

SECURITY ISSUES IN ACCOMMODATION

This fact sheet has been produced by Visit Wales to help accommodation establishments to provide adequate security for guests, employees, their possessions and other property.

The importance of security.

Research has shown that guests believe their security, and the security of their possessions, is of primary importance when staying away from home. They expect to stay in accommodation establishments that provide a safe and secure environment.

Security is also a vital issue for the establishments themselves. They need to provide a secure working environment for employees, and to ensure that the property of the establishment is adequately protected.

The need for effective security is increasing, as are guest expectations of the security measures available at accommodation establishments. However, security needs in smaller, rural operations may be significantly different from those located in towns and city centres.

It is important for operators in both urban and rural areas to be committed to:

- assessing risks;
- putting in place appropriate security equipment, policies and procedures;
- making continuous improvements to their security arrangements.

As well as implementing effective security measures, operators require appropriate insurance cover. Further information is provided in the VW fact sheet 'Insurance to protect your business', which can be downloaded from:

www.wales.gov.uk/tourism and then click on Tourism Industry advice.

The benefits of effective security.

Effective security can help accommodation providers to:

- protect guests from attacks, accidents and other incidents;
- reassure guests that they will be safe and secure;
- deter thefts of guest and employee possessions, including cash and other valuables;
- deter theft of, or damage to, the property of the establishment;
- ensure the safety and security of employees;
- protect cars and bicycles;
- obtain lower insurance premiums;
- avoid guest dissatisfaction and unfavourable publicity.

Specific types of accommodation establishment may gain other benefits. For example:

- Effective security in a hostel or pub can protect bar stock from theft by guests.
- Effective hostel security can enable group leaders and others prepare risk assessments that are satisfactory, and thereby help the hostel to attract group business;
- Effective security in a guesthouse or B&B can provide security for family members, including children.

Assessing security risks

Appropriate security measures can only be put in place if an accommodation provider has a good understanding of the security risks. It is therefore essential for operators to undertake a comprehensive security risk assessment, which identifies potential risks in all interior and exterior areas, together with measures to remove or reduce the risk. This security risk assessment can be undertaken as a stand-alone exercise or as part of a more general risk assessment of operations.

Risk assessments should always be undertaken by a competent person. They should be updated on a regular basis or if there are significant changes at the establishment. The findings of a security risk assessment should be recorded in writing.

It can be helpful for hostels to make copies of risk assessments available to group organisers.

Further information on conducting risk assessments can be obtained from the Health and Safety Executive website: www.hse.gov.uk.

Reducing security risks

As well as having appropriate security equipment, policies and procedures, it is essential for employees and any volunteers to work to reduce security risks.

This may include:

- ensuring that security equipment is checked and maintained;
- ensuring that security procedures are followed by employees and volunteers;
- outlining security procedures to guests on arrival, through notices or information sheets, or by other appropriate means;
- encouraging guests to use secure storage facilities provided and to take other steps to safeguard themselves and their possessions;
- supervising contractors and other visitors;
- providing security training for employees, as appropriate;
- identifying new risks and taking appropriate action;
- looking for methods of reducing risk and improving security on a continuing basis;
- investing in additional security measures.

CCTV

CCTV security – closed circuit television – is a valuable tool to reduce crime, and protect buildings, people and property.

CCTV can help to:

- control access to the building;
- provide a view of public rooms without a staff member in attendance, thereby improving security;
- reduce external and internal vandalism and damage;

- deter theft from public rooms, bedrooms, car parks and bicycle storage areas;
- provide a filmed record of incidents.

CCTV is unlikely to be cost-effective in small, rural establishments. However, it can be a great asset in larger establishments, particularly those located in town and city centres.

Installations can range from a live action only system covering the entrance, to more complex recording systems covering the entrance, car park and all public rooms in the establishment.

External Lighting

External lighting can include:

- lights operated by a manual switch, turned on during the hours of darkness
- lights operated by a passive infra-red (PIR) control;
- high efficiency, low energy lights controlled by photo-electric cells so that they operate from dusk till dawn.

The Institute of Lighting Engineers has produced a guide to security lighting. This can be downloaded from www.ile.org.uk

Securing valuable items

Valuable items, such as televisions and computers can be protected through:

- the use of security devices, such as adhesive mount cables;
- marking the item with the establishment's post code using ultra-violet or ceramic pen;
- attaching theft-deterrent identification tags, which fix easily and permanently, and

provide a visible deterrent to opportunist thefts.

A record should be kept of the make, model and serial number of all major items of equipment.

Liability

The law does not allow hostels to limit their liability to a guest for death or personal injury arising out of negligence, including that of an employee or agent. In respect of any other loss or damage, hostels can only restrict their liability towards a guest as far as is reasonable.

Hostels would not normally accept liability for guest's luggage, unless it was secured in a safe deposit box, cars, bicycles or other possessions, this should be made clear to guests in the hostel's booking conditions.

Hotels

The exterior of the hotel

Guests will expect to feel secure from the moment they reach the hotel entrance. It is therefore to ensure that roads, paths, car parking areas and building entrances are well lit and clear. The route to car parks and reception should be signposted.

Ideally, hotels should offer guests secure car parking facilities, with entrance and exit controlled by a barrier and the car park and the path to reception covered by one or more CCTV camera. City and town centre hotels may wish to consider installing CCTV cameras to cover the whole of the exterior of the hotel.

Reception and public areas

Adequate facilities should be available for the secure storage of guest luggage, which should not be left unattended in the reception area. A system should also be established for controlling the receipt and return of luggage, such as the use of numbered tickets.

Procedures need to be put in place for the secure receipt, storage and return of coats, bags and other items. Cloakroom facilities should always be attended or locked.

Secure procedures for the issue of keys or key cards are now expected by hotel guests. In particular, hotels should not tell guests the number of their room within earshot of other guests or visitors to the hotel. Under no circumstances should reception or other employees release guest room numbers to other parties.

Public areas of the hotel should be regularly patrolled by an appropriate member of staff. In larger city or resort properties, it may be appropriate for specific security personnel to be employed or contracted for specific events, and for key locations to be covered by CCTV.

Access to offices, kitchens, storage areas, etc should be controlled through use of keys, key card or coded entry systems. Conference and banqueting rooms should be locked when not in use to restrict access.

An effective procedure needs to be established for dealing with items left behind by guests or other visitors.

Access to bedrooms

Hotel bedrooms should have self-locking doors with spy holes where possible. Guests should be provided with appropriate means of preventing entry.

Many hotels, including most of the larger and major branded properties, have now replaced bedroom keys with a computerised key card system. This provided much greater security for guests and the hotel.

Any bedrooms on the ground floor or located adjacent to flat roofs or fire escapes may require the windows to be fitted with a device that allows them to be opened for ventilation while safety and security is maintained..

Safe Deposit boxes

Safe deposit facilities should be available to all guests, either centrally near reception or through individual safes in bedrooms.

Emergency Procedures

All hotels should have clear written procedures for dealing with emergencies and other security breaches, and all employees should be familiar with them. These should include information on action to be taken in the event of:

- fire
- accidents and serious illness
- theft
- fraud
- deliberate damage to hotel or guest property
- discovery of a suspicious object or receipt of a bomb or other threat

- threatening, drunken or violent behaviour by guests
- evidence of drug abuse by guests or staff.

There should be an effective system for controlling access to keys.

Guest Houses and B&B's

The exterior of the property

It is essential for B&B's, guest houses and other small accommodation establishments, such as pubs with rooms, to have an acceptably well-lit front entrance, both for security purposes and to reassure guests. A porch light or other small external light can be installed for this purpose.

Depending on the location of the B&B or guesthouse, it may also be necessary to install lights in other external areas, such as on paths, in car parking or bicycle storage areas.

For establishments with grounds, it is important to inspect boundary fences at regular intervals to ensure that they are in good repair.

Consideration also needs to be given to securing the property itself and the possessions of operators and their families. Appropriate mortice locks should be fitted to all external doors and, where appropriate, locks with keys to windows so that the building can be secured when it is empty and at night. An intruder alarm system will normally be required. Particularly vulnerable windows may require a security grille. These security precautions should meet the requirements

of the operator's insurers. It is also important to ensure that security measures do not impede evacuation in any emergency situation.

Guest rooms should be lockable and guests provided with a key. It should also be possible for guests to lock their bedrooms from the inside, for example, with a bolt. It is also advisable for locks to be used for family bedrooms or other rooms where guests are not permitted and for such rooms to be indicated as private by use of signage as appropriate.

Garden equipment, such as lawnmowers, should be securely stored after use in a lockable shed or outbuilding.

Valuable items, including keys, cash, credit cards, wallets, jewellery and handbags should not be left in unattended and unlocked rooms to which guests would have access. They should be stored in a locked room or cupboard, as should alcoholic drinks.

Guest cars

Even in remote rural areas or where cars are parked on private property, guests should be encouraged to lock their cars, with signage reminding them about the importance of not leaving valuables in them.

Emergency procedures

All B&Bs and guest houses should have established procedures for dealing with emergencies and other security breaches. These should include plans on action to be taken in the event of:

- fire
- accidents and serious illness
- theft
- deliberate damage to property
- threatening, drunken or violent behaviour by guests
- evidence of drug abuse by guests or staff
- child or vulnerable adult protection issues.

HOSTELS

The exterior of the hostel

It is essential for hostels to have an acceptably well-lit front entrance, both for security purposes and to reassure guests. A porch light or other small external light can be installed for this purpose. This can be:

- a light operated by a manual switch, turned on during the hours of darkness;
- a light operated by a passive infra-red (PIR) control;
- a high efficiency, low energy light controlled by a photo-electric cell so that it operates from dusk to dawn.

Depending on the location of the hostel, it may also be necessary to install lights in other external areas, such as on paths. If the hostel has a car park or bicycle storage area, it is also important to provide adequate lighting for these.

The Institution of Lighting Engineers has produced a guide to security lighting. This can be downloaded from: www.ile.org.uk.

A car park entrance and exit barrier can provide additional security for cars at larger

hostels. Whenever possible, secure bicycle storage should be provided.

Reception and entrance areas

As a minimum requirement for effective security, hostels should make reasonable efforts to control access to the building. This may require the property to be locked during daytime hours of closure.

For some rural hostels where one or more employees are on the premises (although not necessarily in the reception area), open entry may also be appropriate. In towns and cities, reception should be manned when there is open entry.

Alternatively, entry can be restricted, with a bell or entry phone system installed to enable guests and other visitors to ring for attention.

For larger properties, it is preferable for reception to be immediately visible from the entrance and for the reception area to be permanently staffed during opening hours. Keys can then be made available to guests for late entry to the property.

It is also possible to allow open entry to an airlock reception area, staffed throughout opening hours, again with keys available for late entry.

If circumstances permit in larger, urban hostels, secure entry supervised by employees can be provided for 24 hours a day. This provides a very high level of security for the hostel and its occupants.

Public areas

Security requirements for public areas are likely to vary considerably depending on the location and size of the hostel. For a small, quiet, rural hostel, occasional staff presence in public areas may be sufficient.

In a large, busy property, regular or constant staff presence may be required in the daytime and early evening. A night porter covering the entrance and reception area, and carrying out regular internal and external patrols, may also be necessary.

Key cards or access codes can also be used to provide or restrict access to specified areas of the hostel.

Access to bedrooms

Every hostel should enable guests to secure their bedroom door from the inside, for example, through the use of a bolt or other security device. It is desirable for bedroom doors to be lockable, with keys or key cards available to some or preferably all of the room occupants. Self-locking bedroom doors, which will automatically secure against external entry and automatically close on exit, are the most secure.

Any bedrooms on the ground floor or located adjacent to flat roofs or fire escapes may require the windows to be fitted with a device that allows them to be opened while safety and security is maintained.

Secure storage for possessions

Some small, rural hostels do not provide any secure storage facilities for guest's possessions or provide limited facilities for

secure storage, such as lockers, for which a charge is sometimes made.

A higher standard of security can be provided by making rucksack lockers available for use by guests, with padlocks, keys or access codes. These can be situated at a central location in the hostel or, more conveniently, in the bedrooms.

Larger city centre properties may also wish to provide secure long-term luggage storage. Access to this facility should be limited.

Safety deposit boxes can also be provided for secure storage of valuables, such as passports, either in bedrooms or in a central location.

Hostel property

Consideration also needs to be given to securing the property of the hostel itself and the possessions of employees and volunteers.

Appropriate mortice locks should be fitted to all external doors and, where appropriate, locks with keys to windows, so that the hostel can be secured when it is empty and at night. An intruder alarm system will normally be required. Particularly vulnerable windows may require a security grille. These security precautions should meet the requirements of the hostel's insurers. It is also important to ensure that security measures do not impede evacuation in any emergency situation.

Offices, kitchens and storage areas should be lockable, with appropriate procedures for the security of keys, or accessible only with an access code. Areas, such as kitchens and staff accommodation, should be clearly signposted as restricted or 'no entry'.

Valuable items, such as televisions and computers, can be protected through:

- the use of security devices, such as adhesive mount cables;
- marking the item with the hostel's post code using an ultra-violet or ceramic pen;
- attaching theft-deterrent identification tags, which fix easily and permanently, and provide a visible deterrent to opportunist thefts.

Garden equipment, such as lawnmowers, should be securely stored after use in a lockable shed or outbuilding.

A record should be kept of the make, model and serial number of all major items of equipment.

Employees and volunteers should be provided with secure storage for valuables, such as lockers or lockable desk drawers or cupboards. Employee accommodation should be lockable with a key or key card.

Security arrangements should be put in place for the protection of valuables, such as cash, cheques, transaction slips and stamps.

Procedures may also need to be put in place to check for theft of items, such as bed linen, and for accidental or deliberate damage before guests depart from the hostel.

Protecting children and vulnerable adults

To ensure satisfactory arrangements for the safeguarding of children and, if applicable, vulnerable adults, each hostel should have a Child Protection (and Vulnerable Adult) Protection Policy.

Hostel employees should make it clear that responsibility for children rests with group leaders, parents or carers. No member of the hostel staff can act 'in loco parentis'. Responsibility for vulnerable adults rests with the accompanying group leader, relative or carer.

Further information on child protection issues relating to the accommodation of school or other youth groups is provided in the VW fact sheet 'Benefiting from educational visits', which can be downloaded from:

www.wales.gov.uk/tourismand then click on Tourism Industry advice.

Hostel employees should verbally brief group leaders on safety and security on arrival, and then provide clear written procedures. They should be available during hostel opening hours and at night to help with emergencies.

Emergency procedures

All hostels should have clear, written procedures for dealing with emergencies and other security breaches, and all employees and volunteers should be familiar with them. These should include information on action to be taken in the event of:

- fire;
- accidents and serious illness;
- theft;
- deliberate damage to hostel or guest property;
- discovery of a suspicious object or receipt of a bomb or other threat;
- threatening, drunken or violent behaviour by guests;
- evidence of drug abuse;
- child or vulnerable adult protection issues.

Reducing security risks

As well as having appropriate security equipment, policies and procedures, it is essential for employees and any volunteers to work to reduce security risks.

This may include:

- ensuring that security equipment is checked and maintained;
- ensuring that security procedures are followed by employees and volunteers;
- outlining security procedures to guests on arrival, through notices or information sheets, or by other appropriate means;
- encouraging guests to use secure storage facilities provided and to take other steps to safeguard themselves and their possessions;
- supervising contractors and other visitors to the hostel;
- providing security training for employees, as appropriate;
- identifying new risks and taking appropriate action;
- looking for methods of reducing risk and improving security on a continuing basis;
- investing in additional security measures.

SELF-CATERING

Deterring burglary and theft

Appropriate mortice locks should be fitted to all external doors and, where appropriate, locks with keys to windows, so that the property can be secured while it is empty. An intruder alarm system would give added security. Particularly vulnerable windows may require a security grille. These precautions should meet the operator's insurers. It is important to ensure that security measures do not impede evacuation by guests in any emergency.

Boundary hedges and fences should be kept in good state of repair.

Inventory

It is vital for a comprehensive inventory to be compiled for all self catering properties, and for the inventory to be checked after each let. Guests can then be charged, as appropriate, for any breakages or damage. It is a good idea to take photographs of any significant damage, which can be used as evidence in cases of dispute.

Securing the property

Guests should be provided with clear written instructions on how to secure the property when they go out, including:

- locking front, back and side doors
- securing windows
- closing/locking gates
- setting any intruder alarm.

Spare keys

A spare set of keys for the property (in addition to those being used by the owner,

letting agent or cleaner) should be available in case guests lose their set during occupation.

HOLIDAY PARKS

Park Boundaries

Fences, hedges and railing that mark the boundaries of the park should be inspected regularly to check that they are in a good state of repair, so as to deter intruders.

Units

The doors and windows to units should be locked and the keys stored in a secure location with restricted access when they are not in use (including display models). Visitors hiring units should be provided with a key and instructions on how to secure the unit when they are out.

Inventory

It is vital for a comprehensive inventory to be compiled for all units and for the inventory to be checked after each let. Guests can then be charged, as appropriate, for any breakages or damage. It is a good idea to take photographs of any significant damage, which can be used as evidence in cases of dispute.

Restricting access

It is important to ensure that access is restricted to authorised employees for certain areas of the park, including:

- offices
- catering outlets and bar outlets (when closed)
- retail outlets (when closed)

- storage areas for machinery, equipment and materials
- swimming pool plant
- swimming pools and children's play areas (during closed hours).

Doors should also be locked to restricted areas when they are not in use, or they can fitted with self locking doors.

Storage of valuables

Valuable items such as cash, cheques books, credit cards, credit card slips, vouchers, stamps and high value items of lost property should be stored in a secure location, ideally a safe when they are not in use. Cash should always be removed from tills at night and stored in a secure location. Retail and catering stock should always be stored in a secure location, to which access is restricted to authorised members of staff.

Patrolling the park

All areas of the park should be patrolled by the owner or by employees on a regular basis. The frequency of patrols can be determined by the type of park, whether it is opened to visitors or not, and park's own risk assessment.

CCTV

On larger holiday parks, it may be desirable to install CCTV cameras in key locations, such as access points, retail outlets and reception areas.

Safe deposit boxes

Larger parks may wish to make safe deposit facilities available to guests.

Who can help?

British Security Industry Association

Post: British Security Industry Association
Security House, Barbourne Road,
Worcester WR1 1RS
Tel: 01905 21464
Web: www.bsia.co.uk

British Educational Travel Association

Post: PO Box 182, Carshalton,
Surrey SM5 2XW
Tel: 020 8669 1444
Web: www.betauk.com

Health and Safety Executive

Post: Government Buildings, Phase 1,
Ty Glas, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5SH
Tel: 029 2026 3000
HSE infoline: 0845 345 0055
Web: www.hse.gov.uk

Institution of Lighting Engineers

Post: Regent House, Regent Place,
Rugby CV21 2PN
Tel: 01788 576492
Website: www.ile.org.uk

Skills for Security

Post: Security House, Barbourne Road,
Worcester WR1 1RS
Tel: 0845 075 0111
Web: www.sito.co.uk

Please note that whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this booklet, it is intended to be an introductory guide only. It is not intended to be comprehensive or a definitive statement of the law in England and Wales. If you require precise or detailed information on the legislation mentioned in this guide, or on the legal implications for you in particular, you should consult a professional legal adviser.

This factsheet is one of a series of business development and marketing factsheets produced by Visit Wales to assist businesses in all sectors of the tourism industry in Wales. For details of other titles, please contact us on 029 2047 5303 or visit www.wales.gov.uk/tourism and then click on tourism Industry advice.

