

Customer Occupancy Handbook 2024/25

Your guide to your NHS Property Services building





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Welcome to your Occupancy Handbook. We've created this guide to help you find all the information you need about your building.



Need to get in touch?

You can ask questions, log non-urgent maintenance jobs and track queries through Connect, our [online portal](#). Or, you can call us on **0808 196 2045** or email customer.service@property.nhs.uk

[Visit Connect >>](#)

About NHS Property Services

NHS Property Services provides strategic estates services to help NHS organisations deliver the best patient care. Every day, we work hand in hand with Integrated Care Boards, Trusts, and GP practices across England to help them better assess, adapt and maintain around 3,000 buildings (approximately 10% of the NHS estate) - safely and sustainably.

As part of the NHS, we know how it works and understand the challenges our customers face. Whether that's negotiating funding or keeping buildings compliant, we help our customers navigate the system more easily. Last year, we unlocked more than £150 million for them to reinvest or reimagine their spaces.

With over 5,500 experts, our local teams make the real difference by understanding individual estates and communities. Looking after thousands of NHS buildings means we've seen the full range of estates projects that our NHS needs. In fact, we've completed over 330 refurbishments or new builds in recent years - each one giving us new insights and ideas to help transform estates while keeping costs down and patients safe.

From estate strategy to town planning and cleaning, through to selling inefficient assets and reinvesting the proceeds, our end-to-end service can support every life stage of an NHS building. Saving significant costs and removing the hassle of managing multiple providers, so our customers can spend more time delivering the best patient care.

Because we're part of the NHS, every penny stays within the health system and is reinvested across the NHS. That way we can continue to focus on delivering brilliant service and building an NHS estate that's fit for the future.

Want to know more about our services and how we can help you?

Visit our website at www.property.nhs.uk



Occupancy information

In this section, you can find information about occupancy agreements and how to make changes to your space.



Occupancy agreements

We're working to sign formal occupancy agreements with all of our customers using spaces in our buildings. This will help us better understand how the space is being used and how we can help make sure it meets your needs.

There's lots of benefits to having a formal occupancy agreement. This includes:



More accurate bills



Better forecasts of future costs



Simpler process for refurbishments and improvements



Ensuring the building is fully compliant with health and safety standards



Supporting grant applications for improvements to your space*

You'll also get transparency on:



What our responsibilities are as a landlord and what your responsibilities are as an occupier



What services we'll provide to you



What space you can exclusively use and how



What rights you have over shared or common areas



How long the occupancy with us lasts and how it can be ended

*If you make an application for a premises improvement grant under the Premises Cost Directions then you will need to have a formal occupancy agreement in place.

How occupancy agreements can support investment in the NHS

The Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England are supporting us to get these occupancy agreements in place. This is because it will help us to make sure space is being used effectively across the NHS.

With a clear picture of how space is used, we can provide you with better value for money and reinvest into the NHS. This might be through identifying vacant space that could be let or sold, improving poorly used space or investing in new space to support changing community needs.



How to make changes to your space

We ask that you tell us about any planned changes to the space you use, at least three months in advance. This means we can continue to support you with your health and safety compliance responsibilities and make sure that you're billed the correct amount.

Let us know when you plan to:



Change how you use your space or swap spaces



Adjust the amount of space you use



Leave your current space

You can let us know about any changes to your space by completing the form on our website. Make sure you give us at least three months' notice.

[Complete the form >>](#)



Looking for more flexible space?

NHS Open Space provides access to clinical and non-clinical rooms from partners across the NHS. Health, wellbeing and community services can book flexible and affordable rooms across England on an hourly, sessional or daily basis.

It's pay as you go, so you only pay for the time and space you need, no lease required.

Search more than 1,200+ rooms on our website.

[Visit Open Space >>](#)

Your property bills

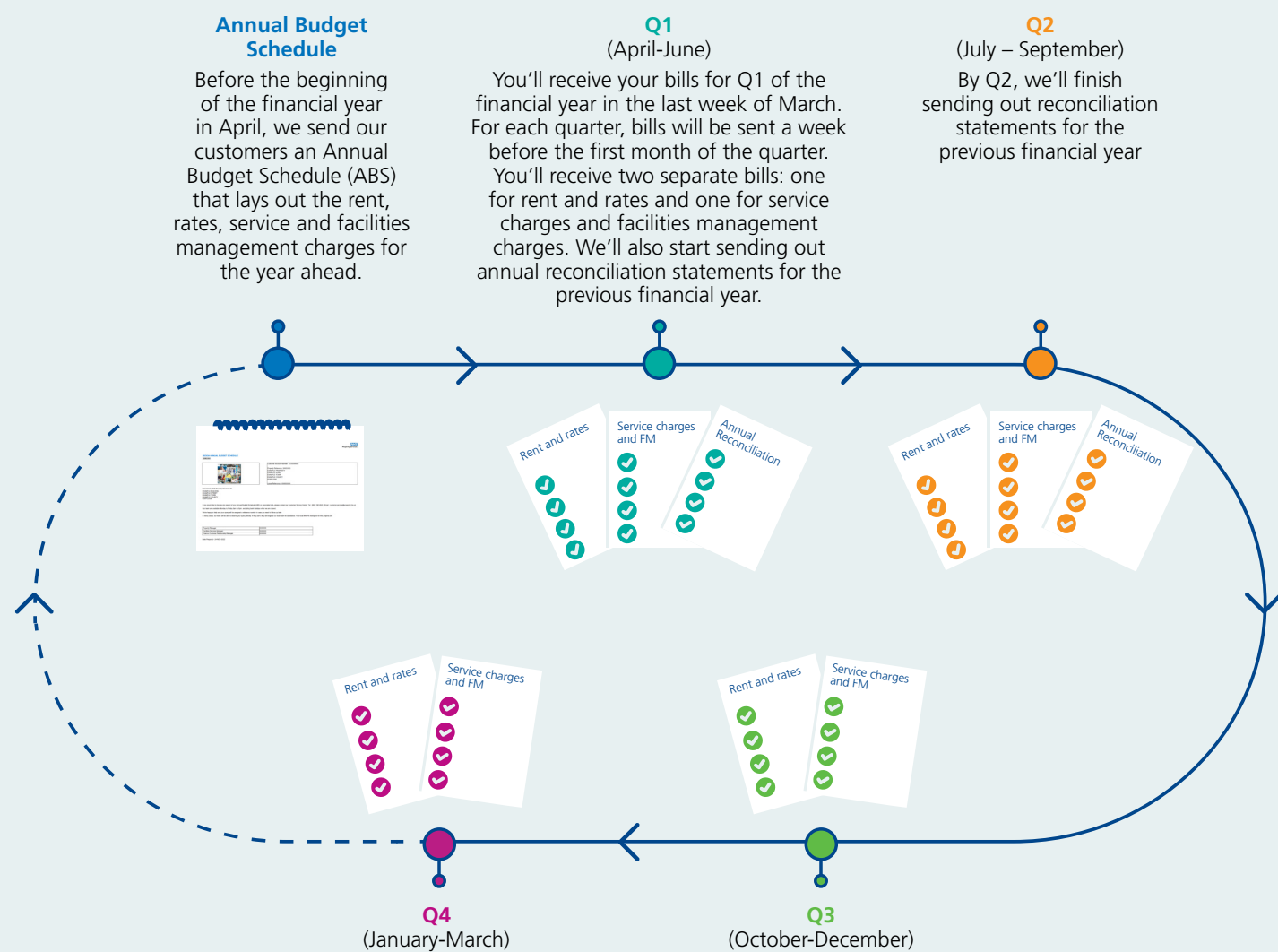
In this section, you can find information about when you'll get your bills and other documents.

Before the beginning of the financial year, we'll send you a copy of your Annual Budget Schedule (ABS) so you have the choice to make any changes to your occupancy or the services you receive from us. This was previously known as an Annual Charging Schedule (ACS).

Our financial year runs from April to March, so you'll receive your first bill for Q1 in the last week of March (a week before the start of April). If you need a purchase order to be shown on your bill to enable payment, please share the details of the purchase order with us before the financial year starts.

Your bills for each quarter will be based on the ABS and will include charges for rent and rates, facilities management, service charges and additional sums. Customer billable works are billed separately.

At the end of the financial year, we'll compare the estimated costs outlined in the ABS against the actual costs of the facilities or services provided at your property. You'll then receive a bill for the difference or a credit note will be added to your account. This is known as annual reconciliation, an industry standard practice that helps calculate any balancing charges and makes costs more transparent.



You can find lots more information about property bills on our website, including helpful guides and updates.

[Visit billing page >>](#)



Management of your building

In this section, you can find information about managing your building, including how to request alterations to your space, customer billable works, insurance, compliance certificates and ways to make your building more sustainable.



Requesting alterations to your space

You'll need to notify us in advance, giving us as much notice as possible of any proposed alterations you would like to make to your space. Here's an overview of how that process works:

Applying for consent



Your Senior Estates Manager will send you a customer application form to complete with the details of the proposal. Once you've completed this, send it back to your Senior Estates Manager.



Depending on the terms of your lease, you might need formal consent from NHSPS. You might also need Superior Landlord consent if NHSPS lease the property from someone else.



Your Senior Estates Manager will assess if Superior Landlord's consent is needed. If it is, we will make that application on your behalf. This would be subject to you paying the Superior Landlord's professional fees.

Review of application



Your Senior Estates Manager will review your application and ask for any additional information needed. If you'd like to instruct your own contractor, we'll ask you to send us some additional health and safety information to review.



If consent is granted, a Licence for Alterations is often needed before alterations can begin. We would prepare this, and both of us would need to sign it.



We'll consider applications on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the legal status of your occupancy, health and safety, sustainability and the value and use of the premises.



Customer billable works

Customer billable works are ad-hoc improvements made to a property within a space that you occupy exclusively.

Examples might include a request to hang a noticeboard, put up some shelving, install some extra electrical sockets or put up window blinds.

They also include replacing or fixing something you have damaged or reported as damaged. These types of improvements fall out of standard planned, remedial, or reactive maintenance. This means that you would be responsible for the cost of these improvements.

How we'll help you

We'll work with you to understand what you need and manage the process for you from start to finish.

We'll find and manage the right contractors at the best price, or our experienced in-house engineers will carry out the works. We'll make sure that the improvements are made in a timely manner, to a high standard and to your exact requirements.

You can submit your request to our Customer Service Centre through the Connect portal:

connect.property.nhs.uk.

You can also find more information about customer billable works here:

<https://www.property.nhs.uk/occupier-hub/property-billing-support/>.



Insurance

As an occupier of one of our buildings, we expect you to have relevant insurance in place to protect yourselves, your employees and your patients.

At a minimum, you must have Contents Insurance and Public Liability Insurance. It's also against the law to employ anyone without having Employers Liability Insurance. We might ask you to send current copies of insurance documents, so please have them to hand just in case.

Looking for compliance certificates?

You can easily request compliance certificates via our website, including for electrical, asbestos, energy performance, fire safety and water management.

[Request certificate >>](#)



Ways to make your building more sustainable



The NHS aims to reach net zero carbon by 2040 and each one of us can help achieve that goal. We've created a guide with some easy tips to help you reduce your building's environmental impact. This includes advice on how to save energy, reduce waste and become more fuel efficient.

[Read the guide >>](#)



We're also working more broadly on how we can create a more sustainable estate. Our focus is always on what we can do to improve and how we can work together with our colleagues and customers to achieve our common goals. That's what being a responsible business is all about for us.

Some of the ways we can support you include installing smart meters, fixing maintenance issues that might make your building less energy efficient, and providing you with sustainability data so you can make informed decisions.

You can find out more about how we're helping to create a Greener NHS here.

[Read more >>](#)



Health and safety

In this section, you can find information about what our responsibilities are and what your responsibilities are for maintaining health and safety in your building.



How we keep you safe

Health and safety is really important to us and we've put a number of procedures in place to help keep NHSPS colleagues safe whilst on site.

Our procedures also consider the impact of what we do on other users of the building, such as your employees and patients. This means that we work in a way that won't put them or others at risk whilst they are at work or visiting the building.

Accidents

If an accident happens to one of your employees, a patient or a contractor you've engaged, this should be reported to you on your accident reporting system. You should investigate the cause of the accident and put controls in place to prevent it from happening again.

If your accident investigation suggests that it may have been caused by an issue that NHSPS is responsible for, please let us know as soon as possible by contacting our Customer Service Centre on **0808 196 2045**.

You should also contact the Customer Service Centre to let us know about any damage to buildings or associated areas. This means we can act quickly to prevent accidents from happening in the first instance.



Your responsibilities

As occupiers of the building and employers, you're responsible for the health and safety of your employees whilst at work. You're also responsible for the health and safety of any visitors and patients on the premises. It's important to note that even if you don't have an occupancy agreement, you still have these responsibilities.



Safe use and disposal of sharps and needle-sticks

Please dispose of sharps correctly. We've had a number of colleagues struck by needlesticks, often coming into contact with them when they've been incorrectly disposed of, either in waste bags, on tables or on floors next to bins.

Sharp disposal containers must be clearly marked and secure. They should be placed close to the areas where medical sharps are being used.

Find out more: https://www.property.nhs.uk/media/4696/health-and-safety-information_safe-disposal-of-sharps-and-needles.pdf



Safe use of mobility scooters

You must consider access for patients with mobility needs while taking into account other building users.

Motorised vehicles should be driven within the building and grounds in a responsible manner and must be set to their lowest speed setting whilst driven inside.

E-scooters and E-bicycles are not permitted inside NHSPS buildings at any time. You'll need to consider the physical layout of your building to see if it's suitable for all mobility scooters.

Find out more: https://www.property.nhs.uk/media/oz0g14au/use-of-mobility-scooters-in-buildings_information-sheet_2024.pdf

Your responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Making sure you have procedures in place to evacuate your employees, patients and visitors from the building in an emergency
- Assessing the risk from the activities you do, their impact on other building users and their potential to cause fire
- Providing first aid arrangements
- Assessing security and other needs for employee, patient and visitor safety
- Assessing and controlling the risks in the services you provide
- Complying with all other health and safety legislation that is relevant to you

We might ask that you send us copies of risk assessments you've completed on your activities or areas you occupy. This is to make sure that we correctly assess any risks to our staff if they need to work in areas under your control where any high-risk activities may take place.

You can find out more about how we help keep you and others safe here: <https://www.property.nhs.uk/occupier-hub/health-and-safety/>

Defibrillators

We will continue to maintain existing defibrillators where a legacy agreement is already in place.

If you would like to install or replace a wall-mounted defibrillator in one of our buildings, you'll need to request approval from the Senior Estates Manager for the building. They'll be able to share the asbestos information you must review if the defibrillator needs to be fixed to a wall and connected to a power supply.

We won't object to the installation unless there is a genuine building safety issue with the position of the defibrillator. The requester will be responsible for maintaining the defibrillator once it's been installed.



Building safety

In this section, you can find information about fire safety, security and emergency situations.

Be clear on your responsibilities to stay compliant with legislation

Health and safety legislation covers some elements of building safety. This includes water quality management, asbestos, compressed gases and lifts.

Depending on the terms set out in your occupancy agreement, either you or NHSPS will be responsible for maintaining these and ensuring legal compliance. It's important to check your occupancy agreement to find out what your responsibilities are and what you can expect from us.



Fire safety

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) sets out who is responsible for protecting people working or visiting a building from fire. It's not just the responsibility of NHSPS as the landlord. The person defined within the FSO as the "Responsible Person" is the employer. In a building with multiple occupiers, there might be several responsible persons who all play an active part in managing fire safety in the building.

As the Responsible Person you should make sure a fire risk assessment is carried out for the parts of the building you occupy. This should include any routes to and from those areas.

Your fire risk assessment should consider the risk of a fire happening and the measures taken to protect people from the effects of fire.

These measures should include providing training for your staff to ensure they can evacuate safely, and safely evacuating patients and other visitors to your site.

If you do not have someone with the skills to do this, you can hire a specialist to undertake the fire risk assessment on your behalf. You can do this as a single occupier or jointly with other occupiers within the building.

The FSO states that the Responsible Person must cooperate and coordinate with others within the building to make sure all occupiers, including any visitors and patients, to the building are safe. This includes sharing the details of the Responsible Person and the findings of your fire risk assessment with all other Responsible Persons in the building and with NHSPS.



Fire evacuation

As part of the FSO, you and the other occupiers have a collective responsibility to evacuate the building if a fire breaks out. This means that all occupiers need to discuss and formalise the evacuation and re-entry procedures for your building. You should have procedures that will:



Raise the alarm and begin evacuating the building, including disabled refuge areas



Investigate the cause of the alarm



Make sure that everyone has evacuated the building safely



Contact the fire service to tell them that it is either a false alarm or a real fire



Communicate with the fire service on their arrival



Get people back into the building when it's safe to do so

You, and other occupiers, should practice these procedures by carrying out fire evacuation drills. This means that if there is a fire, the building can be evacuated safely and quickly.

As landlord, we'll help facilitate fire evacuation drills by arranging for someone to visit the building to activate the fire alarm and reset it once the drill has been completed.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans and Evacuation Aids

If your fire risk assessment identifies people at particular risk who need help to evacuate the building, you may want to prepare a Generic Emergency Evacuation Plan (GEEP). If a known individual needs help, you should prepare a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP).

If either a GEEP or PEEP identifies specialist evacuation equipment may be needed, you will need to buy the equipment. You'll also need to make sure your staff are trained on how to use it and that it's maintained. If the equipment needs to be fitted in a shared area, (for example, an evacuation chair in a waiting room), you would need to ask us to fit it. To do this, you need to follow the Licence to Alter process. More information on this can be found on page 6). We'd then charge the cost of the fitting back to you. You would be responsible for maintaining the equipment in line with the manufacturer's instructions.



Fire safety equipment

As a landlord, NHSPS provides essential fire safety equipment to help keep people in the building safe.

This equipment includes:



Fire detection and alarm systems



Fire extinguishers



Emergency lighting



Fire resisting construction, including fire doors



Fire exit doors

Who is responsible for maintaining and servicing this equipment?

In general, we'll regularly service and maintain this equipment in line with recognised standards and guidance.

However, if you have an occupancy agreement with us, then you're responsible for servicing and maintaining fire safety equipment in your exclusive area. This is in line with The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Any systems (e.g., alarm or sprinkler) that are part of a building-wide system or within the common/shared areas will remain our responsibility, and we'll regularly service and maintain them.

The advice given in this Handbook is general and doesn't override the terms set out in your occupancy agreement if you have one. It's important to check your occupancy agreement as this will tell you what your specific responsibilities are.



Basic fire precautions

Good fire precautions are key to preventing fire. As a responsible occupier and employer, you should make sure that these precautions are followed at all times.

Simple tips include:

- Don't wedge fire doors open
- Keep escape routes clear
- Train your staff in fire safety
- Only charge lithium batteries (i.e. mobile phones, laptops) in a fire protected area
- Don't leave lithium batteries charging unattended



Tell us immediately if you spot an issue with fire safety equipment

If your fire risk assessment identifies a problem with the fire safety equipment, or you spot one during the course of your normal work, you should contact the Customer Service Centre immediately on **0808 196 2045**.



Electrical Equipment

It is your responsibility to make sure that all your electrical equipment on the premises is in safe working order and therefore you should:

- Complete user checks* before electrical equipment is used
- Conduct portable appliance testing (PAT) as defined in your procedure

We might ask you for confirmation that these tests have been completed. We also ask that you turn off all electrical equipment when it's not being used. This will help improve energy efficiency and reduce fire risks.

* You can find more information about the checks in the Health and Safety Executive publication 'Maintaining portable electric equipment in low-risk environments (INDG236).



Emergency situations (major incidents)

If there's an emergency in the building such as fire, flood, lack of power, water or heating then you must contact us immediately.

You should call **0808 196 2045** and provide as much information as you can. We'll then start our incident management process and send the appropriate colleagues to help. We'll make sure we keep you up-to-date until our team arrives at the building.

Further fire safety advice

[HM Government guidance](#)

[Home Office fire advice](#)



Security

Here are some helpful security tips to help keep your building safe:

1. Keep doors locked when not being used.
2. Be aware of people following behind you when you're going into the building.
3. Practice good key security and give your keys back once your occupancy has ended.
4. Close window blinds in all offices and rooms when not being used.
5. Make sure lights are working, as this can deter criminals.
6. Keep all external landscaping trimmed and tidy.
7. Keep all inside areas clean and tidy.
8. Consider the wording you use on signage, certain words could suggest an invitation to criminals .
9. Get to know your neighbours, and be aware of their routines. If you know what's normal activity, you'll be more likely to recognise situations that aren't normal.
10. Give your staff training on security procedures.
11. Make sure your buildings are in good repair.
12. Good communication with all colleagues makes sure everyone is aware of any issues/ concerns.

As your landlord, we'll do our best to provide a safe and secure environment for everyone. However, it is your responsibility as the occupier to do everything you can to make sure your space is kept safe for your staff, patients and visitors.



Lockdown

Lockdown is the process of controlling the movement, entrance and exit of people around a building or other specific area. It's triggered in response to risk, threat or hazard that might impact the safety and security of the building, or the operation of the building.

You're responsible for developing your own lockdown procedures and implementing them. Your procedures should take account of the resources you need to ensure staff, visitors, patients and the building contents are safe. You should also consider what is needed to make sure you can continue to provide your services safely.

If your lockdown procedure needs building systems information, or security guards need to be involved in it, we can provide you with the information you need.

We understand that co-ordination of lockdown procedures can be more challenging if your building is large and has multiple occupiers. This is why you and the other occupiers must co-operate and communicate to align your procedures where possible.

Depending on our local resources, we can help set up meetings with the other occupiers so that you can discuss and draw up integrated site plans. We're not responsible for initiating any lockdown procedures. This must be a decision taken by you or the person who is on site assessing and responding to the risk, threat or hazard as it presents. This might be in partnership with other organisations, both within and beyond the NHS, e.g. if Police intelligence is required.



What to do if a bailiff appears on site

In the rare case that a bailiff visits your site, follow these guidelines:

- Don't panic
- Ask for the bailiff's identification
- Direct the bailiff to a discreet place e.g. meeting room (i.e. away from the main reception and/or waiting room)
- Advise the bailiff that he needs to speak to the NHS Property Services Finance team and explain that you are not NHS Property Services staff
- Call **0808 196 2045** or ask the bailiff to call us directly

We'll speak with the bailiff and ask for these documents:

- Identification documents.
- The court judgement or order.
- The court writ or warrant.
- The enforcement notice served together with details of how and where it was issued.

IMPORTANT

If you receive an enforcement notice or court document, please email this on the day of receipt to legal@property.nhs.uk. This will allow the legal team to take action to prevent the bailiff from attending the site.

There are a number of 'imposter bailiffs' so verify the bailiff's identity via an internet search and an independent call to the company to make sure they are who they say they are.



Want more information about how our Customer Service Centre can help?

You can find more information about our Customer Service Centre on our website, including:

- Guides on how to use Connect
- Our complaints procedure
- How to request compliance certificates

[Visit website >>](#)



How to get in touch

Our Customer Service Centre is here if you need us, 24/7.

If you have any questions, need to log a maintenance job or want to make a complaint, you can contact us by:



Logging into Connect, our online portal



Calling **0808 196 2045**



Emailing customer.service@property.nhs.uk



Help! I have an urgent maintenance job!

If you have an urgent issue that needs fixing right away, call us immediately on 0808 196 2045. All non-urgent issues can be raised on Connect, our online portal. You can also check out this handy infographic to see what's classed as an urgent or non-urgent issue.

[View infographic >>](#)

Sign up to Connect

Connect is our online portal where you can log all of your non-urgent maintenance jobs, ask questions, and tell us if something has gone wrong. You can also track all your queries 24/7 online.

By signing up to Connect, you'll be able to see all the jobs raised for your site, get better updates and more personal responses.

[Sign up >>](#)

Got questions about using NHS Open Space rooms?

You can find information about how to sign up, what equipment is provided in NHS Open Space rooms and what to do if you have an issue with a room on our FAQs page.

[View FAQs page >>](#)

Key contacts

Name	Contact Details	When do I contact them?

