



## Meet the Manager with...

### Siobhan Thomasson, Holiday Inn Wembley

The night of 23rd March 2020 saw the UK fall into uncertain times, with bars, restaurants and hotels across the UK closing their doors to the public. While our guests and colleagues stayed at home to flatten the curve, some of our staff remained onsite to house critical workers away from their homes during this time.

At SHG group, we want you to meet our managers and tell you about their experience. Siobhan, General Manager from Holiday Inn Wembley worked with limited members of her team to keep the support running for our key workers on the front line. Let's hear her story.



#### **Thinking back on your time working through lockdown; how do you feel about the experience?**

I think for everyone either working from home, furloughed or still being in the Holiday Inn Wembley, it has been a very surreal experience for all of us. After a meeting with my Heads of Department we took the decision to remain open for key workers and that has been an extraordinary experience. How quickly the team adapted to new processes and thinking outside the box to increase safety measures for both guests and ourselves was exceptional.



**What was your biggest high point and your biggest and low point?**

My high point was the team itself. I had been a General Manager here for only three months when all of this started. Before I could even ask the team to stay and work in a potentially high-risk environment every Head of Department volunteered to be part of the lockdown team. They have done an amazing job. We have all continued with our daily roles plus additional duties to support the running of the hotel during this time.

It was difficult to witness the exhaustion of our key workers during the pandemic, however the team created a thank you wall with pictures and messages showing our support. However, my favourite idea was 'Friday Treat Day'! We gave each key... worker a little gift every Friday to try and lift their spirits and make them feel like they were at home.



**What was the best story you heard from a key worker during lockdown?**

One of our key workers sadly had a very poorly patient and they were clearly worried about them. One day, she came back with a beaming smile and said her patient had turned a corner and would be on their way home soon. We literally all clapped and cried with happiness with her sharing her joy.



**Have you learned anything new during this time?**

As I was new to the Holiday Inn Wembley it was a steep learning curve getting to know the building and team in such a unique situation. It feels like we have now been working together for years - not months. Spending time learning about my teammates and their families personally has been fabulous. For once we were all able to sit down and enjoy meals together, too, as we usually never had time for that!



**What is the most important life lesson you're taking from this experience?**

During lockdown, the importance of time spent with my family and indeed seeing other family members via web links has made me appreciate them more, especially those who don't live close to us but we would normally visit regularly.

In addition - never underestimate our senior family members who are now IT literate and know how to use FaceTime, Zoom, Facebook and every other social media outlet even though before - they struggled to send a text!

**Siobhan has now returned to her new 'normal'. Her positive outlook and support for our amazing key workers during this time has never faltered. We're extremely happy to see our Holiday Inn Wembley site open to the public with Siobhan's team.**

**We want to say a huge thank you to all at Holiday Inn Wembley for their perseverance and hard work during these difficult times. Watch this space to see the next installment of Splendid Hospitality Group's Meet the Manager!**