



Meet the Manager with...

Adam, Holiday Inn Express Gatwick Crawley

March 23rd 2020; the night the UK went into lockdown for the next three months. While many businesses shut their doors and furloughed non-key workers stayed at home, the critical and key workers tirelessly battling the virus on the front line needed beds and a place to rest.

That's where Adam comes in. General Manager of Holiday Inn Express Gatwick Crawley, Adam moved into the hotel along with select members of staff to give back to our critical workers, just when they needed it most.

In this installment of Meet the Manager, we had a sit-down with Adam to hear about his experiences. Read on to hear his story.



Was it just the NHS you were open for during this time?

“We closed our doors on the 23rd March to all new bookings but remained in-service for 9 long-stay guests who were unable to fly back home due to the travel bans. We were then contacted over the next few days by several Government departments, including the NHS, to see if we could accommodate critical & key workers who were responding to the COVID-19 relief efforts in Sussex and the wider area. By the 30th June 2020 we had welcomed doctors, nurses, air ambulance pilots, armed forces, medical and logistics teams, critical rail infrastructure engineers, rail signallers, civil engineers, highways authorities, police officers and we also were providing self-isolation facilities too.”



Do you know how many you welcomed during the 3+ months?

“We completed over 900 check-ins from 23rd March until 4th July.”



How was the experience of working through lockdown, and during a fearful time?

“Surreal. We had to reduce staff numbers to the bare minimum to ensure everyone could socially distance and keep as many people at home and safe as possible. We erected perspex screens at check-in and floor markings in order to maintain safe distances. The most bizarre aspect to me was walking the wings of the hotel that had been shut-down, it was like the hotel was hibernating. Usually we are so used to the hustle and bustle of a busy airport/downtown hotel that seeing it quiet is so strange.”

“Two of the team moved into the hotel to reduce the need for using public transport and made the hotel their home for almost three months. We would usually work 4-days on/4-days off in 12-hour shifts and I would also stay in the hotel during my 4-days on. Driving to and from home was very eerie as the streets and roads were so quiet, a normal 30-minute commute took just 18-minutes without traffic.”



Are there any highlights / positive stories during this time from a key worker for example?

“We connected on a personal level with all our critical worker guests. The Army guests would stop and have chats with us on their return everyday, doctors and nurses would return drained from busy shifts, but would always smile and say hello on their way in - it was a real privilege to provide dedicated and personal hospitality to all of our guests who were all working so hard to keep the country running during unprecedented times.”



How did you keep yours and your team’s spirit up?

“Good old fashioned fat and sugar! I’ve never seen so much cake, cookies and biscuits in the office. I had a local bakery bake and deliver boxes of luxury cookies for the team. We all had coffee catch ups at changeover and shared takeaway dinners (socially distanced). My team also got me a wonderful bottle of gin towards the end... They know me all too well!”





Was there anything you did / put in place to make their stay more like home?

“Many guests were staying with us week-in/week-out, so we would find rooms that they preferred. We provided boxes of chocolates in the bedrooms when we found out guests had a particularly hard day and we tried to maintain some sense of ‘normality’ with all the socially distanced markers in place. Breakfast was served to the guests rooms and we would often leave a little morning note on the tray for them.”



How has it been since reopening your doors to the general public?

“It’s a really good feeling to see guests back in the hotel again. Everyone has been very accommodating of the changes we have had to put in place, and we have had some incredible feedback about the safety procedures, cleanliness and staff friendliness.”



Do you feel the procedures and hygiene measures that have been put in place have made people feel safer?

“100%. I think this guest review sums it up... “It was the first time in a hotel since lockdown. The place was spotlessly clean. The one way system, sanitisation and general care for social distancing measures was excellent. Staff wore protection and were very helpful. Congratulations to the Company and the staff, we felt very safe and above all very comfortable. Well done! It has given us confidence to travel and stay over again.”



Are you taking a mix of business and leisure guests again, or one more than the other?

“We have a real mix of guests; families that are coming to see relatives they haven’t seen in months, business travellers slowly returning to offices, even the airport is providing some business on their ever-increasing number of flights.”

After over three months of living in the hotel during unprecedented times, we can confirm Adam is back to his usual commute to the hotel from home. Still going above and beyond for every guest, he is happy to be welcoming back guests from every walk of life.

To hear more about the selfless acts of our Splendid Family, stay tuned for the next installment of Meet the Manager!