

To Morning Advertiser/Press

NHS Covid-19 app set to give hospitality venues significant problems

This week, storing customer contact information becomes mandatory in England. For venues that already collect visitor data, the change will make no difference as many have already invested in Smart Phone based data collection systems.

The next key date is 24th September. That's the launch date in England for the long-awaited NHS tracking app. Great news? Well, look at the detail and you'll find many hidden problems

The Govt says users of existing Smart Phone QR code systems should switch to the NHS app. However, it's what they fail to tell you that really matters

The NHS app:

1. Does not collect the data that is required under customer registration regulations
2. Does not inform the venue if a visitor has clicked on their displayed NHS QR logo.
3. Gives absolutely no visitor information to the venue

Venues are being told they must, by law, still operate a separate registration system, but they should not use a QR code registration system. So, if you decided to help the fight against Covid-19 and operate a Smart Phone based system, "We want you to stop using it".

There is always a fine line between a firm request and a legally enforceable demand. Under the planned regime, it will not be illegal for a venue to operate two Smart Phone systems. But, but as that may confuse people, it could lead to a lower uptake of the NHS system. And if a venue is seen to hinder the Covid fight, and increase potential fatalities, that's about the worst publicity you can attract!

Access to the NHS app is vitally important. Smart Phone ownership or use is low in the over 50's, ironically the most vulnerable sector yet one that forms a high visitor group within hospitality. Again, hidden deep in the Government's website, you will discover that many current smart phones are also incompatible. Leading the pack are the iPhone models 5S and 6, followed by some of the latest Huawei models and a list of other android based handsets.

Venues are effectively being told to close down Smart Phone based registration systems. On their website the Government has only suggested alternative is an expensive manual, registration systems, completely ignoring what is probably the most reliable, economical, and widely available option – the Text or SMS based service. Not only do text-based systems work as well as Smart Phone options but some, like CommerceCall's "[TrackSafely](#)" version don't even require GDPR registration by the venue.

A final word of warning. We went through every page of the NHS apps. website, reading every question. Apart from finding they contained more typographical errors than a normal national newspaper (were they prepared in haste?) we found one worrying yet well-hidden comment. In answer to the question "Do we still need to collect customer data?" The answer was "Yes, but this will be kept under review". So, you've been warned. You do need to operate a system alongside the NHS app. We do not want it to be smart phone service and we may change our mind! You've been warned!

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Notes to Editors:

Track Safely is a service only available from CommerceCall Ltd. www.tracksafely.co.uk

CommerceCall Ltd commenced business in 1986 and is based in Bournemouth

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