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## COVID-19 ADVICE SERIES: Opening our stores after lockdown

21ST MAY 2020 • BY RUTH FAULKNER



COMMENT

With plans to reopen on June 1, Harriet Kelsall, owner of [Harriet Kelsall Bespoke Jewellery](#), discusses how the business is balancing the safety of its staff and customers, while still offering a unique experience.



Balancing the need for safety of our designers and customers with the need for a wonderful, personal in-store experience is a challenge.

We've looked at how other retailers are approaching this and have developed our own bespoke plan.

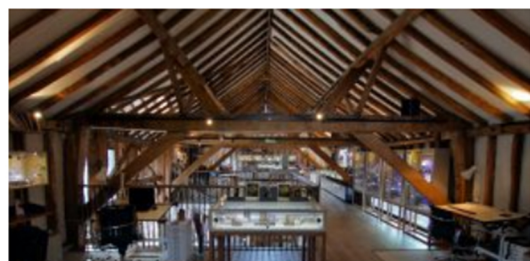
We aren't a normal retailer, where customers browse, buy and pay at a till, instead our customers sit down with designers and create unique pieces.

So, how do we do this safely? And, in particular, how do we keep customers and designers two metres apart?

Luckily for us, our showroom design is based around self-contained design areas, with consultation tables to one side.

So, we've developed a way – using some furniture rearrangement, Perspex screens, surgical gloves and rigorous cleaning routines – that keeps within the government guidelines and makes working with a designer face to face possible.

We're planning to keep our front doors open and as much as possible, with our air conditioning units off – a tip we picked up from guidelines in France. We hope this will keep fresh air circulating and the virus away so, we are praying for good weather.



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We're asking our designers to wear facemasks. So, Harriet Kelsall has teamed up with a fantastic group of volunteers - TrashChic in Cambridge - to get something comfortable and practical. And all the money raised goes to the NHS.

It's a daunting task for those that will be working in our shops. Beyond their normal job they'll be cleaning jewellery all the time, wearing protection and keeping vigilant and we know this will be a challenge.

Our workshop has been a challenge for us as it is long and thin. But, luckily the more senior of our goldsmiths have workshops at home, so they will remain there allowing much more space for those that do not to work safely.

A particular issue for us is the passing of job packets from person to person. So, we'll be focussing our efforts on ensuring everyone wipes down what they've touched - making it safe for the next person.

We'll be drawing up a list of common "touch points" - switches, door handles and so on and asking the team to pay special attention to those.

Critical to our strategy is feedback from our staff and keeping what we do under constant review. we close every day we'll be looking into what went well and what didn't - developing what we do to suit this "new normal".

The good news is, we've seen an increase in enquiries as lock down eases. There's definitely a demand for special pieces of bespoke jewellery - perhaps the experiences we've all been through over the last few months has reminded us of the importance of family, friends and loved ones and maybe jewellery can play its part in celebrating this.

*Harriet Kelsall is founder of Harriet Kelsall Bespoke Jewellery*



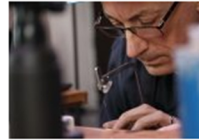
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