

# Can office workers bring life back to hotels?

Hotels across the country are turning bedrooms into offices to rent during the day. *Katherine Price* speaks to those who are turning home office workers into hotel office workers and making this alternative revenue stream work for them

**W**ith limited inbound tourism and corporate travel leaving city hotels' occupancy wanting in particular, some businesses are looking to monetise their empty rooms by looking to the home worker.

Work from home guidance is set to remain in place for at least six months in England, and continues to be the guidance in Scotland and Wales, and so there is a band of workers in need of a private room with reliable broadband – or simply somewhere other than a busy kitchen table – to carry out their daily tasks.

The offer from hotel companies varies, but all offer a quiet space as well as the service and food and beverage that a stay at a hotel can provide.

Roseate has recently launched its Work from Roseate package across its Reading and London properties, which includes lunch and a cocktail at the end of the day in the bar. Prices start from £75 per day for the Roseate Reading and £85 for Roseate House London.

Meanwhile, the 165-bedroom Lowry hotel in Manchester has 'Room To... Work' packages from £70 for a room from 8am-5pm. The rate is paid on arrival and free cancellation is offered up to 24 hours ahead.

Lynn Hood (*inset*) is the chief operating officer at Focus Hotels, which manages 1,700 rooms across the UK.

"It's never going to be a fix for the meetings and events market, because that provides a large proportion of our revenue stream, but everything counts, doesn't it?" she said.

While some of Focus's more stayca-



**"With the way the world's going, I can't see us selling 256 bedrooms any night this side of 2021, so we're going to give it our best chance"**

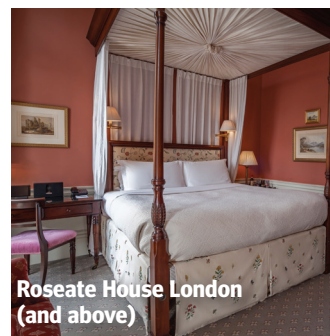
**Beverly Payne,  
Conrad London St James**

tion-friendly properties in the countryside are seeing occupancy in the 80%-90% bracket, those in London remain at 30%.

The group has been advertising bedrooms for use as office space at seven of its properties for several months. At its 87-bedroom Mercure Shrewsbury Albrighton Hall Hotel & Spa, a private room with work desk can be hired between 8.30am and 5pm for £8 per hour or £50 for eight hours.

"A number of us at the hotel were working from home during lockdown and we have a variety of family arrangements. We could see the challenge ourselves, such as having people in the background jumping onto your Zoom calls. Although this obviously adds a bit of amusement, if you're working on something quite serious, it can make it difficult," said Hood.

She added that lead times remain short: "It's more people thinking, 'I need a space to have a meeting in a private area, or I need the broadband to give me certainty



**Roseate House London  
(and above)**



**Conrad London St James  
(and above right)**

Free parking is also an attraction. Hood added that the day occupants are given "the best possible room" with a decent view and a good amount of space.

## First impressions count

Beverly Payne, general manager at the Conrad London St James hotel, agreed. The property, which was operating at around 20% occupancy last month, launched its Perfect Address private offices at the beginning of September. She said that it's important that guests have a professional background and good lighting if they're doing a big deal over a video call or media appearances.

"We don't use the smallest rooms or the boxy rooms; we choose the rooms for the light, the outlook, brightness – they are good spaces," she said.

Of its 256 bedrooms, 10 have had their beds removed and have been turned into offices, and Payne said they would consider increasing this number if the demand is there. Prices start from £75 per hour or £150 per day and the rooms can be booked for up to a month. Offices come with high-speed internet access, 42-inch satellite

around my online meeting.' It's more likely to be this week for next week or two weeks' time, than further out."

Guests are provided with the usual coffee facilities, fruit and water, and there is some additional F&B spend, although this tends to be speciality coffees and lunches ordered to the room.