



BRISTOL RESEARCH

APRIL 2020

RESIDENTIAL MARKET REPORT



8.4% OF BRISTOL WORKERS WORKED FROM HOME BEFORE COVID-19 – WONDER HOW MANY MORE DO NOW?

Before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, 22,309 Bristol people worked mainly from home, or about 8.4% of Bristol's 265,374 workforce (compared to the national average of 14.9%). Yet over the last few weeks, many hundreds, even thousands more Bristol workers have joined them in their spare rooms or at their kitchen or dining room tables.

Amongst warnings from the Government that some lockdown constraints could stay in place into 2021, businesses are dealing with an unexpected cultural shift in how many of us do our work. Talking to many Bristol people who have been asked to work from home, for many it has been a pleasant success.

Working from home does have some negatives though. I have found myself still working at 8pm/9pm and beyond as I have forgotten to clock out and whilst many people might think working from home means doing less work, more often than not, the reverse is true for industrious and hardworking employees. When you don't have that break of the commute to the office, the workday can blend into the home life. Talking of commuting, the average British worker has a daily commute of 11.9 miles, whilst locally...

The average daily commute for a Bristol worker is 7.5 miles

At least working from home, the commute is only to the dining room table or spare bedroom. Speaking to some friends of mine that are new to working from home, they said to me that they can feel out of the office-loop as they miss the 'water-cooler' moments or spur-of-the-moment brainstorming session over a brew, it's tough to reproduce that from home.

Don't forget to get into your garden (if you have one), stretch those legs. Ensure you are taking advantage of the daily exercise allowance. I see so many people walking around our neighbourhood daily who I haven't seen before. Let's hope they keep up the habit once lockdown is removed. You have to admit, it's quite nice especially as there are far less cars on the road.

Bristol workers commute 1,662,090 miles a day to work

That's more than three times to the moon and back – every day!

Some feel guilty if they don't reply to co-worker's emails or phone calls straight away. My friends stated that they didn't want their team-mates to wonder if they were taking it easy rather than pulling their weight. The best advice I can give from working with my team is to overcommunicate, and I suggested (as I do to you) to tell their bosses and colleagues what you are doing and share their accomplishments using those video conferencing software packages.

The really hard part is having a dedicated space in your home. Attempt to set up a workspace and make it out of bounds to the rest of your household while you are working (although that is very difficult when you have children, or your partner is having to work from home as well). Is there anything worse than being on an important call to your boss or a client, only to have a delivery driver knocking on the door or having your kids and dogs yelling and barking in the background? It's a balancing act!

Interestingly, looking at the stats and this internment in Bristol people's homes could be a catalyst for people wanting to move home later in the year be it for rent or for sale, thus giving a vital boost to the Bristol property market. Would it surprise you that...

73,692 Bristol households are either at full capacity or officially overcrowded?

The definition of full capacity is when the household has enough bedrooms for the occupants. The definition is set out in 'The Allocations Code of Guidance', which recommends that the 'bedroom standard' is adopted as a minimum measure of overcrowding.

This means one bedroom should be provided for each adult couple.

any other adult aged 21 or over.

two adolescents of the same sex aged 10 to 20.

two children regardless of sex under the age of 10

That means 32.36% of Bristol households do not have a spare bedroom for their occupants to work from

(compared to the national average of 16.64% of household)

Even worse, I suspect there are many Bristol families with two teenage boys or two teenage girls, and guidance is suggesting they can share a bedroom – do they live in the real world? This means there are probably even more Bristol households that are at full capacity or even more overcrowded than the stats suggest, meaning plenty of people will be working from dining room tables (if they have a dining room that is) and quite probably the kitchen table ... a recipe for even more people wanting to move home later in the year.

So, I don't know how many Bristol people are working from home, yet looking at the newspapers the consensus is that it has at least doubled. For all the reasons mentioned in this article, this looks like we could have a pressure cooker scenario of demand for Bristol property once the restrictions have been fully lifted.

Meanwhile, a message to all you new homeworkers in Bristol. Working from home is a tough one. The best advice I can give is to change your way of thinking. I know many friends who are missing their offices right now, yet is office-working really so great? Consider the relentless risk of disturbance when you are trying to finish that important project, the recirculated air conditioning with its germs, the shortage of quiet meeting rooms and as I have already mentioned before, the drawn-out and expensive commute.

Try breaking the cycle that being at work - time is productive and not being at work - time is only leisure. The new way of thinking that accepts the concessions of home-working and discards the traditional 20th Century conventions of office working. Yes, the downside is that as humans we are very sociable creatures and we acutely feel the need to be in face to face contact with each other often, meaning lockdown is quite tough for many of us. Yet, if we are able to connect the positive prospects for the future working and the situation that Covid-19 offers us, then together as a society we should be able to find the right balance between working from home and coming together. In the meantime, be considerate of each other and keep safe we are all in this together and we will all overcome this together.

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NEW ELECTRICAL SAFETY REGULATIONS COULD COST EACH BRISTOL LANDLORD £350+ IN THE NEXT 13 MONTHS

Bristol Electricians are going to very busy in the next 13 months as they will have to test the electrics of every private rented property in Bristol and potentially may have to install new fuse boards and wiring in some circumstances.

New regulations set out in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 gave the Secretary of State of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government the authority to compel private landlords to test their fixed electrical systems. Currently, these responsibilities only apply to licensable Houses of Multiple Occupancy (where a house is split into individual rooms) yet these new rules will come into force for any new tenancy or renewal of any private rented home from the 1st July this year (2020).

All new tenancies from the 1st July 2020 will need to have had their electrics tested

The new IET electrical regulations enforce a duty on all private landlords to ensure that their electrical installation complies with the 18th edition (from 2018) of the IET wiring regulations. Therefore, any property built before the middle of 2018 will have electrics to 17th edition regulations (or a previous edition). It might not sound a lot, but the 18th edition regulations were a substantial update over the 17th edition which were published in 2008. Now, just because a rental property was built with its electrics up to the prevailing 15th, 16th or 17th regulations at the time of building, it doesn't necessarily mean it will automatically fail this test.

Electricians are telling me any property built after 16th Regulations came into force in 1991 (and they deem it to have failed the test) will probably require a new fuse board and other minor works at an average cost of around £355 per property, although it could be as low as £300 and up to £500 per property to upgrade, meaning...

The potential cost of upgrading every Bristol buy to let

**Home to 18th edition regulations (if they all
failed) could total £17,228,150**

Some Bristol landlords might think they can circumnavigate the regulations by renewing the fixed term every 6 months, yet the Government have protected against that by stating, irrespective of what tenancy is in place, all rental properties by the 1st April 2021 must have been tested against the 18th Regulations standard.

**My concern is all 48,530 rental properties
in Bristol will need**

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their electricians testing before the Spring of 2021 and that there are only 68 qualified electrician firms within a 1.5-mile radius of Bristol to do all these tests and work

Bristol landlords must give any new Bristol tenant a copy of the inspection report before they start the tenancy. Also, Bristol landlords must give a copy of the report to any prospective tenant who asks for it in writing within 28 days of a request during the tenancy itself.

Even with the coronavirus situation, only last week the Government indicated that Landlords should still make every effort to follow these new electrical safety regulations from the 1st of July, yet those same regulations also allow for situations where a landlord cannot carry out their obligations. To stay the right side of the law, they must demonstrate they have taken all reasonable steps to comply with the law. If they do that, they will not be in breach of the new regulations (including the duty to comply with a remedial notice). My advice would be if a landlord could keep copies of all communications they have had with their tenants and with electricians as they tried to arrange the work, including any replies they have had, together with any other evidence they have on the electricians of their rental property.

The local authorities are tasked with policing this – and they too have the right to request to see copies of any Electrical Report and works done. They can force a landlord to comply with the legislation and also may issue a civil penalty up to a maximum of £30,000.

Remarkably, if the letting/managing agent doesn't organise the Electrical reports, there is nothing in the legislation which allows a landlord to pass the blame onto their letting/managing agent. That means Bristol landlords could be at significant risk from dishonest or badly organised letting agents who won't/don't sort the electrics out, so my advice to all Bristol landlords is to speak to your letting/managing agent right now and plan ahead. Rest assured, we have had plans well in hand for our Bristol landlords since last year, because I knew this legislation was on its way.

The regulations are obviously important for the safety of tenants and, in essence, these new laws and regulations will mean new accountabilities for the private rented landlords with not much time in which to get prepared and be compliant. If you are worried about these new rules or don't have ultimate confidence in your current agent, then please do pick up the phone and let's have an informal chat about how we can help you with this issue, you don't want to fall the wrong side of the law do you?

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