

11th January 2021

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: COVID-19 – Restrictions and testing for essential workers

We would first like to start by thanking you and your staff for everything you have been doing, and will do, to make sure that residents in our borough can access food and supplies in these difficult times.

This has been a difficult 10 months for us all with Covid-19 having a huge impact on our daily lives. We appreciate that our supermarkets have been significantly affected by the pandemic and businesses have had to modify operations to reflect this.

As we move forward over the weeks and months ahead, I am sure you agree that the priority must be to stop the spread of Coronavirus. Similarly to other boroughs, Richmond upon Thames is seeing a continued rise in the number of cases. Locally nearly 200 people have died from Coronavirus. Our current positive rate is the highest it has been with more than 638.8 per 100,000 people testing positive. That is compared to around 100 per 100,000 at the start of December

We know that you have all put measures in place to ensure the safety of your staff and customers, and I can see in the national media that a number of your organisations are tightening those measures. However, I would urge you all to really look at how the measures are being implemented on a local basis. Over the past few weeks, we have received a growing number of reports of supermarket chains allowing in large numbers of customers, social distancing not being enforced, and staff and customers both not wearing face coverings consistently. We have received numerous complaints from staff and customers saying they have felt unsafe whilst doing their shopping or whilst at work.

We appreciate that these measures are difficult to enforce. However, as Coronavirus continues to spread, we all need to double our efforts.

Our COVID Marshals and Food and Safety Team will be out visiting businesses over the days ahead to discuss the restrictions and help those who are struggling to understand the guidance. If you have questions or need clarification about what your businesses needs to do, please contact us on foodandsafety@merton.gov.uk or 0208 545 3025.

As you know, we do not want to enforce. However, during this pandemic, when lives are at risk, we will consider enforcement action for those businesses who consistently don't comply with the guidance.

Testing for your staff:

To help give additional reassurance to you and your staff, I would like to remind you that Richmond Council has an asymptomatic testing service. We know that up to one in four people who have coronavirus never show any symptoms but that does not mean they are not infectious. Lateral flow devices (LFDs) are one of the tools being used to help us to detect and fight COVID-19. These tests can be used to detect individuals with no symptoms of the virus that we would not otherwise be able to find. The rapid turnaround, lateral flow tests – which can give results in under an hour, without the need for laboratory processing.

Testing for residents who live in Richmond upon Thames is available on an appointment basis – and people are advised to have two tests a week. Please can you promote this service to your staff. They can book online:

www.richmond.gov.uk/book_lateral_flow_test or call: 020 8891 1411

Again, I would like to thank you for everything you are doing to help our borough keep moving during these difficult times. I know that if we continue to work together, we will get through this and keep everyone safe.

Many thanks

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Baker', written in a cursive style.

**Cllr Richard Baker
Lead Member for Business
Richmond Council**