



Date: 21/01/21

Dear Store Manager,

### **Responsibilities in the fight against COVID**

Lewisham's COVID-19 infection rates are high. Hospitals are under significant pressure as the number of people in hospital with COVID-19 is 35% higher than during the April peak.

Lewisham residents are being asked to follow the national guidance to stay at home wherever possible, but naturally many will need to leave their home to visit supermarkets, grocery stores and other essential shops.

Over the last year, we recognise the enormous efforts you have taken in response to the pandemic, putting in place measures to ensure shops are COVID-secure and safe for customers.

In recent weeks, we know that some Lewisham shops may have been impacted by cases of COVID-19 which clearly has an impact on staff, and may affect customers as well. It is critical – at a time when COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in our borough – that essential shops play a central role in encouraging the right behaviours. Please help Lewisham Council, the police and all those working tirelessly in the NHS by strictly enforcing these rules in your shop:

- Request **all staff to wear a face covering** and **require customers to wear a face covering for the whole time** they are in the shop (unless they are medically exempt).
- Staff should have access **at all times** to hand sanitiser and cleaning equipment for any machinery they may be using, for example a till.
- If on the shop floor, staff need adequate protection so that they are able to **maintain social distance** from customers at all times.
- Ensure **all customers are maintaining social distancing rules at all times** when entering, leaving and in the shop including closely monitoring the capacity indoors by introducing a carefully managed queuing system.
- **Look out for COVID-19 symptoms in your staff.** Anyone who develops coronavirus symptoms, must go home, stay at home to self-isolate and get a test via [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119. Everyone has an individual responsibility to do this to protect ourselves; our family, friends and colleagues; and the most vulnerable in our community.



I urge you to take your responsibilities seriously. Not only will this protect Lewisham's residents – your customers – and all those partners who are working so hard in the fight against COVID-19, but it will protect your own workforce.

### **Rapid testing launched in Lewisham**

In Lewisham, we have opened our first Community Testing Centre in Catford offering rapid tests to all those **without symptoms** who are unable to work from home. You can now book an appointment for a rapid, lateral flow test at [www.lewisham.gov.uk/communitytesting](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/communitytesting)

You should get tested if you are out in the community or coming into regular contact with customers and colleagues. 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 don't have any symptoms and will be spreading the virus without realising.

Ask your staff to book a rapid test today and to keep booking tests regularly. It takes around twenty minutes and results are returned the same day, usually within an hour. While you're waiting for your results, you don't have to self-isolate (unless you develop COVID-19 symptoms) so staff will be able to return to work straight away.

Everyone in Lewisham can help stop the spread of COVID-19, protect the NHS and save lives. We need your support now more than ever.

**Damien Egan**  
Mayor of Lewisham

**Dr Catherine Mbema**  
Director of Public Health