

Charnwood Borough Council

Since business closures were introduced in March, Charnwood Borough Council's regulatory services team have worked closely with their businesses community to support them to understand and comply with the law. As part of this supportive approach, enforcement action is used only as a last resort.

In response to the first phase of businesses closures back in March, Charnwood pulled together a team of environmental health officers (EHOs), enforcement officers and licensing officers to offer proactive support. Going out on visits to the high street, the team were able to check what essential businesses needed to operate in a COVID-secure way. Support included providing them with business guides via email and leaflets and stickers to help queue management and promote social distancing.

As businesses started to re-open regulatory services worked closely with the council's high streets and market and town groups. High-street helpers (employees seconded from other parts of the council) were deployed across the borough's high streets, offering advice to the public with and supporting queue management. Work was also done alongside the Loughborough Business Improvement District (BID) to support the re-opening of the night-time economy, for example providing pubs and bars with floor stickers.

Tailored guidance was developed for the hospitality sector, setting out measures needed to be COVID-secure, and support with risk assessment was provided to businesses to make sure the right safety measures were put in place. Alongside high-street helpers, qualified Security Industry Authority (SIA) licenced Stewards were also deployed to support the hospitality sector throughout July and August. Stewards shared intelligence, for example where social distancing was not been observed, with the police and council who could then undertake compliance visits. A case study of Charnwood's marshal scheme has been [published on gov.uk](#).

The vast majority of pubs and bars were compliant, but in some cases, warnings were given and enforcement action was needed. For example, the police issued a £10,000 fine to a pub which was holding a large gathering in a marquee without any social distancing.

Support has been given to the local University to put in place COVID-secure plans, ahead of students returning. Close work with the University has also helped to manage community cohesion issues.

Multi-agency working has been a vital part of the council's compliance and enforcement work. A multi-agency Event Planning Oversight Group was established which included the fire service and public health to support and advise event organisers on how to run a safe event.

The council have also worked with the fire service to make sure every contact with businesses counted. Where the fire service went out to visit businesses as part of fire safety work, they took the opportunity to undertake COVID specific compliance checks, feeding intelligence back to the council.

Since April the regulatory service team have worked closely with the Local Resilience Forum and have set up a weekly Leicestershire managers' meeting which helped to manage the local lockdown. As a two-tier authority – good working relationships with trading standards have also been important to co-ordinate enforcement.

Between April and September, Charnwood's food team alone has undertaken 440 monitoring checks on businesses, over 100 enforcement visits and provided over 350 COVID specific advice emails as well as over 2000 update emails to businesses.