

Dear business owner,

It has been an extremely challenging year, and I would like to thank you for everything you have done and are continuing to do to provide your services and keep your staff and customers safe, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

While I am sure the changes announced on Monday 12 July will be welcome, we currently have very high rates of COVID in Bristol and it continues to heavily impact on individuals and business.

Infection rates in Bristol are at their highest level, with currently over 500 cases per 100,000 population, these are the highest rates in the South West. While the majority of infections are among younger people, we are also seeing infections spread into older age groups.

From Monday 19 July, the government has confirmed it will lift restrictions across most areas. This means that all businesses, including nightclubs, festivals, and sporting events are able to reopen at full capacity, and that face coverings and social distancing will be lifted.

Moving from a legislative framework to an advisory one, means everyone will now need to consider their own risks and take appropriate action.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act you have a duty of care to your employees. Providing a workplace that is safe will increase the confidence of your employees, reassure your customers that it is a safe place to visit and will reduce infection rates helping to keep your business open.

To protect your business, it is important to take steps to prevent your staff becoming unwell with COVID-19 or contacts of someone who has tested positive.

We are already seeing staff shortages as a result of people testing positive for COVID-19 and from close contacts needing to self-isolate. If we don't take the necessary precautions and continue to follow COVID-secure practices this is likely to worsen.

With a relaxation of social distancing and an increase of mixing across social groups, we are also likely to see an increase in other infectious diseases, which will worsen staff shortages.

We must not stop our great work and efforts now as we lift restrictions. We must continue to follow COVID-safe measures to help tackle the rising infection rates and protect the people of Bristol.

You can stay up to date with the local situation through our bi-weekly reports which are [published on the local authority website](#), every Monday and Thursday.

If you need additional communications materials, support to keep your business safe or questions about coronavirus, please email us at business@bristol.gov.uk

To help us better understand how businesses and organisations across the city are responding to the challenges of COVID-19 and to Brexit we are running a [Business recovery survey](#). Please spend a few minutes to share your views.

Thank you once again for everything you are doing.

Best wishes
Christina Gray