



PLANNING FOR THE RE-OPENING OF TOWN & DISTRICT CENTRES

MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING AND GUIDANCE TO RETAIL BUSINESSES

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH & POOLE

Destination & Culture

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Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole

As the country emerges from the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions BCP Council aims to make sure that its shopping centres and streets, its town centres, and its parks, gardens and beaches are ready and confident to welcome shoppers, residents, visitors, employees and students in a safe and secure environment.

From 15 June 2020 all non-essential retail businesses in our town and district centres will be able to re-open. This includes shops that sell clothes, shoes, toys, furniture, books, and electronics, plus tailors and photography studios.

Certain businesses and premises will need to stay closed however, until at least 4 July and these include personal care (such as hairdressers and beauty salons) hospitality (such as food service providers, pubs and accommodation), public places (such as places of worship) and leisure facilities (like cinemas). Some venues which are, by design, crowded (for example, nightclubs) and where it may prove difficult to enact social distancing may still not be able to reopen safely at this point, or may be able to open safely in part.

The paper details what plans and measures BCP Council is putting in place to facilitate this re-opening, paying particular attention to social distancing.

Guidance to retail operators is also included along with links to relevant government advice and business support at the end of this report.

BCP Council measures being introduced

- The council will be advising people to follow **the 2 metre safe-distancing rule** in all public areas through **clear, consistent and frequent signage** prominently displayed across all retailing areas, beaches and main parks and gardens across the BCP region. These will be located on lamp columns, signposts, waste bins, bollards and stickers on the footpaths. Additional signs will be deployed at high volume footfall areas.



The signage will be subject to any changes in government guidance and if this happens they will be updated accordingly.

- Instigation of '**Keep Left**' guidance on all footpaths/pedestrian areas to keep movement flows in same direction. This tried, tested and understandable format will mean people needing to keep to the left hand side of a footpath/pedestrianised area, road crossing point, beach promenade, beach zig-zags etc, in the direction that they are travelling, so as that people travelling in the opposite direction can pass on the right.

Clear, consistent and frequent signage will be positioned to emphasise this message and remind people to KEEP LEFT.



- The signage will start to be instigated from the beginning of June and **rolled out in two phases:**

Phase 1 – concentrate on the main town centres of Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and larger district centres such as Boscombe, along with high risk suburban centres highlighted within audits currently being undertaken.

Phase 2 – Look at the remaining district and suburban centres and triage those areas where specific social distancing measures that need implementing have been identified.

- Audits are currently being undertaken to **assess the impact of street furniture on social distancing** (benches, bins, planters etc) with a view where possible and practical to remove them if problematical. This will be monitored on a daily basis to identify any particular pinch points and flow impacts and will be triaged and responded to accordingly.
- **Traffic Management** - To assist social distancing, especially in higher footfall areas, certain commercial areas may require a range of specific measures. In extreme cases this may have to include road closures, or one-way traffic systems being introduced. Other measures could include on-street parking provision removed to enable pedestrians or cyclists to use all or part of the highway.

This is currently happening at:

- Ashley Road, Parkstone – traffic cones into carriageway to create extra space outside of Waitrose.
- Wimborne Road, Winton – suspension of street parking in various areas to widen footpath into parking area.
- Southbourne Grove, Southbourne - suspension of street parking in various areas to widen footpath into parking area.

Monitoring will take place across the BCP area to identify any hotspot areas and instigate measures as appropriate. Any measures taken will be communicated direct to those adjacent businesses.

Utility providers will need to make sure that when undertaking emergency works in public areas they are coordinated in accordance with the social distancing measures being implemented, and this will be monitored by the council.

- **Most BCP Council car parks are now open**, and operating at normal capacity levels. Normal parking charges are in operation. Users are being advised to use a mobile phone to pay for parking where possible to avoid queues and touching the pay machines. Social distancing rules will be applied within the car parks, at entry/exit points and stairwells, along with the 'Keep-Left' message.

- **The council is re-opening some of its public toilets**, and these have full hand washing facilities available. This re-opening will happen gradually as staffing is organised and safety implications are met. Some toilets will remain closed while changes are made to ensure they are safe for public use.

There will be intermittent closures throughout the day for additional, thorough, cleaning. Signage will be in place advising of social distancing and hygiene importance.

The location of toilets that are planned to be open can be found at www.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/News/News-Features/COVID19/Changes-to-Services/Services/Toilets.aspx.

- **A-boards and other promotional items (eg flags) should be removed where they cause blockages and pinchpoints.**
- **All events on council owned land have been cancelled until the end of August.** This includes Town Centres, High Streets, Poole and Christchurch Quays, parks, gardens and beaches.
- **Street entertainment is discouraged, as is busking where it creates the risk of large crowds gathering, along with any promotions from the businesses that come outside of their building.**
- **Communication** – The council will continue to work with the respective organisations that represent businesses across the conurbation to continually review the situation, and develop the measures contained within this document.

Any news, changes to the measures, or announcement of additional government guidance or business support packages will automatically be loaded onto the Support for Businesses Hub on the council's website www.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/News/News-Features/COVID19/Employers-Employees-and-Businesses/Employees-employers-and-businesses.aspx as well as being forwarded via e-newsletter direct to our subscriber database.

The e-mail address of hotspot@bcpccouncil.gov.uk has been set up for businesses to pass on any feedback or report specific issues or incidents, and this will be monitored daily during normal work hours.

Guidance and practical advice for local businesses to support social distancing

The ability to provide a safe and welcoming environment for our customers and colleagues is a top priority for us all. To help and support local businesses BCP Council offers the following advice (which is based on government guidelines and best practice) which will help to ensure a consistent approach.

- **Ensure you are up to date with all the latest government guidance.** Whilst non-essential retail businesses will be able to re-open from the 15 June this will be conditional upon that business being safe to do so, and subject to them being able to follow the new Covid-19 secure guidelines www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19.

Businesses will only be able to open from this date once they have completed a risk assessment, in consultation with trade union representatives or workers, and are confident they are managing the risks. They must have taken the necessary steps to become Covid-19 secure in line with the current Health and Safety legislation. The council's Economic Development Team can offer advice.

Details on all government guidance (Including all government business financial support available) can be found on the BCP Council Support for Businesses Hub www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/News/News-Features/COVID19/Employers-Employees-and-Businesses/Employees-employers-and-businesses.aspx.

- **Try to limit the number of entry and exit points** into and out of store by considering separate entrance and exit points if at all possible.
- **Limit the number of customers in your premises at any one time.** Assess the size of the store and its layout, this will enable you to calculate the number of customers who can reasonably follow the 2m social distancing rule. Consider one-way routes inside premises.
- **Use a colleague to meet customers,** explain the social distancing requirements and control the number of customers entering premises at any one time.
- Place **clear signage visible from outside** explaining the social distancing measures in place that customers should follow.
- **If queueing space is needed outside of premises** make sure you do so along your longest frontage and not out at right angles into the footpath. Attach place markings outside the store to assist correct queue spacings, but do not go beyond your premise boundary.

- **Establishments such as takeaways and supermarkets that have been open, may need to re-assess their existing queueing** to enable them to function without hinderance to neighbouring businesses that will be re-opening.
- **Speak with your neighbouring business** to discuss yours and their potential queueing arrangements – it may be possible to agree a shared queueing space.
- You will need to actively manage any queue and **stop people from joining it** if your space limit is reached.
- **Avoid the siting of A-boards outside of your premises** or anywhere on the footpaths.
- **Encourage customers to shop alone** wherever possible.
- **If you offer a click and collect service** try to arrange collection times at non busy periods.
- Likewise try to schedule **deliveries to times** when expected to be less busy.
- **Do not host sales and discounts in store**, but keep them online to reduce long queues and overcrowding.