

## **Richmond Council statement on Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

23 March 2020

Richmond Council's Interim Director of Public Health, Shannon Katiyo, said:

"Over the weekend we have seen a lot in the news about going outside, visiting our many parks and open spaces.

"Our social media accounts have been inundated with comments about people flocking to local parks, particularly as other venues have been closed and the weather has been good. With schools closed and a lot of people having limited options for being outdoors, I know this is challenging.

"I thought it would be useful to talk about social distancing and remind everyone why it is really vital for us to all follow the advice.

"Social distancing measures are for everyone, including children. By reducing our social interaction, we can do our bit to help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

"The official guidance says we must:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) - these symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport - when possible, alter your travel times to avoid rush hour
- Work from home, where possible - your employer should support you to do this
- Avoid large gatherings and small gatherings in public spaces - pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently closed as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together

- Avoid gatherings with friends and family - keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

“If every one of us takes the necessary steps to limit our interaction with others, then as borough, we have a chance to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

“Undoubtedly some people will be asking “But does that mean we can’t go to the park?

“If you are isolating then that means you and others that you live with should not leave the house at all, or even open the door to delivery drivers and therefore children should not be leaving the house either alone or accompanied to go to parks or play areas. There is [guidance here](#) about ways you can stay active within your own home.

“If you and your household are not self-isolating, then it is okay to go to the park for exercise and fresh air – as long as you continue to follow Government advice and practice social distancing. You can also go for a walk or exercise outdoors if you stay more than 2 metres from others.

“The important thing is maintaining a proper distance and being careful with frequently touched surfaces or areas while outside, that includes playgrounds.

“Just because you are outside does not mean you can’t get Coronavirus. Don’t assume that someone is not infectious, just because they aren’t showing symptoms.

“I would also like to address the myth that children can’t ‘catch’ Coronavirus. Children can be infected with and appear to be able to transmit coronavirus, even if they do not have symptoms. That is why it is important for children to practice social distancing and hand-washing, even if they do not appear ill. This is particularly important when considering children playing in playgrounds.

“Whilst much is still unknown about Coronavirus, one thing is clear – we all need to be responsible for our own health and help protect the health of others.

“So, if you are heading out for a walk or to the park this week, – keep your distance from others and always wash your hands when you get home.”