

Kerry from Growing Communities' farmers' market here - in Stoke Newington, London.

We ran a very tightly regulated market on Saturday and our efforts to keep farmers/stallholders and customers and our local community safe were appreciated by everyone.

I thought you might want to pass on what we did just in case it could be useful for anyone else trying to make things safe.

- We secured all the perimeters of the market early in the setup and only had one entrance for going in and out. This is possible in our market but I appreciate may not be the same for many locations.
- We employed more staff from 9am (an hour before our opening time). One person was posted at the gate to let vans in and out and to prevent members of the public coming in early.
- We put posters asking people to queue at 1 metre apart all the way down the fence bordering the market to enable people to queue safely down the pavement next to the market. We will be increasing this distancing to 2 metres from this coming Saturday. We also had lots of posters saying them same thing inside the markets on stalls.
- I had re-measured our market space and re-drawn the market layout to facilitate social distancing for customers - laying out where the queues would go. (on a to-scale plan).
- On the day we marked out where queues would go and the direction people needed to queue with chalk on the ground. This week we will use more hanging signs and A boards.
- **Mostly importantly I worked with the busiest stalls - particularly the veg stalls in advance**, to re-design their stall layouts to facilitate easy queues, protection for the staff and speed of shopping. Essentially I was trying to eliminate stall designs that encourage grouping (and rummaging for produce). The best design is supermarket like (ironic I know!). A long thin stall with baskets, (if used) at one end and payment at the other. Think supermarket aisle and you'll have the right idea. This was essential and worked really well. People walked along, maintaining distance and dropped the items they needed into their baskets and paid at the end of the stall. We also tried to make sure the farmers (in particular) were boxed in a bit with tables to try and maximise distance between them and their customers. (All absolutely the

opposite of our normal layout/stall designs). We all need to get our heads round the fact that we are moving away from the market being a social experience to a food service one - this is vital to protect farmers and customers. And the different layout helps not only to speed things up but to help people get their heads round this!

- At opening time we let in only as many people as could safely queue at a 2 metre distance, and then it was a one in, one out policy.
- We had other staff working in addition to the person at the gate and myself - their job was to make sure people were keeping social distance (will be 2 metres on Saturday) and direct people to where the end of the queues were!
- I walked round keeping an eye and also making sure customers knew there was plenty of food - in particular of key items such as eggs (which seems to inspire particular anxiety).
- I had asked stallholders to limit the number of egg boxes per customer to 2 and this was essential in stopping panic and making people feel happier about their queuing.
- We had a crazy number of people between 10am and 12noon - then it quietened down completely and people who came at 12.15 had a peaceful, almost queue free experience. The farmers and stallholders still sold pretty much everything they had. So we encouraged customers to come later and not all come at 10am next week. We will reinforce this in social media and emails.
- We didn't run our cafe or the burger stall. We provided free coffee and tea for the hard-working stallholders !
- We also had a hand washing station as you came in the market entrance.

To summarise my lessons learnt would be:

- re-design stalls to facilitate queueing and speed up throughput of customers and minimize grouping round stalls ***in advance of the market.***
- re-design market layout to plan where queues will go to make sure queues don't bump into each other
- Keep communicating with the customers directly and politely
- Have posters and/or info up outside for when they are queuing to help allieviate anxiety for when they get in

- Keep the farmers and stallholders protected (and remind them about not getting close to customers for their protection)
- Keep farmers and stallholders hydrated !
- Try and secure market perimeters and limit entrance/exit points
- Use more staff/volunteers to help

I can honestly say that everyone (nearly!) appreciated our efforts. Hope this is useful.