

Strategy in Action

COVID-19 update

With COVID-19 lockdown restrictions continuing into 2021, a wide range of enhanced protocols have remained in place at all FW Thorpe factory and office locations to ensure compliance with, and to exceed, government guidelines. Measures include infra-red temperature screening technology at the entrances to each site, designated sanitation stations, and changes to workspaces and shift patterns. FW Thorpe continues to support those staff working from home with the latest IT facilities and to digitise processes, reducing the need to transfer paper and to minimise contact on site. The company also reopened a mothballed 13,000 square feet factory to enable both TRT and Thorlux to spread out and achieve compliance with the 2m social distancing guideline. It is expected that this additional resource will stay open until the end of the autumn period.

Shortly after Christmas, the TRT facility in Redditch experienced significant disruption due to a number of COVID-positive cases and was closed for two weeks as a result. In the face of national infection rates rising, the management team decided to research lateral flow test kits. We purchased a considerable number of tests in order to test all office based and factory employees on, typically, a weekly basis. We decided to control and manage testing ourselves to give complete flexibility about how, where and when to conduct tests.

By April approximately 4,000 tests had been carried out, allowing us to maintain a safe operating environment as well as manage any infections detected. On numerous

occasions we were able to detect positive cases and proactively isolate asymptomatic cases. This, together with compliance with working within pre-set zones (bubbles), wearing PPE, social distancing and washing hands, allowed us to keep the businesses fully functioning. That the Group businesses kept working is a credit to our employees for supporting and adhering to the measures. With the infection rate steadily falling at the end of April, the decision was made to reduce testing rates in some parts of the Group.

The lockdown and ongoing restrictions have had an impact on all of us within the Group. As a company, we prioritise the health, safety and welfare of all our employees. In March we introduced an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and priority GP online helplines. The EAP provides confidential access to licensed professional counsellors and work/life specialists who are available for short-term assistance. The service offers the support and resources needed to address any personal challenges and/or concerns that may affect personal well-being and/or work performance. The EAP is a company funded benefit.

It is confidential and free to all employees as well as their eligible family members.

With the recent easing of lockdown in the UK, we will continue to review our procedures and protocols and will adapt them accordingly over the coming weeks and months in line with government advice.



△ Lateral flow testing at Thorlux



△ Temperature screening at Thorlux