

Stunning New Londis in Ballyfermot

Sean Littleton's superb new Londis store in Ballyfermot, Dublin 10, combines the finest modern standards with great service and value for money.

Sean Littleton's brand new Londis store in Ballyfermot, Dublin 10, blends the cutting edge appearance of modern grocery retailing with a genuine commitment to provide the locality with great service and value for money.

Sited on what used to be the ESB's showrooms, the new Londis store is managed by Rajesh Yadav, who came on board during the construction phase of the development.

"When I was brought on board, the shop was already going to be part of the Londis Group," Rajesh tells *RETAIL NEWS*. "Their development team were already heavily involved in the project and they were providing tremendous support. As I was brought in to manage the store, I immediately had to work closely with members of the Londis team and I found them to be extremely professional and dedicated individuals."



Londis Regional Manager Richard Murphy with store manager Rajesh Yadav.



Value For Money

The project was run so efficiently that the store opened its doors a full week ahead of schedule. The shop is in essence a city centre convenience location and as such has a very strong focus on fresh food-to-go. "However, our core customer base in Ballyfermot demand good value for money as well as the clean, fresh, modern image that the shop presents to consumers, which I think we deliver," notes Rajesh.

"Our customers are very price saavy," Rajesh explains. "There is a lot of competition in the area and they know which ones are charging five cent more on a chocolate bar or a loaf of bread, as well as which ones are offering good value on the top-up shopping trips. We have a very strong



focus on value for money as a result: saving five cent on an item here isn't going to make our customers rich, but they appreciate the fact that we are not 'ripping them off'. Ensuring repeat footfall is vital to our business and striking a balance between providing competitively priced items and exceptional customer service means they will come back."

The Londis group also plays its role in the focus to drive value perception in-store, offering the traditional cycle of special offers. Rajesh can always find quality KVI offers to give his customers that little bit more for their money. He explains, "It's not about competing head to head with, say, Aldi on price, but we do have to offer good value for money: part of this is to demonstrate a level of respect for the needs of our customers. But it's also a simple business strategy. We will take a lower margin to increase volume of sales and the strategy has proven very successful, as we surpassed the sales figures needed to break even for the first year after just six months of trading."

Strong Performance in Deli

The store's primary focus is the deli, which is a hive of activity during the morning and lunchtime periods. Having a good selection of product in this area is as important as what ambient goods the store will carry: however, again, it is important to get the right balance. "Customers react well to the promotions and during June and July we will be giving free bottles of Londis water with fresh food purchases," notes Rajesh. "In addition, our freshly ground coffee offering is also proving to be very popular with our customers."

"Obviously we use value offers to drive sales in areas of the shop that do not do so well, but I also feel it's very important to use promotions to further sales in areas where sales are high," Rajesh notes. "It's very hard to win customers over in such an extremely competitive sector and it's also very easy to lose them, so we have to work non-stop to retain the loyalty of our local customers."

Londis Ballyfermot, like the rest of the country, is seeing a big progression towards healthier eating and lifestyles. "We are selling a huge volume of water," Rajesh explains, by means of example. "Wraps are becoming more popular than baguettes, and brown bread more popular than white. We will be installing a smoothie bar in the near future to make sure we have a full choice of healthy offerings available to our customers. Here again, it's about being aware of the demands of customers and meeting them as effectively as we can."

Customer Service

Offering value for money without good customer service would be an exercise in futility, however, and Rajesh is well aware of this, noting how "customer service is also key to our success". The store avails of extensive in-house training from the Londis group, as well as running their own training in-store.

"The manner in which our staff interact with customers is absolutely critical," Rajesh stresses. "No matter how good a shop looks, if the staff are surly or unhelpful, then customers will not come back. We have a great team here. Shabaz Khan [Assistant Manager] and all the rest of the staff put in a huge amount of effort on a daily basis and without their efforts, the business would not be as strong as it is."

In closing, speaking on behalf of Londis, Area Regional Manager Richard Murphy says, "Raj and the rest of the team here consistently put in a huge amount of work to keep meeting all of their customers' needs. It's a pleasure to work with people who display such a high level of commitment and we at Londis look to match that level of dedication to assist them in any way we can to grow the business into the future."



FACT FILE

-  **Owner:** Sean Littleton, Rajesh Yadav
-  **Location:** 314A Ballyfermot Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10.
-  **Size:** 1,575 square feet
-  **Number of Staff:** 18, full time & part time
-  **Opening hours:** 06:45-22:00, Monday-Friday; 08:00-22:00, Saturday; 09:00-22:00, Sunday.