

Coronavirus (Covid 19) Advice to Retailers

There is lots of advice online from government sources that should be followed, and The Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) have a dedicated Coronavirus web page that will be regularly updated and is a good resource, in particular for advice on how to handle staff who show symptoms or are returning to work after having the virus. The ACS webpage can be accessed here:

<https://www.acs.org.uk/advice/covid-19-coronavirus>

In addition to those official resources, here is some further advice to help you ensure that your business is doing the right things in these unprecedented times, we want your store to be safe and an essential lifeline to your local community, particularly for the elderly and vulnerable.

Following these additional steps and tips will mean that your store is seen to be doing the right things, is responsible, is not profiteering and genuinely wants to provide a service to the local community at this very difficult and uncertain time, **how you behave and trade now could secure the loyal support of your local community for many years to come.**

Due to people not wanting to, or being unable to travel, your store will be a lifeline for the elderly, and you will most likely see many new faces as people choose to shop locally. If your store is seen to be acting responsibly and is genuinely interested in helping the local community, many of those customers will really appreciate what you are doing and will choose to carry on supporting their local store.

The opposite of this, retailers who see the current situation as an opportunity to make extra profit and do not take extra measures to protect and help their local community are at risk of causing serious damage to their business as their local community will view them as greedy and uncaring.

PLEASE ACT RESPONSIBLY THROUGH THIS PERIOD

We have broken down our **practical advice for retailers** into 5 key areas as follows:

1. Hygiene and personal safety measures:

Protect yourself and your staff – It is important to you and your community to keep your store open and trading so please be mindful of your own and your staff health especially those with underlying health issues and adjust staffing accordingly. Implement a regular handwashing policy and make hand sanitizer and disposable gloves available.

Cleaning and sanitising – In addition to your normal cleaning regime, be seen regularly cleaning and sanitising door handles, counters, chip and pin keypads, ATM's, basket and trolley handles, handrails etc. You and your staff should be seen using hand sanitiser regularly. Do these things openly, regularly and in full view of your customers. These measures will give customers confidence that you are taking the current situation seriously and you care about their welfare.

Open and loose foods – If you sell open foods, loose bread rolls or loose children's confectionery for example, you need to take action. Bag up loose bread, put rolls in bags of 2,4,6 for example, remove unwrapped confectionery from sale for the time being or have it served from behind the counter by staff wearing gloves.

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Personal space – Introduce a policy of no handshakes and use signage to ask people to respect other customers personal space by keeping at least 2m away from other people.

Social Distancing – [Download this poster now to display in your store.](#)



2. Helping your local community:

Free delivery service for the elderly, vulnerable or those who have the virus - Think about how you can promote and operate this service, telephone orders, card payment over the phone and goods left at the door. There will be many public-spirited healthy people who are willing to volunteer to help the elderly by delivering orders, so talk to your regular customers and gain their support. Look out for community help group that are being set up in many communities on Facebook and other social media platforms.

Limit purchase quantities on essentials - Don't allow panic buyers to clear you out, print homemade signs placing a purchase limit on grocery and cleaning essentials, place these signs around your store. Explain that you want people to shop responsibly so that there is plenty available for the elderly and vulnerable.

Out of stock promise – If the elderly or regular customers want something that you have run out of due to high demand, take a note and if practical promise to save them some when you get it back in stock, you could call or text them when you have it.

Become a local 'hub' for helping the elderly in your community - If you are taking telephone orders for the elderly and you have a team of volunteers to deliver, you could also offer to help the elderly with other errands, e.g. fetching items needed from other retailers, paying bills etc., all of this will be really appreciated by the elderly and vulnerable who are afraid to leave their homes.

Consider extending your trading hours – Make your store even more convenient by being open longer, also consider having an hour each day just for the over 70's so if they have to leave their homes for essentials they can feel safer coming to your store and have staff on the shop floor to assist.

3. Stock and promotions:

Maintain your promotions - Whilst it may be sensible to remove some promotions from grocery and non-food essentials so as not to encourage people to buy more than they need, you should still ensure that you maintain regular promotions, particularly on all impulse soft drinks, crisps and snacks, confectionery and beers, wines and spirits. It is important that both existing and new customers see that you have not withdrawn all deals and they can still get value for money. If all promotions are suspended, customers will assume you want to make more profit from the situation, and this could have long term damage to your reputation

Maintain prices - Don't be tempted to increase prices on essentials that are in high demand, your regular customers will spot this, and word will spread that you are profiteering. Of course, many products come in price marked packs, so these will continue to give shoppers confidence that they are paying a fair price. Don't be tempted to over price on top of a PMP product as this is also illegal.

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If particular products have increased in price and you have to pass the increase on, consider creating a sign to explain that the increase is beyond your control.

Consider expanding your space for grocery and non-food - Where possible, have a look around your store and see if you can temporarily increase space for the products that are in demand, subject to being able to obtain enough stock of course.

Empty shelves - Nothing looks worse than gaps on shelves, try and fill gaps with alternative stock or face across to minimise the appearance of gaps, you want your customers to spread the word that you have plenty of stock.

4. Use social media:

Let your community know what you are doing – Communicate everything, let people know that you have implemented extra cleaning measures, longer hours, out of stock promise, free deliveries, ask for delivery volunteers etc, etc. Make sure that your community know that you are there for them. With regular daily updates and news.

Daily stock updates – Let your community know when you have had fresh deliveries of pasta or toilet rolls for example, nappies, paracetamol, the possibilities are endless, and your customers will really appreciate what you are doing.

Not on social media? – Now is the time to get on-board, if you don't know how, speak to the younger members of your family or even look on-line for how to create social media accounts.

Good news travels fast – If you or your customers do good things to help others, post it on your social media, give your support and show you care.

5. General:

Delivery or click and collect – Consider taking orders over the phone or via email and prepare these for delivery or collection to limit contact with other people. Alternatively, WhatsApp is free tool that can be utilised to capture orders and communicate with your customers. For a step by step guide on using WhatsApp, please [click here](#).

Cashless payments - Be prepared to see more cashless transactions as people will want to handle money less and pay by card.

Availability from your wholesaler – No doubt you may be experiencing availability issues now from your wholesaler as a result of the peak demand. Consider stocking different brands and pack sizes if your normal product is currently out of stock.

Availability of PMP's - You may find that some PMP packs and smaller size packs may become unavailable as suppliers rationalise their production to maximise production rates. This will be temporary, so be prepared to buy bigger non price marked packs should this arise.

Avoid people congregating in your store as this is likely to put others off entering your premises.