



UK COVID-19
GUIDANCE FOR UK RETAILERS:
Reopening Stores and Keeping them Open during the
COVID-19 Pandemic

May 2020

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UK LOCKDOWN

On 23 March 2020, the UK was placed in a police-enforced lockdown in a government effort to fight the spread of the Coronavirus (otherwise known as the COVID-19 pandemic). As part of the lockdown, all “non-essential” retail doors were closed. “Essential” retail doors that were permitted to remain open included the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supermarkets/other food shops• Health shops• Pharmacies/chemists• Petrol stations• Bicycle shops• Hardware shops/car repair shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Veterinary surgeries/pet shops• Corner shops/newsagents• Off-licenses• Laundrettes/dry cleaners• Post offices• Shopping centres containing essential units
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For those retail doors that have remained open during the lockdown, and for those that are now preparing to engage in the process of reopening as the UK begins to ease out of the lockdown, we set out below some practical guidance and precautions.

REOPENING AND STAYING OPEN: GUIDANCE

Consider alternatives to full opening

- Expand customer options to order online for home delivery.
- Introduce or expand click and collect services, with contact-free pick-up services or drive through collection windows.

Safeguard delivery practices

- Regularly clean all surfaces at pick-up points and in and on delivery vehicles.
- Create a contact-free environment for drivers in loading and unloading zones, install notices requiring 2 metre distancing between vans and drivers, and use appropriate markings (such as floor tape) to facilitate this.
- Provide face masks and disposable gloves for drivers, to be replaced at least daily and disposed of responsibly.
- Provide hand sanitisers in each delivery vehicle and encourage hand washing as often as reasonably practicable (ideally, between each customer interaction where possible).
- Advise drivers to remove and immediately wash their work clothing at the end of working hours (using hot water settings) and to leave work shoes, gloves and masks outside of the home.
- Instruct delivery drivers not to enter a customer’s home/building, but to leave items a safe distance outside (notifying the customer).

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Escalate hygiene levels in-store

- Provide face masks and disposable gloves for staff, to be replaced at least daily and disposed of responsibly.
- Provide hand sanitisers to staff and encourage hand washing as often as reasonably practicable (ideally, between each customer interaction where possible).
- Avoid staff sharing of items such as pens, phones, keyboards, swipe cards, and tills.
- Provide hand sanitiser at store entrances/exits for customer use.
- Regularly clean all surfaces, paying particular attention to frequently touched areas such as door handles, self-checkouts, card readers, bathrooms, lift buttons, baskets, trolleys and hand-rails.
- Install protective screens over exposed items such as fruit, vegetables and bakery goods.
- Remove all testers and samples. If items can be “tried” by a customer before purchase (e.g. headphones), ensure regular cleaning of these items (ideally, after every customer use).
- Close in-store cafés and restaurants, and remove coffee and vending machine dispensers.
- Consider whether it is safe to keep customer toilets and baby changing facilities fully open, or if these should be available only on request.
- Encourage non-cash payment methods.

Take all necessary steps to facilitate social distancing for both staff and customers

Operating hours

- Operating hours may be reduced to allow for deliveries/shelf stacking to occur when there are no customers or other staff in-store.
- Operating hours may be altered to reserve specific shopping hours for (i) elderly or disabled customers; and separately (ii) NHS and other healthcare staff.

Outside stores

- Install customer notices to request social distancing when queuing and shopping.
- Where customers are required to queue outside the store, mark 2 metre distancing on the ground.

Inside stores

- Where customers are required to queue inside the store, mark 2 metre distancing on the floor.
- Ask customers to practice low-touch shopping (i.e. only touch items that you intend to purchase).
- Encourage customers to shop alone wherever possible. Communicate that children must be accompanied by a guardian at all times to ensure their compliance with distancing and low-touch shopping practices.
- Impose restrictions on the number of shoppers in-store at any given time.

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- Mark one-way systems throughout the store to control foot traffic, with floor markings and signage to highlight system and direction.
- Use separate entry and exit points into and out of the store.
- Install protective screens/barriers at manned checkouts to create physical separation between staff and shoppers. Alternatively, close manned checkouts (or every other till) and keep only self-service checkouts open to limit staff-customer interactions.
- Keep customer changing rooms closed.
- Remove or close-off customer seating (except for customers requiring special assistance).

Special assistance

- Where customers require specialist advice in-store (for example, from a pharmacist), ensure that relevant staff operate in a clearly designated area with appropriate safeguards in place (ideally, with a secure screen/barrier).
- Where customers require specialist assistance in-store, ensure that relevant staff have appropriate protective clothing (ideally, physical assistance or contact should be avoided altogether if possible).

Staff-only areas

- If staff changing rooms or bathrooms are required, lock every other locker/changing room/cubicle from use.
- Introduce a staggered or extended staff break rota to prevent gathering in staff areas, and encourage breaks to be taken outdoors.

Communication and knowledge sharing is key

- Customers should be contacted before store visits (for example by email or SMS - observing applicable data protection laws at all times) to notify them of changes in store operations (including opening hours and required shopping practices). These messages can be reiterated using notices and announcements inside and outside of stores.
- Where customers are accepting deliveries, appropriate information should be shared with them beforehand (for example, explaining that packages will be left outside of the home).
- Stay connected and liaise with any external contractors (e.g. cleaning/security staff/delivery drivers) to coordinate business responses and continuity plans.
- Provide appropriate training to staff so that they can assist in procuring compliance with the guidance in operations on the ground.
- Monitor government guidance and Public Health England recommendations. Consider appointing a member of staff or advisor to regularly review and monitor updates. Establish a protocol for communicating any updates or changes to management and staff. Build flexible methods of business operations to move with the evolving standards and guidance.

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GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions regarding any of the aspects raised in this guidance note, please reach out to your usual BCLP contact or one of our authors.



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