



Rebecca Hilsenrath  
Chief Executive  
Equality and Human Rights Commission  
Fleetbank House  
2-6 Salisbury Square  
London EC4Y 8JX

Helen Dickinson OBE  
Chief Executive

28 April 2020

Dear Ms Hilsenrath,

Thank you for your letter. I hope you are well.

We have been working with our members and Government throughout the coronavirus outbreak to ensure that everyone in the country gets the food they need.

Retailers understand that there are many consumers who are unable to visit stores to shop for themselves, and that has been a key focus of our discussions with Government. We have been clear that online delivery operations do not have the capacity to address the concerns of every consumer because online sales currently account for 8% of all food sales. Whilst online delivery has an important role, the BRC has long argued that a community response is essential, and we have urged people consider picking up food for vulnerable, disabled or self-isolating neighbours.

The primary aim for retailers was to help to ensure clinically shielded groups identified by Government could easily access food without added risks to their health. As soon as Government shared the lists of these individuals, retailers verified those who were customers and prioritised them for delivery. Where they can, many retailers have created further slots for other vulnerable customers identified by Government and local authorities but capacity is still limited. Many retailers also dedicated separate time in their stores to these consumers to improve access for them in the initial period of the crisis. At times of intense pressure this was not always a straightforward exercise due to the less than helpful approach of a minority of consumers creating issues for colleagues in store.

Our members believe the best way to feed the nation is through their stores. Their shelves are fully stocked, they have worked hard to create a safe environment with social distancing measures in place, and many have implemented new initiatives whereby volunteers can buy on behalf of the vulnerable. We are really pleased that the Government has worked with local authorities to make it easy for vulnerable individuals to identify volunteers nearby who can shop for them. I understand that new, clear communications on this will soon be launched for vulnerable consumers and shared with retailers, local authorities and representative groups.

4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 2 London Bridge, London SE1 9RA

+44 (0)20 7854 8900

info@brc.org.uk      brc.org.uk

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Our members remain committed to getting essential items to those in need. This will mean supplementing priority online deliveries with neighbours, relatives and volunteers who can shop on behalf of others. This is the only way to guarantee that no one misses out.

Thank you very much for taking the time to write to us, we really appreciate your concerns and what you do.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Helen Dickinson'.

**Helen Dickinson OBE**  
Chief Executive