



8 April 2020

To everyone working in the UK's retail sector

I know that these are challenging and uncertain times, in particular for retail businesses and staff across the country. Many shops remain closed as part of the national effort to fight coronavirus. I understand how hard that must be for those who run and work for those businesses and I want to thank you all for following the Government's direction.

The Government has always been clear that online retail can continue to operate and is encouraged, and that postal and delivery services will continue to operate. I want to pay tribute to all of you who continue to work tirelessly in the retail sector to ensure that the public can continue to access the goods they need in these challenging times.

The retail sector is a vital lifeline for those self-isolating, and for all of us in adhering to the Government's social distancing guidelines. The goods that you supply make a real difference to our ability to get through this national crisis together, from the food and medicines that people need, to items ordered online to support home working, education or entertainment. Other goods, like electronics and technology, ensure people can remain connected virtually to friends and family, and hardware suppliers are ensuring people have the parts they need to carry out home repairs.

The Government has advised that wherever possible people should work from home. However, I know that for many of you, your job requires you to travel to your place of work. You can continue to do so. This is consistent with the Chief Medical Officer's advice.

So whether you're working in a shop, large or small, or in a distribution centre or supply chain supporting retailers operating online, I would like to convey my heartfelt and personal thanks for everything that you are doing to support our joint national effort. Each and every one of you is making a valuable contribution to the economy and the communities you serve, keeping our supply chains up and running to contribute to the UK's efforts to defeat coronavirus.

I am encouraged by the way the sector has responded and am confident that it will continue to meet these challenges. To help ensure that workplaces remain safe, employers will, I am sure, continue to follow the latest government [guidance on operating safely in the workplace](#). I am also pleased to see that the British Retail Consortium has developed sector specific [guidance on social distancing in warehouses and distribution centres](#) aligned with this advice. This demonstrates the sector's commitment to the safety of its employees.

The Government is also supporting businesses and their employees with a package of measures during this period of disruption. The [gov.uk/business-support](https://www.gov.uk/business-support) website has all the information needed for people to find the right support, advice and information to help with the impact of coronavirus on their business.

My ministerial team and I are in regular contact with industry and union leaders about this situation and are fully committed to maintaining this engagement over the coming days, weeks and beyond.

Thank you again to everyone operating in the UK retail sector. You are making a hugely valuable and critical contribution to the resilience of our nation and I commend you for the enormous efforts you are individually undertaking to support the UK economy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alok Sharma', with a stylized flourish at the end.

THE RT HON ALOK SHARMA MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy