

# Social Distancing

## **BRC-USDAW Recommended implementation practices for Non-Food Retail Stores**

*A guide for retailers on how to implement Government advice*

*Version 2: 12 May 2020*

## Social Distancing in Retail Stores

On 23 March, the Government stepped up measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus, to protect the NHS and save lives (detailed advice [here](#)). Some businesses including food retailers, takeaways and pharmacies were permitted to remain open and all non-essential premises were closed.

Since then, the UK government published its Covid-19 recovery [plan](#) on 11 May. This refers to a phased approach to re-opening non essential retail which will begin from 1<sup>st</sup> June. Further information on the phasing including types of business and timeframes has not yet been shared. Specific guidance has been published to support the strategy including for "[Working Safely during Covid-19 in Shops and Branches](#)". It is important to be ready and as we start to prepare for the re-opening of stores it is clear that some virus control restrictions will continue to be necessary to limit transmission.

The safety and wellbeing of every retailers' staff and customers is a top priority. Retailers welcome continued government support and clarification to assist managing their workforces.

The following outlines recommendations businesses may wish to consider to facilitate implementation of social distancing in retail stores. They are based on the experience of our food retail members who have been operating social distancing effectively in stores for a number of weeks. These are non-exhaustive and it is the responsibility of each business to decide the most appropriate methods to implement social distancing and other coronavirus control measures in their business. Over and above these specific recommendations there should be open dialogue with colleagues to reassure them and discuss any concerns about the safety of their role.

This document has been prepared by the BRC based on input from across the membership and USDAW and will be regularly updated, so if you have any proposed enhancements or further input, please email [Elizabeth.Andoh-Kesson@brc.org.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.Andoh-Kesson@brc.org.uk). Version changes are highlighted at the end of the document.

This guidance should be implemented in addition to all legal requirements for example the Health and Safety at work regulations. Retailers are encouraged to frequently check the official Government advice which is updated daily. Government guidance for employers can be found [here](#) and retail specific [here](#). Links within the document take the reader to information published by the government in England. Additional information specific to other UK Governments can be obtained through those pages.

## 1. Social distancing in and around stores

### **Government advice**

*The Government has issued guidance for social distancing in retail outlets, which can be read [here](#). That advice is the basis for the practical guidance below.*

*All employers are expected to follow social distancing guidance. Where the production environment makes it difficult to do so, employers should consider what measures may be put in place to protect employees. Once staff have left the work areas, social distancing and further hand washing guidance should be adhered to.*

Government advice recognises that “*the practical implementation of this advice will depend on the local circumstances.*” The guideline goes on to acknowledge the need for a local management assessment of measures that can be implemented. Businesses can meet these objectives by implementing the following measures.

### **BRC recommendations on how to implement:**

#### **Outside store**

- **Limit number of entry and exit points into and out of store. Consider having separate entrance and exit points if possible.**
- **Limit the number of customers in the store at any time. Assess the size of the store and its layout, this will enable you to calculate the number of customers who can reasonably follow 2m social distancing.**
- **Use a colleague to meet customers, explain the social distancing requirements and control the number of customers entering store at any one time. In some circumstances, that colleague may need to be [SIA licensed](#).**
- **Consider whether temporary barriers should be available in case it is necessary to stop people joining a queue.**
- **Place clear signage outside of the store explaining the social distancing measures in place that customers should follow.**
- **Place markings outside the store to assist correct queue spacings.**
- **Speak to nearby premises to work together to manage possible shared queuing areas.**
- **Encourage customers to shop alone wherever possible. Please bear in mind that this is not always possible.**
- **Schedule deliveries to avoid crowding in delivery areas.**
- **Consider non-contact stock deliveries.**

- **Businesses should speak with relevant partners such as local authorities, landowners, shopping centre managers and BIDs (where they exist) to determine the best way to avoid congestion for queues outside stores.**
- **Consider whether additional security staff may be required to support staff.**

## **Inside Store**

### **Hygiene and cleaning**

- **Provision of cleaning stations at front of store including:**
  - **Hand sanitiser, if available and**
  - **Disinfectant wipes or spray and tissue for trolley/basket handles.**
- **Identify and regularly clean key touch points eg. door handles, lift buttons, keypads, stair/escalator hand rails.**

## **Social Distancing**

### **General**

- **Consider what steps will be taken by managers and staff where customers are not following social distancing measures.**

### **Shop Floor and Till Areas**

- **Use floor markings inside to facilitate compliance with the social distancing advice of 2 metres, particularly in the most crowded areas and where queueing is likely.**
- **Place clear signage throughout the store reminding customers of the social distancing measures and asking them to follow these rules.**
- **Review the layout of the store to ensure aisles/walkways are as clear as possible to accommodate 2m social distancing, including the removal of promotional fixtures if necessary.**
- **Consider one-way systems using floor markings and signage to highlight system and direction.**
- **Make regular announcements to remind staff and customers to follow social distancing advice.**
- **Erect physical barriers at till points using flexiplastic to provide a barrier for those working on the tills. These should be included in store cleaning programmes.**
- **If necessary, use staff to manage the flow of customers to checkouts.**
- **Where till points are close together, consider closing every other till point. Assess whether this is also necessary for self-scan tills.**
- **Leave non-essential doors open to minimise the number of people who touch them. This does not apply to fire doors.**
- **Customer order collection points should be set up to ensure the 2m separation either by floor markings or by limiting the number of customers that can wait at a time.**
- **Consider limiting the number of customers in enclosed spaces such as lifts.**
- **Remove promotions and features where customers are likely to congregate, such as product demonstrations.**

- To limit congestion, consider restocking/replenishing only outside of store opening hours. If replenishment must be done in opening hours, assess how this can be done without compromising employee or customer safety.
- Encourage cashless purchases.
- Self-checkout touch screens/keypads – If these remain in operation a member of staff must be available to regularly wipe these areas. Ideally between each use.

### **Changing rooms, Customer Seating and Special Assistance**

- Consider keeping changing rooms closed. If this is not possible, you must have a colleague in place at all times to ensure social distancing is maintained.
- Where customers require specialist advice/assistance in store, ensure colleagues giving the advice have a clearly designated position, ideally with a secure barrier as provided at till points.
- Remove or limit customer seating in store. If seating is provided, space out appropriately.
- If you provide in store products for customers to trial prior to purchase e.g. TV's, headphones, computers these must be set up to enable social distancing rules to be followed:
  - Consider whether it is better for staff to demonstrate instead of customers touching the item or
  - Provide hand sanitiser in these areas
- Stop services which require direct physical interaction with customers such as make- up application, nail bars or personal shopping.
- Specialised make-up and skincare advice can be provided if following strict hygiene and social distancing protocols.
- If stores choose not to assist customers with large purchases e.g. 60" TV to their car, it is advisable to highlight this prior to purchase. If stores are providing this service they should provide suitable protection and advice for this to be conducted safely.

### **Cafes and Toilets**

- Consider whether it is safe to keep customer toilets open or if these should be available on request. If open, regular cleaning should include manual multi-person touch points such as door handles, flushes, taps. etc.
- Baby changing facilities should be available but consider frequency of cleaning.
- Cafes and restaurants are closed until further notice unless offering hot or cold food to be consumed off the premises. Seating areas should be securely closed off to ensure customers do not use them.

## **2. MANAGING THE WORKPLACE – ENSURING YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE PROTECTED**

### ***Government Advice***

*If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in the business or workplace they should be sent home and advised to follow the [stay at home guidance](#). If you or an employee are experiencing symptoms, visit NHS 111 online or call 111 if there is no internet access. In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured, or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.*

*If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.*

*It is not necessary to close the business or workplace or send any staff home, unless government policy changes. You should keep monitoring the [government response to coronavirus](#) for further updates.*

New Government [guidance](#) published on 11 May raises the need for a risk assessment as follows:

*To help you decide which actions to take, you need to carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, just as you would for other health and safety related hazards. This risk assessment must be done in consultation with unions or workers.*

#### **BRC recommendations on how to implement:**

- **Ensure all staff are aware of the social distancing measures that are in place and trained on how they should support these measures being observed. Remind staff that social distancing applies in all areas of the store, including non-customer facing areas.**
- **Regular and visible written or verbal communication of the government messages.**
- **Frequent reminders using the following:**
  - **Additional signage to ask staff not to turn up for work if they have symptoms.**
  - **Written communication.**
  - **Posters and signage.**
  - **Daily reminders to all staff via noticeboard and/or intranet.**

## **2.1 LIMITING SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS IN THE WORKPLACE**

### **Government Advice**

*Businesses and employers can help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) by reminding everyone of the public health advice.*

*Employees and customers should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently than normal.*

**Government [advice](#) is clear PPE, including facemasks, is only necessary for those working in clinical situations. However, we are aware from the experience of our food retail members that some colleagues remain concerned and good practice is to supply masks or visors, and gloves to those who request them. It is important that these are used correctly to minimise the risk of infection. The use of such PPE does not replace or reduce the need to follow the government guidance in relation to hygiene practices.**

*Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products.*

- *Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds.*
- *Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.*
- *Wash your hands as soon as you get to work and when you arrive home, after you blow your nose, cough or sneeze, before you eat or handle food.*
- *Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze.*
- *Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards.*

#### **BRC Recommendations on how to Implement:**

##### **General Considerations**

- **Regular and visible written/verbal communication of the government messages.**
- **Daily reminders about hand washing and correct coughing etiquette using the following:**
  - **Additional signage**
  - **Written communication**
  - **Posters and signage.**
  - **Daily reminders to all staff via noticeboards and/or intranets**
- **Provision of hand sanitiser in high traffic/customer interaction areas such as:**
  - **Till points**
  - **Changing rooms, if open**
  - **Staff rooms**
  - **Backdoor for staff and delivery drivers**
- **Regular cleaning of multi-person contact points including door handles, keypads.**
- **Provide additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities if possible. Provide soap, water and hand sanitiser, if available.**
- **Facilitate regular handwashing breaks for all staff.**
- **Introduce frequent deep cleaning of work areas, with attention to multi contact points. For example, between shifts, staff change overs and/or during breaks.**
- **Encourage use of disinfectant wipes to clean all equipment before and after each use.**

- Stagger staff shift start, end and break times to avoid crowding.
- Arrange shifts to maintain same staff working together, where possible.
- Offer staff alternative tasks if concerns are raised.
- Have available sufficient gloves, masks and/or visors for those colleagues who require them. If you supply re-useable visors ensure colleagues are reminded to clean them regularly during use, and before and after each use.
- Remind staff not to share items for example, pens when signing in or out.
- Consider how staff security checks can be managed while maintaining social distancing.

## 2.2 In staff canteens and rest areas

### **Government Advice**

*It is very unlikely that coronavirus is transmitted through food. Workplace canteens may remain open where there are no practical alternatives for staff to obtain food. As far as reasonably possible, a distance of 2 metres should be maintained between users.*

### **BRC recommendations on how to implement:**

- Staff can continue to use rest areas if they apply the same social distancing measures.
- Staff who go outside the store for a break should maintain physical distancing from any colleagues or public while doing so.
- Notices promoting hand hygiene and social distancing should be placed visibly in these areas.
- Staff should be reminded to wash their hands regularly using soap and water for 20 seconds before and after eating.
- Provision of hand sanitiser at entry/exit points.
- Canteen staff who are unwell should not be at work.
- Canteen staff should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and before and after handling food.
- A distance of 2m should be maintained between users.
- Where possible, staff should be encouraged to bring their own food.
- If possible, increase the number of hand washing stations available.
- Introduce a staggered or extended break rota to avoid crowding.
- Space out chairs and tables. For example, by removal or marking as "do not use".
- Remove sofas from break areas.
- Frequently clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products.
- Consider providing a takeaway service to avoid crowding in the canteen

## 3. Regular review and compliance checking



It is important that any of the measures put in place are regularly checked to ensure customer and colleagues' understanding and compliance.

With regards to customer compliance, retailers should review their in-store and out-of-store security measures and requirements on a regular basis. Public facing retail staff could be faced with difficult situations when trying to manage social distancing measures and other requirements (e.g. non-compliance). Staff should be supported when trying to manage and enforce government guidance and it is important that it is made clear to customers to treat staff with respect. This can be done through increased signage and the appropriate action where necessary. Retailers and government have a duty to protect shop workers, and there must be a zero tolerance approach to verbal and physical abuse from customers, with clear measures in place to protect staff and deal with abusive customers.

## **Changes in Version 2 – 12 May**

**Page 2: Inclusion of references and links to UK Government Covid-19 recovery strategy and guidance.**

**Page 3: Recommendations for queue management outside store have been updated to include references to local authorities and BIDs.**

**Page 5: Advice on specialist services has been updated and highlights that specialist product consultation can be given while maintaining social distancing.**

**Page 5: Advice on provision of food in cafes and restaurants amended to be consistent with government guidance.**