

Joint letter from 23 charities regarding the third national lockdown and the unfair costs to safely access food that people especially vulnerable to COVID-19 are facing

Dear Ken Murphy (Tesco), Roger Burnley (Asda), Simon Roberts (Sainsburys), David Potts (Morrisons), Malcolm Walker (Iceland), James Bailey (Waitrose), Tim Steiner (Ocado)

As leading charities, we support and represent millions of disabled people, people with long term conditions, older people, unpaid carers and others. Many of these people are at very high risk if they get COVID-19 and have been advised by the Government to take precautions to minimise their risk.

As the seven participating supermarkets in the priority delivery slots scheme, and those who provide priority delivery slots through local councils, we are asking you to once again suspend delivery charges for priority delivery slots, and take steps to reduce minimum spends.

Shoppers of all ages would support supermarkets in this move. Recent Independent Age / YouGov polling shows that three quarters of people (77%) agree that those who are unable to shop in supermarkets due to their age or underlying health conditions should not have to pay online delivery charges, with 81% agreeing that reductions should be made to minimum spend¹.

In this third national lockdown many of the people we represent face long periods staying at home for their safety, including those who once again are shielding. They do not have the choice of visiting their local stores, and instead must largely rely on online delivery. We are particularly concerned about people at risk who are also on lower incomes, for whom delivery charges or minimum spends represent a disproportionately high cost. We believe it is unfair to ask these customers to stay at home to protect the NHS, and yet also have to take a financial hit just to access food.

During the first lockdown in Spring 2020, we were pleased to see supermarkets taking positive and proactive steps to ensure that people especially vulnerable to COVID-19 could safely access food, and that they would not be financially punished for following the guidance and staying at home. Working with the Government, you have continued to provide priority online shopping slots to people in the clinically extremely vulnerable group, which has allowed them to access food in a secure way. Supermarkets have also worked directly with DEFRA to make priority slots available to local authorities and four referring charities for people outside the shielding group struggling to access food. We thank you and all your teams for this – it has made a big difference to many people.

When these priority slots were originally introduced, some of your supermarkets waived delivery charges and reduced minimum spends for priority slot holders. This ensured that vulnerable customers were not being unfairly penalised for following official guidance to stay at home. Delivery charges were reintroduced for these priority slots once the lockdown began to ease from August 2020 but have not been removed again even though we have re-entered lockdown.

We have spoken to many who have experienced challenges accessing food safely. In addition, recently we have also heard from people struggling with the increased costs they

¹ Independent Age commissioned YouGov Plc. survey. Total sample size was 2019 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th - 11th December 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

now face to enable them to access food safely, which has been compounded by lost income and other increased costs caused by the pandemic.

“Online shopping is more expensive - when I've needed groceries and was supposed to stay in I had to spend £60 for a delivery (if I could get a slot) so tended to buy things I didn't really need. That and the actual extra cost for delivery.” – Eleanor

The Government has asked everyone to play their part in helping the nation through this crisis. We know that supermarkets have taken this call seriously and have been working to ensure that those vulnerable to COVID-19 can safely access food. We are asking you to do this once again during this third lockdown. We believe that supermarkets waiving delivery charges and reducing minimum basket spend for those who have priority shopping slots would make an enormous contribution to the financial position and wellbeing of thousands of people.

As you will appreciate, this issue is extremely urgent and we would ask that you take quick and bold action.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director, [Age UK](#)

Kate Lee, CEO, [Alzheimer's Society](#)

Helen Walker, CEO, [Carers UK](#)

Sarah Sleet, CEO, [Crohn's and Colitis UK](#)

David Ramsden, CEO, [Cystic Fibrosis Trust](#)

Dr Hilda Hayo, CEO and Chief Admiral Nurse, [Dementia UK](#)

Chris Askew, CEO, [Diabetes UK](#)

[The Disability Benefits Consortium](#)

Kamran Mallick, CEO, [Disability Rights UK](#)

Deborah Alsina MBE, CEO, [Independent Age](#)

Paul Bristow, CEO, [Kidney Care UK](#)

Steven McIntosh, Executive Director of Policy & Communications, [Macmillan Cancer Support](#)

Sally Light, CEO, [Motor Neurone Disease Association](#)

Nick Moberly, CEO, [MS Society](#)

Deborah Gold, CEO, [National AIDS Trust](#)

Caroline Stevens, CEO, [National Autistic Society](#)

Georgina Carr, CEO, [Neurological Alliance](#)

Steve Ford, CEO, [Parkinson's UK](#)

Andrew Symons, CEO, [PSP Association](#)

Mark Hodgkinson, CEO, [Scope](#)

Kate Steele, CEO, [Shine](#)

Charles Colquhoun, CEO, [Thomas Pocklington Trust](#)

Anela Anwar, CEO, [Zacchaeus 2000 Trust](#)