

Supporting Older Customers During COVID-19

At Age UK North Tyneside, we want to make sure that those over 50 are safely able to stay as active, independent and connected to their communities as possible. One of the things that can make people anxious is how they will do their shopping, especially as those who had been shielding will no longer receive food parcels and may start to venture out to shops again in September. Here are some actions that older people have said would help them shop with confidence and reduce their risk.

Telephone 0191 2808484 for support for older people in North Tyneside.

Make queuing as safe and as easy as possible

Queuing for long periods can be challenging, especially in severe weather, and can be daunting if people do not know what measures you have in place. **Consider providing shelter and seating**, and make sure there are **bright distance indicators** on the ground and **signs** that clearly convey what to expect once inside.

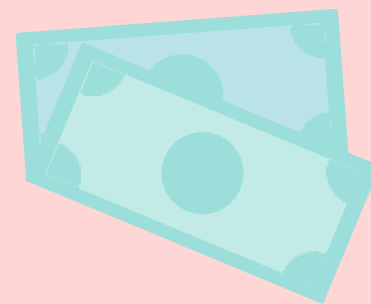


Provide customer toilets

Fear of being 'caught short' can make it almost impossible for many people to do shopping or run errands. If you have toilets, make sure they are **clearly signposted**, have stringent **hygiene measures** in place, and **access is prioritised** for those who need them most. If your toilets are temporarily closed, make sure there are signs visible to those in the queue to warn them.



Allow customers to use cash if they have no other way of paying



One in ten people have been refused payment by cash since the start of lockdown, and for the significant number of older people without access to a bank account or who rely on cash, this has made purchasing essentials incredibly difficult. **Consider ways in which**

you can make the exchange of notes and coins as hygienic as possible..

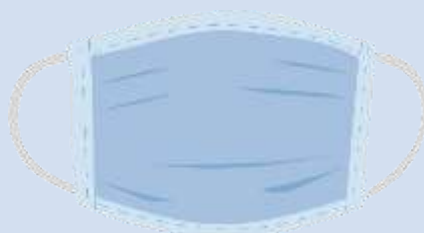
Space for people to stop and rest

As well as having some seating available in the queue, if at all possible consider having a **safe and hygienic area indoors** where people can have a sit down.



Clear communication

Customers who are deaf or hard of hearing may be unable to understand what a staff member is saying if they are wearing a mask, as they cannot lip read. If masks must be worn because there is no screen between the customer and staff, **put up signs that people can point to** if they may struggle to understand what staff are saying to them. All signage should be **black-on-white or yellow-on-black and at least 48 point** to support partially sighted customers.



Offer priority hours

Allocate time for customers who consider themselves vulnerable to COVID-19 to visit your premises, when it will be quieter and **staff will be able to offer more help** with things such as **reaching items on high or low shelves..**



Keep face-to-face services open

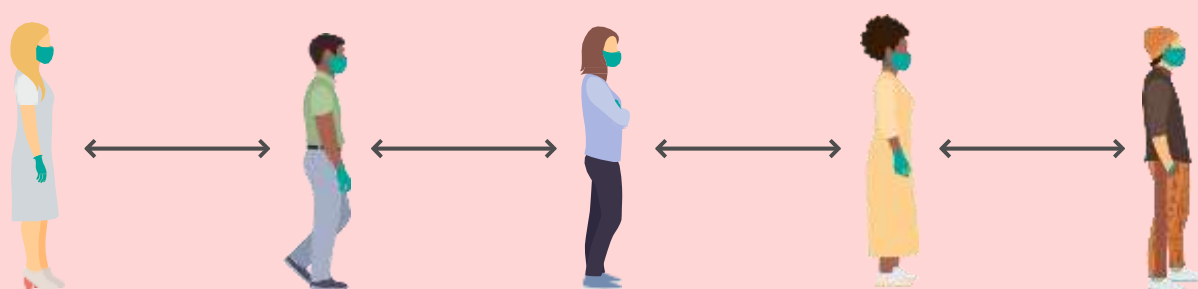
Recent research shows that only 7% of over 70s are likely to be able to shop and manage their money online*, and **being able to visit a physical shop or branch is vital to stop them from being cut off from essential services.** Many of the most vulnerable older people, including those recently widowed or without family able to shop for them, will be most affected by services such as banking moving online completely.



*Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020

Keep two-metre distancing

The government has announced a change to the two-metre rule, but many people who have been told they are at high risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus are concerned by this easing as it may double the risk of transmission.* If your business has been able to operate well with a two-metre rule, **keep this in place.**



*The Lancet Journal 1 June 2020

Be available on the phone



If you offer a delivery service, make sure **people can phone to place an order and either pay over the phone or in person once it arrives.** Make sure there are staff available to answer the phone so that people can call ahead and find out what measures you are adhering to.