

Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

17 March 2020

Dear Chancellor

The Charity Retail Sector

The Charity Retail Association represents some 9000 charity shops belonging to nearly 400 different charities. Between them they bring in around 1/3 of a billion pounds for their respective charities – income which the charities would find next to impossible to source elsewhere. They keep huge amounts of material out of landfill and provide 23,000 UK jobs, as well as being the largest provider of volunteering opportunities in the country, with over 230,000 volunteers.

They now find themselves in an unprecedentedly precarious position due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Many of our shops rely on volunteers, a high proportion of whom are quite elderly and who are understandably reluctant to move from their houses given the Government's recent restrictions. Further, reduced footfall in the High Street due to social distancing restrictions is clearly having a dramatic adverse impact on sales and productivity generally.

In response to this a number of our members are having to close their shops or substantially reduce their opening hours, and major announcements will be forthcoming in this area over the next few days.

I therefore write to add our name to your no doubt substantial list of organisations requesting significant government support for their sector in this difficult time, to ensure that this vital sector can rebuild after the virus outbreak ends. In our case charity shops are significantly threatened, but the principal negative outcome will fall on the beneficiaries and the clients of the charities concerned.

We ask that the government significantly increases the amount of money that it is making available for support to organisations facing financial distress both in the form of grant funding and loans

We ask that this money is made available as quickly as possible and that charity shops and charity trading arms in general are able to access it quickly

www.charityretail.org.uk

We ask that the government works with landlords to provide support for shop rents which will be a considerable fixed cost burden for our members even if their shops have to close

We ask that State Aid restrictions are temporarily lifted on the Business Rates Retail Discount schemes and other forms of Government support that will be announced

We ask for support for charity retailer salary costs, for example by mitigating National Insurance costs and other measures, so that staff can be retained

We ask for increased funding for the charity sector as a whole, which is facing the temporary loss of fundraising income from retail and other fundraising activities

We appreciate that at the moment there will be a huge number of calls upon the government's time and money; however the knock-on effect of impoverishing charities is all the more significant because of the vulnerable nature of charities' beneficiaries. If this kind of support is not forthcoming the government itself will be forced to pick up substantially greater financial costs to support the most vulnerable of our society, many of whom will no doubt in the meantime suffer most acutely.

Yours sincerely



Robin Osterley
Chief Executive
Charity Retail Association