

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET

12<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Secretary of State

### **Charity shops and re-opening**

I am writing to ask that you consider allowing charity shops in England to re-open ahead of the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 expiry of the current national restrictions requiring non-essential retailers to remain closed. The Charity Retail Association is the voice of charity retail with our 400+ members operating around 80% of the UK's charity shops.

Charity shops play a unique role in the retail sector which should be considered as decisions are made around the expiry of the current national restrictions and what might replace them. As decisions are taken, I urge you to consider the role that charity shops play in:

- Raising funds for charity. We estimate that charity shops will lose £28 million in charitable contributions during the current period of national restrictions in England.
- Selling good quality donated goods at affordable prices to those on lower incomes. For example, the average cost of a woman's coat in a charity shop is £7.64. It is arguable that with winter coming up purchasing affordable clothing is an essential rather than a non-essential activity.
- Preventing good quality second-hand goods from ending up as waste with all the associated waste disposal costs and environmental harm.

It seems to us and our members that it is inequitable that those retailers who remain open are able to sell large volumes of clothing, books, and other non-essential items at a time when charity shops who sell the exact same items are required by law to remain closed. The impact of this inequity will increase as the retail sector enters the peak Christmas trading season and risks permanently distorting the retail sector.

If decisions are taken to allow some categories of non-essential retail to reopen earlier than others, charity shops should be among the first allowed to reopen for the reasons stated above and also because it will take charity retailers longer to resume normal trading than other retailers. The reliance on donated stock which needs to be quarantined for 48 hours, sorted and processed means that the early days of charity shops reopening will be focused on managing donations of stock rather than sales. Additionally, charity shops are likely to continue to experience a shortage of volunteers which has been a major challenge in recent months.

I hope that you will consider the unique contribution that charity shops make as you make decisions on the reopening of non-essential retail in England.

Yours sincerely



Robin Osterley  
Chief Executive

[www.charityretail.org.uk](http://www.charityretail.org.uk)