

Supporting Unpaid Carers During Covid-19

This guidance outlines how convenience retailers can identify and support unpaid carers in-store during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support for another individual who has a disability, illness or needs support later in life. The type of support typically provided by carers can include personal care, household tasks, emotional support, help with finances and managing and attending appointments.

Accessing food has become an issue for many carers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some carers are unable to leave an individual home alone for long, while other carers are having to shop with vulnerable individuals who are physically unable to queue for extended periods of time. Carers have also reported problems accessing some online grocery delivery services and two-thirds of carers struggling to access food report having no support network to help¹.

Convenience stores are well placed to support carers by providing access to groceries and other essentials close to where people live with generally shorter queues. Local shops can provide tailored and responsive customer service to support carers, many of whom may be existing regular customers².

Identifying Unpaid Carers

There are 6.5 million people in the UK providing unpaid care for an ill, older or disabled family member or friend³. Recognition is a strong theme amongst carers to avoid having to repeatedly explain their status in relation to the person they are looking after. Although there is no single national identification scheme for carers, there are three main ways carers can be identified:

Local Carer Schemes

Local authorities and carers' organisations may administer local identification schemes for carers, typically a Carer Passport, Carer Emergency Card or Carer Discount Card. These schemes are application-based and often provide a physical form of ID to members. You can contact your local authority social services department to find out about schemes in your area.



Carer ID Letters

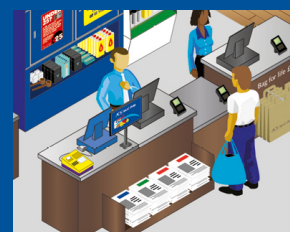
The Government has encouraged local authorities and care providers to provide letters to carers for purposes of identification to support access to groceries and other essential services during Covid-19.

Letters may vary in exact design locally.



Customer Engagement

Customers might not identify themselves as an unpaid carer for a number of reasons, including the personal relationship they may hold with the person they are caring for and the often-gradual process towards becoming a carer. Retailers may however notice customers who come to store regularly with someone who is ill, disabled or older, or who regularly come to store for specific items potentially related to caring such as medical supplies.



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Supporting Carers

Convenience retailers can improve the shopping experience for carers in the following ways:

In-Store Support

- Consider carers within 'Covid-19 Secure' and social distancing procedures ([ACS' guidance available here](#)). Sole-shopping policies could exclude carers who need to be accompanied by the person or persons they are caring for.
- Minimise queuing where possible for carers shopping with vulnerable customers who may be unable to stand for long periods of time. Seating could make queuing more comfortable where this is not possible.
- Ensure the in-store environment is accessible and welcoming for all types of customers by following the [ACS Supporting Vulnerable Customers Guide](#).

Further Actions

- Promote the services you are offering during the Covid-19 pandemic to unpaid carers, including [home delivery services](#) and [methods of payment](#). A template is available via the [ACS Retailer Services Checklist](#).
- Explicitly include carers in any 'priority access' hours you may provide.
- Signpost colleagues to support for carers in the workplace and externally. Carers UK resources [are available here](#). One-in-seven employees nationally are carers⁴.
- Consider joining a Local Carer Scheme. Businesses can often join Local Carer Schemes to offer discounts or concessions to carers. Schemes may be able to provide window stickers or other advertising to promote a shop's support for carers. You can find out if your local area has a Scheme by [contacting your local carers' organisation](#).

For more information, please contact Steve Dowling, ACS Public Affairs Manager,
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References

1. Carers UK: Carers' Experiences of Coronavirus Survey, April 2020
2. ACS Local Shop Report 2019: The average customer visits their local shop 3.6 times per week.
3. <https://www.carersweek.org/get-involved/politicians>
4. <https://www.carersweek.org/get-involved/employers>