

7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Paul Scully MP  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET

Dear Paul

### **Easing of Restrictions and Colleague Isolation**

I want to take this opportunity to thank you again for your engagement and support – and that of your officials – during these extraordinary sixteen months. The regular meetings and development of advice and support has made a material difference to retailers and colleagues, and ultimately to controlling the spread and impact of Covid-19. I think there are key issues to discuss now, and I would welcome a further meeting of the retail industry group, or with you privately, to work on a practical response.

1. Government messaging regarding the easing of restrictions on 19 July has been confusing and could be improved with some simple messages now. On the one hand, individuals are being asked to exercise their own judgement on wearing face coverings and social distancing, while businesses and settings like public transport are being encouraged to develop policies on these matters. We are helping members to do this, balancing the needs of colleagues and a range of customers, but if members of the public are being asked to exercise their judgement regardless of the policies of the facilities they are using, there is little point in doing this. A new message to the effect that the public should exercise their judgement but respect the policies of the businesses and services they use would bring welcome balance. We think this really does matter.
2. We welcome the change in the rules for self-isolating due to a close contact, but we are disappointed that this will only take effect from 16 August. Members are seeing large numbers of colleagues asked to isolate at the same time, causing significant operational challenges and store closures are being considered in some cases. Bringing the implementation date for this welcome policy forward to now would alleviate these concerns. This change could be specified for key workers – which would include our members and their colleagues – if that helped to move towards the 16 August date in a managed way.

I hope you view these as constructive suggestions to help retailers play their part on tackling the pandemic. Please let me know if you would like to meet to discuss this, or to add these points to an upcoming meeting agenda with a wider group of retailers.

Yours sincerely



James Lowman  
Chief Executive