



29 April 2020

Dear Chief Executive

Supermarkets and shops have had to adapt quickly to social distancing measures in place during Covid-19 including providing vital access for vulnerable groups and key workers. We know that staff are working hard to continue to provide an essential service to everyone in challenging and unusual circumstances.

However, we are concerned at increasing reports from parents and carers that they have been challenged by staff and members of the public about bringing their children shopping with them during Coronavirus restrictions.

We ask that you request that your staff respect the diversity of families and the need for some parents and carers to bring their children for essential shopping. We would appreciate assurance that you will provide guidance and training to all your staff about this. We would also welcome clear information posted at entrances to shops explaining that some parents and carers may need to be shopping with children and that customers abusing them or challenging their right to be there will not be tolerated.

Shopping with children in any circumstances is not an easy option and at the moment, with Coronavirus restrictions in place, parents and carers are even less likely to choose to take their children to the supermarket. No one wants to expose their children to the virus. If parents or carers are taking their children to the shops, there is likely to be a good reason.

There are a whole host of reasons why parents and carers may need to take a child shopping with them during Coronavirus restrictions. The families most likely to be affected are single parents who have no one else to leave their children with.

We are sure you will agree that as a safeguarding issue, parents should not be expected to leave children home alone. Others may have to take their children with them, for example, because a disabled child requires one to one attention and so may be looked after by one parent while the other shops. If one parent is a health worker or other keyworker, the other may need to take the children to the shops

either because their partner is working or is self-isolating from the rest of the family. There may also be child protection issues where a parent or carer is not be able to leave a child with an abusive parent or one who has addiction problems.

We also note that children and young people have the right to shop for essential food without being accompanied by an adult. In some cases, parents may be unable to shop for reason of disability, shielding or because of a mental health condition. Alternatively, sending an older child to the shop may avoid parents having to bring younger children with them.

Given the sensitivities involved, you will understand why it would not be appropriate for a member of staff to seek an explanation from any parent or carer shopping with their children or from children and young people themselves out shopping for essential goods.

It is important that this issue is addressed as quickly as possible and that families are treated with kindness and compassion in these difficult times.

Yours faithfully,

Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland
Clare Simpson, Manager, Parenting across Scotland
Satwat Rehman, Director, One Parent Families Scotland
Jackie Brock, Chief Executive, Children in Scotland
Mary Glasgow, Chief Executive, Children 1st
SallyAnn Kelly, CEO, Aberlour
Justina Murray, CEO, Scottish Families Affected by Drugs and Alcohol
Susan Walls, Scotland Manager, Contact
Douglas Guest, Acting Scotland Director, HomeStart
Jackie Tolland, Chief Executive, Parenting Network Scotland
Stuart Valentine, Chief Executive, Relationships Scotland
Eileen Prior, Chief Executive, Connect
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