



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP**

*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and  
Local Government*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local  
Government**

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02 December 2020

Dear Councillor, Chief Executive,

### **EXTENDED RETAIL OPENING HOURS FOR CHRISTMAS AND JANUARY**

To ensure that shoppers can return to the high street safely as shops reopen, this week I announced a temporary relaxation of Monday to Saturday shop opening hours in the run up to Christmas and through January. I am writing to update you on this change and to encourage you to take a proactive approach to supporting shops in your communities to reopen safely.

As we approach Christmas, retailers will be gearing up for their busiest period of the year – one which has been cut short during the national lockdown that has run through November. That was a difficult decision – and one that all of us in Government took with a heavy heart. However, from Wednesday 2nd December shops in all parts of England – regardless of which tier they are in – will be able to reopen. Our announcement this week means that as shops reopen in your communities, they will now be able to stay open later.

Although there are no national restrictions on retail opening hours from Monday to Saturday, there can often be local planning restrictions. I know you will be looking for ways to ensure shops in your communities can reopen safely and ensure their businesses are Covid-secure, even through this period of high demand. That is why I have made a Written Ministerial Statement – to make clear that, as a matter of urgency, local planning authorities should take a positive approach to their engagement with retailers. This will ensure planning controls are not a barrier to the temporary extension of retail opening times in December and January.

The majority of shop owners have already introduced extensive measures to ensure their premises are Covid secure. By allowing retailers to extend their opening hours from Monday to Saturday, we hope to maintain an even safer shopping experience in the run up to Christmas and through the January sales. This will give shoppers greater flexibility deciding when they shop, in turn easing transport pressures and making socially distanced shopping easier when there is less need to shop during peak times.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have taken decisive action to support our pubs, restaurants, cafes and markets with a comprehensive package of £160 billion in support, including the Eat Out To Help Out initiative which protected two million jobs in hospitality. And we have spearheaded efforts to help businesses provide takeaways without going through a planning application process, providing businesses with the flexibility they need to adapt.

Our latest measure demonstrates this Government's continued commitment to supporting jobs and retail, while also keeping people safe. I hope you find this measure supports your local efforts to help businesses to reopen safely and you can play your part in enabling retailers, where necessary, to open longer for Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

**RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP**