

Co-op

We know how important it is for those who are shielding or self-isolating to be able to access food and other essential supplies, which is why we have launched our initiative to **support these vulnerable customers**. We've been so encouraged to hear about the extraordinary efforts volunteers are going to in their communities to do shopping on behalf of others. In response to the need for a more secure payment solution, we have introduced a dedicated Co-op phonenumber – 0800 029 4592 – **to enable customers to purchase a gift card which can then be passed on to a friend, neighbour or volunteer to pay for shopping in one of our 2,500 local Co-op stores**.

The gift card can be paid for by debit card or by cheque, will be dispatched in 2-3 working days, and can be topped up via the same phone number as required. Through our volunteer matching scheme, these customers will also be offered the help of a volunteer in their area to pick up and deliver groceries on their behalf. Charities, Community Groups and Local Authorities who are co-ordinating volunteers are also able to purchase these gift cards in bulk by contacting [our support centre](#).

We also know that enabling schools to continue to support every **student eligible for free school meals** is critical. We welcome the assurance that has now been given by the Department for Education that schools can purchase vouchers directly from us in the full confidence that they will be reimbursed for the cost of the vouchers; I have spoken with DfE personally and they made clear this was the case. Schools wishing to order vouchers should again contact [our support centre](#).

Finally, I'd like to mention the launch of our **Co-op Members' Coronavirus Fund** which will allow Co-op's members to donate their unspent existing member rewards, totalling over £30m, and enable them to donate their newly acquired points from now on. Our CEO, Steve Murrells, kickstarted the fund by donating 20% of his own salary for the next three months. These resources will go towards foodbanks, a funeral hardship fund to support families of key workers who have died as a result of COVID-19 and to local causes that are already being supported by the Co-op and working to alleviate the impact of Coronavirus. This is in addition to the £4.5m we have already paid out to community groups doing invaluable work across the country through our Local Community Fund and in addition to the £1.5m worth of food that we are donating directly to FareShare who are busy distributing it to charities, community groups and food banks.