

Dear Alok Sharma

The greeting card industry is a great British success story – but it is a sector that is being unfairly penalised as a result of the current closure of non-essential shops. We strongly urge that you allow specialist card retailers to be allowed to reopen during this lockdown.

The Greeting Card Association (GCA) members represent the interests of the entire greeting card industry – from the retailers who sell the cards and the greeting card publishers who create them, to the printers and trade suppliers who manufacture them.

We believe that greeting cards are an essential product, more so now than ever before, providing a meaningful way for people to communicate with those they care about, at a time when they are not able to meet in person. We have seen a huge upturn in general card sending this year as people keep in touch with loved ones, the receiving of greeting cards have been proven to stave off the feeling of loneliness and improve mental health, vitally important in today's climate.

Therefore, the retailers who specialise in their sale should have 'essential retailer' status. While greeting cards are available from some of the retailers deemed as 'essential' by the latest rulings, by their nature they are generalists and do not offer the selection that a specialist card shop can in facilitating these all-important relationships. Christmas card sales are already significantly up on last year – people will continue to buy cards so allowing card shops to open will allow shoppers to spread out and shop safely.

Recent findings from Sage have indicated that 'non-essential retailers' have not contributed to the spread of the pandemic. Indeed, our retailer members have all been incredibly stringent in ensuring they create Covid-safe shopping environments. The majority operate from small shop units, who are easily able to keep an eye on their customers ensuring that safety guidelines are adhered.

The British sent nearly 1 billion Christmas cards in 2019. We send more cards per capita than any other nation and last year spent £1.7 billion on them last year, providing an income for many of our artists, publishers, printers as well as the retailers. More than 90% of cards are bought in a bricks and mortar store.

From the small independently-owned card shop in your local community to Card Factory, our largest specialist which employs up to 15,000 people, these are all retailers who are helping to spread joy, provide comfort and reinforce relationships by their selection of cards.

We, as an industry, urge you to make this a happy Christmas and allow greeting card shops to reopen without delay so that the nation can keep in touch.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Fergusson  
CEO Greeting Card Association

This letter comes with the endorsement of the GCA's members which includes greeting card publishers, based the length and breadth of the UK, trade suppliers as well as major multiple specialist retailer names (including Cards Galore, Cardzone, Clintons, Card Factory and Scribbler) and thousands of independents (including the 1,000 rooftops as represented by Cardgains).