

# Costcutter<sup>®</sup>

## DUNNINGTON

Chris Jones

# COVID-19 SAFETY AND HYGIENE

**Coinciding a refurb with the start of the COVID crisis hasn't held back this Yorkshire store**

**"We closed on 9th March for three weeks to have a full refurbishment – a brand new shop basically," said Chris Jones, the store's manager, "but there are a lot of elderly people here who can't get out of the village. So, in a first for Costcutter, we placed a pop-up shop outside selling essential products so that we could keep serving local shoppers. And then the lockdown happened!"**

Chris said the immediate issue for him and the team was how to comply with social distancing when the pop-up shop was so small. They resolved this by operating a one-in-one-out system.

"It was a challenge, but Costcutter provided lots of information and signage for us to put up, which worked really well. We had tape down the ramp, bus stop signs outside asking people to wait before being allowed in, and a door patrol colleague making sure to only let one shopper in, one shopper out."

Once the refurbishment was complete, Chris was able to start letting more customers into the new shop and stocking a wider range of products again.

"Customers think the shop's got bigger, but it actually hasn't. It's just been laid out completely differently, with a lot more aisle space that makes it more open. We've also extended the fresh produce and dairy ranges massively."

That also includes more Co-op Own Brand food items too, which he says are incredibly popular, even more so than the main brand items, such as Heinz. "They're selling really well. Everyone knows about the quality the Co-op Own Brand range provides."

Other changes include self-serve checkouts that free up more time for Chris and the team to work on other tasks, while also letting them be more responsive to customer needs when they happen. "The actual working experience is really different now," he said.

As for working life during the lockdown, he says footfall has dropped by about a third, as people are shopping less frequently. However, the average basket spend has increased considerably, from £5.40 before, to around £8-9 now. "Even with the lower footfall, we're taking in more than we were in the old store. People can't go out to eat and don't want to go too far for their shopping."



**BASKET SPEND  
INCREASED BY**

**66%**

**“Even with the lower footfall, we're taking in more than we were in the old store.”**

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“I’ve had lots of comments saying what a good job we’re doing in terms of implementing social distancing and door control,” said Chris. “We’re also encouraging all customers to follow the social distancing guidelines through guidance we have inside and outside of the store, and through store colleagues providing advice to shoppers throughout the day. One example of the action we’re taking is that when restocking, we put up signs telling people to ask for anything they want instead of coming down the aisle. It’s just one small example of the actions we are taking to keep colleagues and shoppers safe but it all matters and our customers have said how much they appreciate it.”

**The lockdown has also been an opportunity to showcase the refurbished shop to new customers and to make a good impression with great customer service.**

“We have new customers coming to us because they want to avoid big queues in the larger stores,” said Chris. “We have a great range of products, and we’re working hard to provide a good service and be very compliant about social distancing. I think those who are trying us for the first time will be surprised and will return.”

Chris has also implemented free home delivery for about 20 of the most vulnerable people in the village. “We’ll call them on Tuesday and Thursday, ask if they need anything, then take the payment over the phone. We’ll let them know when we’re close, ring their doorbell and leave the shopping on their step.

“That’s been really successful even though and it’s great to be able to play a small part in helping those vulnerable customers. We do the best we can to be an active part of the local community. Once the lockdown is over, people will remember those companies that were helping out.”

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