

Morrisons really helping those in need

Gillian Lawson is Community Champion at the Portobello Road branch of Morrisons supermarket. Speaking to her it is really obvious that this is someone who is in the right job.

I spent a lively half hour with her on the phone today finding out what Morrisons, particularly at her own branch, have been doing before and during the lockdown this summer – and how they can help you now.

Gillian is very keen that due to the changes introduced from this weekend, everyone who needs their help knows exactly what is on offer. She said: “We are not just talking about the vulnerable or the elderly. There are students and families who may need help. If they can’t come to Morrisons for their shopping, then we can go to them. There are no restrictions on this. We know there are some people who are still frightened to come in to do their shopping, and we have many ways of getting the shopping to them. We have Amazon, Click and Collect, Deliveroo and The Doorstep for example.

“The Doorstep is the service where we get the order through the Community Champion phone or there is a Central Hub that people can call. We get their shopping out to them at home the next day for no extra charge.

“We understand there are people who are just apprehensive

about shopping, and they can also order with Click and Collect and then pick up their shopping at a designated place in the car park. That way they don't have to come in and have contact with anyone."

Morrisons also have a Serve our Students service which allows students who may be confined to halls to order online. This is being rolled out in Manchester first, but students can also use Deliveroo to get items delivered to them quickly from a list of 200 or so products.



Gillian Lawson Community Champion at Morrisons
There is information [here](#) about the Click and Collect service.
The shop assistants bring the shopping out to your car for you.

And if you want a box of essentials without the bother of ordering each individual item, then you can find details of these [here](#). One of the boxes is designed to feed a family of four for several days, which sounds like a good idea for busy parents.

There are several Morrisons stores in Edinburgh at The Gyle, Dalkeith, Granton, Moredun, Portobello Road, Gilmerton and on Ferry Road. They have an NHS hour from 6am to 7am Monday to Saturday when anyone with an NHS badge can stock up on their shopping in a calmer atmosphere. On Sundays, they open at 9am for NHS workers and at 9.30 for all other customers.

Gillian explained that Morrison's put around £10 million aside to help food banks all over the UK. Every store got a pallet load of food each week to be donated to various organisations to distribute during the height of the lockdown. This funding was raised from the sale of plastic bags in stores, although the use of plastic bags is something that the supermarket is keen to phase out. They have a 12 week trial running now in eight of their stores to investigate how that will work.

Morrisons say that removing standard plastic bags for life across all Morrisons stores would save 90 million from being used, and would remove 3,510 tonnes of plastic a year.

This was the first supermarket to introduce paper carrier bags at checkouts in all of its 494 stores at the start of 2019. Since then they have proven popular with customers, with one in three switching from plastic to paper bags. But they have really come into their own during the lockdown.

The paper bags used by food banks all over Edinburgh and East Lothian to distribute meals and store cupboard items have been provided free of charge by Morrisons. We have seen these at just about every distribution point we visited over the summer, so there must have been thousands used in this way.



At The Venchie in Craigmillar where they were distributing meals and food packs using the paper bags provided by Morrisons PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

The Donation Station at Morrisons where shoppers can donate to local food banks is generally well-filled – Gillian says that customers are very generous indeed, but of course there is always room for more. There are a couple of ways to do this. While you can make your own choices as to what to donate and put in the Donation Stations, there are also Grab Bags to buy for £2 or £5. Once scanned and paid for, these can be dropped into the Donation Station too. The bags which Gillian fills herself (and which have a loveheart on them) include toiletries and other items that food banks have suggested would be welcomed by those accessing the help.

As well as this they worked during the lockdown with Fareshare, and they also have a contract with The Cook Inn in Musselburgh who get any food which would otherwise go to waste. This is part of the company's Unsold Food to Charity Programme. The Cook Inn prepare meals with the food which can no longer be sold on supermarket shelves, but is otherwise perfectly safe and these meals are given to people who need them in Edinburgh and East Lothian.

Gillian concluded: "I love my job. I love meeting people and I love to talk too. Being able to help was a bit of fun previously when we did dress down days and children came to visit us in the store. This year it has become so, so serious, but if we can help one family it is all worthwhile."