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By Luisa Cheshire

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## Asda combats lockdown loneliness



Asda has launched a new service to help combat loneliness during lockdown by encouraging customers to chat to its delivery drivers

**U**K supermarket chain Asda has launched a new initiative to help combat loneliness, especially heightened by recent lockdown measures, in the lead up to Christmas.

With help from Royal Voluntary Service, Asda is working with its delivery drivers and in store Community Champions to tackle social isolation in the community.

From today (25 November), Asda's 7,500 delivery drivers will have the option to wear a 'Happy to Chat' badge to let customers know they're happy to talk to them while their shopping is being delivered.

The initiative was developed following recognition that delivery drivers have formed a lifeline for some people throughout the pandemic. Asda revealed that almost a quarter of its customers (23 per cent) are only interacting with people once a week - many of whom are delivery drivers.

The Happy to Chat badges will be particularly useful for the 42 per cent of Asda customers who say they are reluctant to start a conversation with delivery drivers for fear of being a burden. While 25 per cent said they would also be more likely to start a new conversation if they knew the other person was 'Happy to Chat' too.

As well as its drivers, Asda's Community Champions will be working with local school children to create Christmas cards for local care homes and those isolated in the community. Special post boxes will be available in larger stores for customers wishing to get involved. Virtual community networking events are also being hosted to bring those that are isolated together to share tips and advice.

Anna-Maree Shaw, CCO of Asda, said: "It's a challenging time for everyone, especially those experiencing loneliness. While Asda colleagues have always

made an effort to have a quick chat and raise a smile, we want to make sure that whether it's in our stores, at the doorstep or in the community - we're here for customers this Christmas."

Asda recently won 'Online Supermarket of the Year' at the 2020 Grocer Gold awards for its online grocery service.

Vice President of Online Grocery at Asda, Simon Gregg, commented: "We've always been proud to have some of the friendliest drivers here at Asda, and never more so than this year. The Happy to Chat badges are a symbol of the great work they do - delivering a little kindness along with their groceries to someone who may be lonely or isolated."

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