

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

7th December 2018

Dear Constituent,

RE: FOOD LABELLING AND ALLERGENS.

Thank you for contacting me recently about food labelling requirements for allergens; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

I entirely share your concern about this issue, following the tragic death of a 15-year-old customer of a Pret a Manger branch at Heathrow Airport. My heart goes out to her family and friends.

The current food information regulations, which date from 2014, require pre-packed foodstuffs to highlight 14 allergens in their labelling. For foods that are not pre-packed, including those in restaurants and takeaways, information on the same 14 allergens must be made available in the store. The intention is that customers with allergies can choose to avoid those foods that put them at risk, but the issue this case has highlighted is that the definition of 'pre-packed food' rests on whether the food was assembled on the premises.

Pret a Manger does this and as such its products are classed as 'non pre-packed', but because it then sells the items from display fridges and in packaging resembling that used by supermarkets, there is a risk that customers may not appreciate that they would need to look for allergy information elsewhere. I regret to say that this appears to be what happened in this case.

I, therefore, welcome the Prime Minister's call for a review of the packaging regulations and the responsibilities of individual companies, and the instructions issued by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP, to his officials to investigate a change in the law. We need to act now to ensure that we have the best possible protection in place.

Recently, during questions to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, I took the opportunity to state my support for tightening the law, but asked if in the meantime, the food industry can work with the Government to improve things sooner, for the better. The Minister responded by saying "*It is important that we take forward this review to ensure that this is done robustly, but it is crucial that businesses step forward and address any concerns that consumers have. It is good business practice and businesses should be doing it.*"

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE