

# Son's thanks for job at Sainsbury's that helped mother cope with dementia

Tom Whipple, Science Editor

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• Health



Doron Salomon's mother had the job for six years

DORON SALOMON/PA

When Doron Salomon's mother first showed signs of Alzheimer's, she was still in her fifties and working as a bookkeeper. Rather than leaving the workforce entirely, in 2012 she applied for a position packing online shopping at Sainsbury's.

Six years later, Mr Salomon has written an extended tribute to the company, which kept his mother in a job even after she had deteriorated to the point where she had to be reminded about her duties each day.

His posts on Twitter, written at a time when dementia charities are urging employers to keep on staff suffering from the condition, have been shared more than 5,000 times — and mark her final week in the job she loved.

After the family spotted the first signs of early onset dementia, Mr Salomon said that it was clear she would no longer be able to work with numbers but was still able to contribute. “In mid-2012 she applied for and was offered a job at a Sainsbury’s as part of their in-store ‘picker’ team, putting together people’s online orders for delivery,” he wrote. She loved the job but became increasingly limited in what she could do. He said that the company continued to accommodate her at its store in Kenton, north London, even as the disease progressed.

“For context, Sainsbury’s have seen my mum deteriorate to the point that every day for the last year or so she has gone into the store confused, as if she’d never been there before. They have always stood by her, going above and beyond to make sure she’s happy and feeling valued.”

This extended to creating roles just for her. “Most recently this has involved giving her the task of cleaning the tote boxes (something staff already did as part of their job).

“To my mum, cleaning the tote boxes became the most important job in the world. If she didn’t do it the store would fall apart. The sense of self-worth and pride has undeniably helped with aspects of her Alzheimer’s, such as giving her something to talk about in social situations.”

He said that on several occasions the family thought that her employment would have to end. “There have been so many times Sainsbury’s could have let her go. Instead, every time my dad was

called in for a meeting, fearing the worst, it was because they had noticed a decline, were concerned about her and wanted to know what more they could do to help.”

This week, now in her 60s, his mother finally left the job. “Even when they probably should have let her go they didn’t until now,” Mr Salomon said. “My mum was emotional but relieved. Senior management have acted with compassion and handled everything with class and dignity.”

Hilary Evans, chief executive of Alzheimer’s Research UK, said that 40,000 people in Britain had dementia under retirement age and she called on more companies to find ways to include them in a similar manner.

“The experience outlined by Doron Salomon highlights the importance of helping people with dementia to remain an active part of their community, and the huge impact this can have on a person’s quality of life. Employers can play a vital role in supporting people with dementia, and Sainsbury’s should be applauded for working with Doron’s mum and family to help her remain at work for as long as possible,” Ms Evans said.

41 comments

[Matthew Cartwright](#)

A great story - and proves that large corporations can be profit oriented and human at the same time.

Sainsbury's are not alone in the retail sector in this regard and indeed there is a long history of social philanthropy but it would be great to see other industries follow suit.

[josie1one](#)

What a lovely story, it brought a tear to my eye. Here on "my" little Greek island where there was a notorious mental hospital there are a number of ex-inpatients, especially "Yiorgaki" ("little George"). He does the shopping locally for many unable to get out for themselves. He is known and hailed by everybody as he passes, head down, bulging bags doing his work, happy as Larry. Everybody (I feel) needs to feel useful to others if only for their self-esteem.

[Lucy Gannon](#)

Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant.

[Sara London](#)

Heart warming! More stories like this please!

[RC](#)

This article has made my day.

I wish newspapers would cover more of these acts of kindness - maybe have a 'media kindness day' where only good news can be covered. I'd like to think there would be enough stories to still fill a newspaper!

[Paul Townsend](#) 1 hour ago

[@RC](#) Yep, mine too.

[Stephen G Spencer](#) 1 hour ago

I too came across a Sainsbury's employee who had a very supportive package of support following her diagnosis and treatment for stomach cancer. It is heart warming to hear of employers, managers and staff colleagues who reach out to a colleague in need.

[Val Marriner](#)

A tip of the hat to the local manager - why wasn't he/she named and praised? And another salute to the colleagues who could so easily have

undermined Mrs Salomon but took the high road instead.  
Good ethos in that particular branch - with permission from higher up  
to support their choices.  
Good story

### Gezobel

Well done Sainsburys indeed!  
Retail is arguably the most under-valued sector in our society, yet one  
of the most essential and efficient. We rightly hear about the value of  
nurses, firemen etc but if we had no shopworkers we would all starve  
or die of the cold.

Every person has value to others and is entitled to the same human  
dignity, whatever their status or health.  
At last a good news story to cheer us all up!

### Richard Mason

I understand 'Clumsier's' point but pity it serves to take the shine off  
this positive story.

### Simon Antiochus

Well done to Sainsbury's. A great example to set for society,

### DIYdad

Quite a contrast with the story of a Premier Inn hotel turning away a  
group of homeless people during the extremely cold weather when a  
benefactor had already paid for the rooms.

### Kevin Moore

excellent story, well done Sainsburys

### Clumsier

A wonderful story, but did she need the wage? Was someone who

needed to work to support themselves and get off benefits denied a job. There are always two sides to a story, and was an old, supported lady, made to feel welcome while someone in need was denied?

PrimaryKey

@Clumsier Whether she needed the wage is irrelevant unless you are suggesting that people with dementia who have support shouldn't work. The most important thing for someone with dementia is to maintain their routine so that they do feel valued. As you have no evidence that Mrs Salomon 'blocked' another person from getting a job you are simply a troll

Clumsier

@PrimaryKey @Clumsier I am not at troll. If she was in the job, someone else was not in it. What more evidence do you need bar her years of employment, or are you suggesting the whole story is fake.

Nick Hall

@Clumsier A bit cynical. I prefer to take the story at face value and I loved it. All credit to Sainsburys, Mrs Salomon and her family. But if you must use your argument then complete the first side of the story. For all we know, her continued employment helped to slow the rate of decline in her Alzheimers and delay the cost of her care which would be at the taxpayers expense. That scenario is comparable to taking someone of unemployment benefit. Anyway, I'd argue that a company which looks kindly on an employee with declining health is also more likely to be generous to jobseekers. The attitudes are compatible not mutually exclusive.

Lucy Gannon

@Clumsier It's not all about money.

Grant McCormack

@Clumsier

She took the job 6 years ago when she was in her 50's and showing "signs of Alzheimer" which hardly makes her "old" and, going on the basis that employers generally give jobs to the best candidates, the 'someone' you mention who "needed to work to support themselves and get off benefits" obviously didn't need the job enough to be better than an "old supported lady" with Alzheimer's.

Philip Davidson

Wow, well done Sainsburys, it is not often that you hear of employers taking a sympathetic view in these situations and as an employer, I will be more helpful in the future!!

JDM

Its quite refreshing to see a story that has a good feeling about it

Challenger

Well done Sainsburys, so wonderful

Dyana Rodriguez

What a wonderful, heartening story! Thank you, Sainsbury's. For my MSc last year, I interviewed a small number people with early stage dementia/mild cognitive impairment in their own homes and day centres. One thing that emerged from my study chimes with Doron Salomon's inexperience: being valued for what one CAN accomplish lifts one's spirits and increases self esteem. One gentleman had various jobs in his church: putting the chairs out before a service, putting tea bags or coffee into cups and mugs, dusting prayer mats and other tasks. He beamed as he told me how happy these jobs made him feel. This

particular church, in East London, is one of a growing number of "dementia friendly" churches. My hypothesis is that this and other "interventions" might defer the progress of dementia. I aim to follow up the same group of people in a few years' time.

### Andrew Middlemiss

We've seen people in our Sainsbury's who clearly appreciate this kind of support. Hats off to Sainsbury's for helping this lady, and for all others who do similar really good work.

### Simon Brown

Sainsbury's has just gone up in my estimation. Nice story (obviously it's a personal tragedy for the man's Mother, her son and family and friends) hopefully it's a practice replicated across other stores and other retailers.

### David Illsley

Everybody needs to be valued, have a purpose in life and the chance to mix with others. Well done to Sainsburys, I've seen this in a few of the other big supermarkets, but never to this extent.

Although I'm a passionate supporter of the minimum wage and think it needs to be increased! I do also believe in certain cases the work is more important than the level of pay.

Many Downs children as they finish education need work in a supportive environment, they would always struggle to compete with other job applicants, thanks to all the employers who take the time and trouble to help support and give purpose to so many disadvantaged members of society.

### Iain

My local Morrison's employs a couple of people with minor mental health issues and are capable in serving at a till. Another server at the same store has a zimmer frame in the till cubicle.



### Gentleman living in Surrey

How refreshing to see a company such as Sainsbury's making society a better place by putting people before profit.

And this is not new: I worked for J.Sainsbury's when I was at school, and will always remember Charlie, our trolley man: he clearly had some minor mental health issues, but he was always helpful towards the customers; and was a genuine "character". Sometimes he would have a bit of strop, but the company stood behind him: family values in a (then) family run company.

### Sarah Martin

*@Gentleman living in Surrey* Was this North Cheam branch many years ago? I worked there and remember a trolley man.

### Polly

I remember him too.. and in another couple,of branches. Also our local Waitrose has a few folks who work really well with minimal support. And people are really nice and tolerant of them if they are a little slow at what they do. Work enhances quality of life.

### PrimaryKey

*@Sarah Martin @Gentleman living in Surrey* No. Kenton

### David Jaundrell

Love it. What a great start to a day.....

### RIII

For me Sainsbury's has always been and will be my number 1 UK supermarket! Great company!

[nora o'mahony](#)

Well done Sainsbury's. Its time to abandon Waitrose and reward such acts of humanity with our support.

[PrimaryKey](#)

[@nora o'mahony](#) I think you will find Waitrose and many other household names have similar good CSR

[James Lawson XIX](#)

After the dreadful stories of the callousness shown to the workforces of companies such as Sports Direct and Amazon, it really is heartwarming to hear of a Company like Sainsbury's who appear to have lead the way for others to follow in the field of human compassion.

Well done Sainsburys. We need many more like you.

[Global Voter](#)

What an amazing company! Love Sainsburys

[Elizabeth Agarwal](#)

Well done Sainsburys.

[Leanora Munn](#)

Sainsbury's seem to do this sort of thing as a very admirable matter of course.

There is mentally and physically incapacitated lady who works in a Sainsbury's where I sometimes shop. She has been there for about fifteen years that I know of.

She used to pack messages, chatting away to the customers to the best of her ability; and sometimes she cleared the tables in the cafe, taking one plate at a time; and I've even seen her dusting shelves. Just lately,

she seems to do not much more than chat to customers and wander about the store looking at things. She's the best advert for the store that I can think of.

David Kennedy

Well done Sainsbury's. That is just brilliant and such a good example to others.

Chris Frankland

Sainsburys has set an excellent example here, which other organisations could and should follow. Alzheimers and dementia sufferers can still provide a useful contribution to society, given the right support.