

Covid-19 Food and Vulnerability: A strategic approach

Triaging the food needs of vulnerable people during Covid-19, and planning emergency food responses at national government and local authority level, to make best use of available resources.

Vulnerable category	Registration	Triage	Options for food response	Questions and considerations
Shielded and cannot access food independently (identified as having specific medical conditions)	Register with national government and triage	Has money for food	Prioritised for supermarket home delivery slot	Could be directed to volunteer shopping, if digital connectivity or online ordering is not accessible (e.g. for older people)
		Not enough money for food	Government food parcel Local authority meals on wheels service & automatic inclusion of children in free school meal delivery options.	Questions on nutritional adequacy for people with clinical conditions; allergens; cultural preferences; suitability for those with limited mobility, cooking facilities (e.g. only a kettle) or physical capability (e.g. opening cans). Hence meals on wheels and tailored local school catering partnerships may be a better or complimentary option, and a good use for available fresh produce and catering packs. Parking fine waivers and ID badges for meal delivery would help avoid unnecessary costs/barriers.
Self-isolating or housebound and cannot access food independently (due to e.g. infection; caring for dependents; ill or disabled with a condition other than those specified for 'shielding'; pregnant; older age groups; experiencing other personal crisis)	Register with Local Resilience Forum / local authority hub and triage	Has money for food (but may have other welfare needs – include checks and questions)	Help with shopping – payment solution for supermarkets and local shops; match with volunteer delivery	Online ordering is a very unlikely option as we understand supermarket home delivery slots are now maxed out. Volunteer delivery solutions (shopping and meals on wheels) are now key to the solutions. Key questions are around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure and reliable payment solutions can be challenging where some people (esp. older groups don't have online payment / mobile phones) Identification of volunteer shoppers, who could be prioritised in the shop when queuing/buying in bulk Government and LRF connections with groups that can coordinate volunteers to do pick-up and deliveries to doorstep – NAVCA, Red Cross, Age UK, NHS Volunteers, Covid Mutual Aid, etc.
			Prioritised for supermarket home delivery slot (<i>?? now looks unrealistic as we understand slots are maxed out</i>)	
			Local authority paid meals on wheels service	
		Not enough money for food (and may have other welfare needs – include checks and questions)	Local authority food parcel with secure payment scheme (perhaps managed by local community trust or other trusted local entity?)	
			Nationally: benefits uplift and suspension of benefits cap; free school meals extension to all children in need identified at local/school level (via cash/delivered food solution); suspension of two-child limit; suspension of No Recourse to Public Funds, etc. Locally: Financial advice: welfare benefits access; debt suspension; mortgage holiday; help with furlough; Council Tax Relief (0%) Locally: Welfare assistance grant to enable shopping by family, friends or volunteer support	The 'money first' principle ensures that as many people as possible can access food themselves in diverse ways; minimising pressure on local authority budgets; minimising social contact; relieving pressure on food banks and emergency services. Financial interventions can be based on increasing income or reducing outgoings, or a combination of both. Advice and options can be provided with the support of organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureaux and other local VCS groups. For children requiring free school meals, cash transfers or vouchers should generally be seen as a fall-back solution, where local catering arrangements are unable to provide – school catering partnerships can also facilitate contact and required safeguarding checks between schools and those families dealing with multiple challenges.

			Local authority free or subsidised meals on wheels service	Meals on wheels may be a better option for older or housebound people, and use available kitchens, skills and surplus fresh produce in supply chain – less suited to food parcels. Volunteers could help with delivery to doorstep.	
			Local authority food parcel – food can be purchased by local authority or donated from supply chain	Available if financial advice and other assistance is exhausted. Volunteers could help with packing; doorstep delivery. Joint purchasing from wholesale between local authorities may be a cost-effective option.	
			Referral to charitable food aid / food bank as last resort, where home delivery of food aid exists	Available only after all other assistance exhausted (charitable food banks are at full stretch; they mainly focus on extreme vulnerability; may struggle with demand, supply and volunteers. Other food aid groups may need to focus on securing food for e.g. hostels, domestic violence refuges, homeless shelters, etc.)	
<p>‘Normal risk’ profile and cannot access food independently</p> <p>(due to e.g. too little money to buy food – either pre-existing low income, destitution or recent job loss, reduced income; five-week wait for Universal Credit, or experiencing other personal crisis)</p>	Register with Local Resilience Forum / local authority hub and triage	<p>Not enough money for food</p> <p>(and may have other welfare needs – include checks and questions)</p>	Nationally: benefits uplift and suspension of benefits cap; free school meals extended to all children who need them at head teacher discretion (via cash/vouchers/catered provision); suspension of two-child limit; suspension of No Recourse to Public Funds, etc. (several interventions possible)	The ‘money first’ principle ensures that as many people as possible can access food themselves in diverse ways; minimising pressure on local authority budgets; minimising social contact; relieving pressure on food banks and emergency services.	
			Locally: Financial advice: welfare benefits access; debt suspension; mortgage holiday; help with furlough; Council Tax Relief (0%)	Financial interventions can be based on increasing income or reducing outgoings, or a combination of both. Advice and options can be provided with the support of organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureaux and other local VCS groups, including those specialising in outreach to e.g. faith groups, those tackling homelessness and other groups supporting specific groups of beneficiaries.	
			Locally: Welfare assistance grant to enable shopping by family, friends or volunteer support		
			Local authority free or subsidised prepared meals delivery service (delivered by volunteers)		Prepared meals (e.g. meals on wheels) may be a better option for some, using available kitchens, skills and surplus fresh produce in supply chain - less suited to food parcels. Volunteers could help with deliveries. Parking fine waivers and ID badges would help avoid unnecessary costs/barriers.
			Local authority food parcel – food can be purchased by local authority or donated from supply chain		Available if financial advice and other assistance is exhausted. Volunteers could help with packing; doorstep delivery. Joint purchasing from wholesale between local authorities may be a cost-effective option.
			Referral to charitable food aid / food bank as last resort, where home delivery of food aid exists		Available only after all other assistance exhausted (charitable food banks are already at full stretch meeting existing need, but may struggle with demand; supply; volunteers; adapting to home delivery. Other food aid groups may need to focus on securing food for e.g. hostels, domestic violence refuges, homeless shelters, etc.)
Key workers		May or may not have enough money for food	Some supermarkets offer key worker times. Some volunteer, catering, delivery and referral schemes are offering food services.	Key workers can be integrated into Covid-19 emergency food response. They may struggle to access adequate food due to shift work, queues, or low income. Children of key workers are kept in school and provided with free school meals. Where necessary to support key worker parents/carers with shift work, breakfast or after-school provision needs to be considered.	