

Mapping of non-shielded vulnerable groups

3 April 2020

Summary

- This paper sets out the scoping work to date and next steps to support the non-shielded vulnerable population; individuals who are at increased risk due to the impact of Covid-19 and require access essential supplies and services. Much help is already available and a key part of this is signposting individuals to that support. The scope of support includes but isn't limited to:
 - **Access to food** (e.g. food supply, food banks and food delivery mechanisms);
 - **Essential supplies** (e.g. medicine, non-food grocery goods such as toiletries and household cleaning products) and
 - **Essential services** (e.g. voluntary/ third sector services (such as food banks and community kitchens), and other local support services that are often provided or sign-posted through these forums such as domestic violence, FGM, mental health, debt management, parenting and youth support. Such services interact with these vulnerable groups regularly at a local level and also provide social contact which is key to many vulnerable individuals.
- In response to an action from the GPSMIG on 25 March, the Cabinet Secretariat undertook work to map non-shielded vulnerable people against available support. Through senior official meetings and drawing on inputs from departments this paper seeks to:
 - Identify the target vulnerable groups to inform scope of the challenge
 - Identify relevant essential services most at risk as a result of C-19 outbreak to inform scope of the challenge
 - Identify the non-shielded vulnerable groups for whom support is already available and how they might best be sign-posted to it, or access it directly via existing services, national corporate volunteer offers, and local businesses or individual groups/volunteers to inform critical activities to support the challenge;
 - Identifying gaps and making recommendations for potential policy consideration to ensure a comprehensive approach to the challenge forward this work.

Identifying TARGET VULNERABLE GROUPS

- There are a broad range of cohorts who could be said to make up the non-shielded vulnerable population. We have identified specific concerns relating to those whom we believe are not sufficiently supported through other means (such as the Chancellor's job retention scheme, or through changes to Universal Credit). Additionally, there are two problems in identifying individuals. Firstly, these cohorts overlap and secondly, those requiring support will be a subset of them (only those who are not currently supported by friends, family or their communities). A significant proportion of this group will not be digitally literate so non-digital routes to contact this group and arrange necessary support must be built in. The Government will need to reach out to these individuals, but self-identification will be needed within these

cohorts to identify the unsupported vulnerable. Work is underway to identify individual level contact information held within government to reach out to this cohort.

- Through the mapping work we have specific concerns regarding:
 - **Home-isolating socially vulnerable people**, particularly those with a physical disability, a hidden impairment, or a cognitive impairment, or students from low income backgrounds who are isolated, and unsupported by their families, and ineligible for support through the welfare system. These individuals and households may need food and essential supplies to be delivered to their home (whether by LAs, VCS or local volunteers).
 - **Vulnerable children and Free School Meal (FSM) households**. There will be significant crossover between the cohort of vulnerable children, and those entitled to FSM, which are available to a wider cohort of 1.3m eligible children. DfE has launched a supermarket voucher service whereby schools send out vouchers to FSM families directly (not available over the Easter holidays). DfE, HMT and HMRC are exploring routing FSM equivalent cash payments via a child benefit uplift. At a future meeting, GPSMIG may need to take a decision on the benefit of a cash payment to replace a voucher focused directly on food.
 - **Individuals with no access to public funds** who are not entitled to claim the majority of benefits, although they can access the Chancellor's Job Retention Scheme, and the contributory benefits system, if they meet the relevant eligibility requirements. EEA migrants do not fall into this group, but some may nonetheless struggle to claim benefits if they cannot provide proof that they meet certain residency requirements.
 - **Rough sleepers/those in temporary accommodation/those experiencing domestic abuse as target groups**. MHCLG's work on housing rough sleepers in hotels has focussed on those who were sleeping on the streets or accessing emergency assessment centres.. However, there is a broader cohort of those in hostels at risk who are also now particularly vulnerable and face multiple complex needs.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- 1) **Building on work undertaken by the Secretariat, cross Government analysts with relevant experience in understanding this cohort to ensure data and analysis to quantify and refine focus on target groups and identify the essential services on which they depend is most effective and robust. This should move beyond cohort headings and look at what datasets are held to enable proactive contact with vulnerable individuals who are less digitally literate.**
- 2) **Seek to ensure and encourage school attendance for vulnerable children and consider whether wider support for their households may be necessary and deliverable**

- 3) **Assess needs to individuals with no recourse to public funds, to establish whether the support currently available to them is sufficient during this period.**

Identifying SERVICES AT RISK

Foodbank/community kitchens

- There are 2000, UK-wide food banks (1200 part of the Trussell Trust network), as well as other local community kitchen services, used by many vulnerable cohorts (including low income/indebted households, lone parents, parents with more than two children, single adult males, those homeless or in temporary accommodation, and asylum seekers). Foodbanks and community kitchens often provide or signpost to wider service (for domestic abuse, mental health, or asylum seeker support).
- Foodbanks are overstretched and undersupplied and undersupplied in light of the C-19 outbreak and restrictions. Whilst supermarkets are working to support foodbanks with financial donations, advertising campaigns, and by lifting buying restrictions for foodbanks, donations from individuals have decreased and channels for distribution are more limited, largely due to an often elderly volunteer workforce self-isolating. There have been reports of smaller foodbanks having to shut their doors.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- 4) **Consider how food banks might be best staffed at this time, and what role Government should play in supporting them. This should include an assessment of options, such as allowing foodbanks access to GoodSam to advertise for volunteers, and more proactive options, such as a national comms campaign appealing for volunteers.**
- 5) **Set out an approach to assuring food supply to foodbanks, including an option including working with major supermarkets to encourage provision of food bank drop off points (supported by comms campaign).**

Charitable provision

- A large number of charities support these vulnerable cohorts but departments are unsighted on their ability to continue provision of support. This is especially important for individuals with mental health difficulties, those at risk of domestic violence, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities and individuals with disabilities. The extent to which these charities are able to continue to operate due to financial and volunteer constraints is unknown.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- 6) **Work with the Charity Commission in prioritising charities to whom excess GoodSAMs volunteers should be directed.**

Unknown risk

- This work is continuing at pace and whilst initial analytical returns from departments have been incorporated there is a risk that individuals or services at risk have not yet been identified and that risks will change over time. Local Government will be aware of risks raised at a local level, and may also be well placed to provide support to

individual groups. Citizens Advice will also be dealing with a different balance of citizen's issues.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- 7) Engage with Local Authorities (and any community-led coronavirus support groups) to identify further at risk groups and at risk services, and to establish where support is best provided at a local level.**
- 8) Engage Citizens Advice on trends they are seeing in citizens unable to access basic food and essential services (including geographical demand).**

SIGNPOSTING to existing services

- In the first instance, those who self-identify as feeling 'at risk' because of C-19 should be signposted to government information and available services, recognising that individuals may have more than one need or vulnerability. Over time, this service may be extended to include data collection (though note that this is non trivial effort) and/or notification services so that individuals can receive personalised help from local or national, private or public support relevant to their context.
- In addition to the information already available via GOV.UK, a prototype for a new service is already in development with contribution from relevant government colleagues. We hope to be able to launch the first iteration during week commencing 6 April, subject to necessary support and sign off to deliver. The GOV.UK team will then iterate the service in the live environment to ensure we are responding to user needs and the help that government wishes to provide. The user map based on existing services is included in Annex A.
- LAs play a critical role in provision of in particular social services but also have a coordination function and signpost individuals to local and national third sector organisations. LAs have an understanding of the vulnerable people within their community through the provision they already provide.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- 9) GOV.UK to deliver a service that signposts users to relevant information and services. Over time this service can be extended to include data collection to enable further, personalised, help. Further work should also include work should also be done with departments on alternate ways of seeking help (including non digital).**

Identifying and addressing GAPS IN PROVISION

- This approach to identifying target groups begins to map demand, though any response will need to be matched by assurance of food, services and workforce supply.
- Food supply - similarly to the shielded cohort initiative, work is required to identify individuals who should be prioritised for home delivery with key suppliers. There is a separate paper on food provision from DEFRA.

- Workforce - DCMS is already working with the VCS community and should work with HMIG on developing a proposal for how best to utilise the surplus GoodSam volunteers not needed for the shielding effort - (subject to analysis above) with regard to:
 - Delivering food and essential supplies to people's homes
 - Supporting any expanded effort to provide food through schools (subject to appropriate DBS validations etc)
 - Supporting the VCS to run foodbanks and community kitchens
 - Additionally, at a national coordination level, redeployment options across the civil service and public sector should be scoped to match workforce supply to emerging demand.

Potential GDPR and data privacy restrictions

- GDPR and PECR will need to be considered to ensure there is nothing to inhibit; charities from identifying previous volunteers who are already specially trained (for example on mental health hotlines); potential information sharing to identify individuals at need; and capturing full complete analytics data on user journeys on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and NHS.uk (owing to the cookie compliance opt in mechanism)

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- 10) **Consideration on this is required at pace, drawing on advice from DCMS and the ICO as needed.**

Setting up the Taskforce on food provision

- Victoria Prentis MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has agreed to lead the new Ministerial Taskforce, supported by David Kennedy, Director General for Food, Farming, Animal and Plant Health as Senior Responsible Officer. This Taskforce will convene Ministers from lead departments (primarily DWP, MHCLG, DCMS, DFE, HO, HMT and DHSC), and will report into GPSMIG. In doing so, it will liaise with other committees as required - in particular HMIG.
- The first meeting of the taskforce took place on Thursday 2 April. There is a separate paper from DEFRA presented to the committee today which provides an update on the work of the taskforce.

- 11) **RECOMMENDED ACTION: DEFRA to finalise Taskforce Terms of Reference and agree the scope of the taskforce**