

Food and Essential Supplies Vulnerability Taskforce Paper

Proposed approach for supporting non-shielded vulnerable access to food and essential supplies during the Covid-19 crisis

Date: 02/04/2020

Summary: This paper sets out our proposed approach for supporting vulnerable people, outside the shielded population, who are in critical need of food and essential supplies due to the impact of Covid-19. It is **not** about support for other essential services.

It sets out a cascade approach where vulnerable people are able to self-identify and be targeted and are signposted or triaged through a series of interventions at local level. This will be developed in the coming weeks.

Urgent work is needed with Local Authorities to understand what support national government can provide. It is also vital to work closely with Devolved Administrations including to ensure that communications are aligned.

Defra has already worked with supermarkets to increase capacity for home deliveries and click and collect. We are also working with key parts of the supply chain and logistical firms to encourage other actions to be taken to increase the potential of food deliveries – e.g. linking wholesalers with amazon.

Because of the challenges involved, this is likely to need to be implemented in an incremental way that will take time to implement.

While we develop the proposition it is crucial we reassure worried communities and representative charities we are acting to support the vulnerable and point them to existing offers of help. As such it is crucial we quickly:

1. ensure active communities around the country are encouraged to keep playing their part as, in addition to local authority mechanisms, they are the primary means of help for this group
2. show progress and direction of travel for this work by publicising some of the plans we have in development and the groups we are working with (possibly including the fact Local Authorities will be the first point of contact for those who cannot access community / retailer support).
3. point people in need of help to Local Authorities, while working with local areas to support and where necessary bolster their capabilities – e.g. through additional bulk food drops

The Covid-19 comms hub in Cabinet Office have a friends and neighbours campaign ready to launch which helps achieve point 1. Defra comms will work with OGDs and

No10 to shape a package around point 2. We will explore how soon in w/c 6 April we could issue this comms, as a pre-cursor to a more developed package.

A process flow diagram is included at Annex A.

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Objective

The objective of this work is support vulnerable people in critical need of food and essential supplies due to the impact of Covid-19, outside those identified as 'Extremely Clinically Vulnerable' by the NHS. We are referring to this as the '**Vulnerable**' group.

We are defining the Vulnerable as those who need help accessing food and other essential supplies as a direct consequence of the current Covid-19 pandemic and who are not able to access it themselves, or through existing support structures, including family/friends/neighbours. These people fall into two broad categories:

1. Those people who are incapable (due to illness, impairment or because they are self-isolating) from accessing the shops; and
2. Those who are not able to afford food / their usual route to food support – e.g. food banks – has become unavailable.

The interventions for these two groups are different, as set out below. The Vulnerable group and estimates of its size (where known) are set out in Annex B.

Proposed long term approach to identifying and supporting the Vulnerable

1. Identifying the Vulnerable

- a. When online, use the new GDS site to provide a central point of registration which includes contact and address details for people to self-identify. Require 'reasons why' they are vulnerable – e.g. access, financial situation, etc. This should enable friends/family/other existing supporters such as carers to register those they are helping. The GDS site will signpost people to existing relevant support.
- b. Supplement this with existing Local Authority data for vulnerable people – particularly those with disabilities who will be at increased risk due to reductions in social services and NHS care (due to reprioritisation and illness/isolation).
- c. Scope out whether additional DWP data is needed to allow us to identify and communicate with
 - i. People with on Personal Independence Payments (PIP), or those still on the Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

- ii. Those over the age of 70
- d. Ensure people are able to register via their Local Authority, via a telephone option.

2. Data Transfer to Local Authorities and supermarkets where appropriate¹

2(i). Supermarkets

- a. Provision of Data - Provide supermarkets with a list of the Vulnerable for prioritisation of:

- i. Delivery slots
- ii. Click and collect

If this data is not immediately available, we can start by providing supermarkets with an expanded list of 'vulnerable characteristics' for filtering – e.g. by >70-year olds plus those who have self-referred via the NHS Shielded Patients List website.

- b. Priority Hours and Food Limits - Make clear that where supermarkets are still operating priority hours for elderly/NHS workers, this should also include:

- i. People with Good Sam App can have priority at physical shops for bulk shopping for other people, and also that they can collect for Click and Collect
- ii. Carers

and that these people should also be exempt from food limits restrictions.

- c. Methods for volunteers to pay for food - Where the Vulnerable need someone to collect food for them (where they are unable to access online systems but are able to pay), find ways for transactions to occur through volunteers.

2(ii). Local Authorities

- a. Identification of the Vulnerable - GDS to provide Local Authorities with the identification data of the Vulnerable (if that capability is possible), supplemented by local authority's own work on identifying vulnerable people, as in (1) above

¹ There are multiple significant data challenges associated with this proposition. We are working with GDS to find the best solution.

- b. Set up a hotline for vulnerable people during the Covid-19 Crisis (where they have not already done so)
- c. For those who are unable to access food (but who can pay for it) the Local Authority will in order:
 - i. Check they have a supermarket delivery slot
 - ii. Ensure that click and collect goods can be transported through:
 - Partnering with a Good Sam or other local community volunteer
 - other locally sourced infrastructure, e.g. Deliveroo, taxis, etc.
 - iii. Provide a Good Sam volunteer who can shop on their behalf
 - iv. Signpost to other charities and other local support arrangements that have already been established in communities
 - v. If no other options – deliver emergency food supply (extending the Shielded Offer)
- d. For those whose ability to afford food has been compromised:
 - i. link them with local food banks;
 - ii. link them with other relevant local charities; or
 - iii. where they both cannot afford it and are self-isolating, deliver emergency food supply (extending the Shielded Offer)

3. Coordination of Volunteers

Volunteering and coordination with local charities is best organised at the local level, for example by Local Authorities. This could include direction of Good Sam volunteers to local charities, or to support individual local people. Functionality to do this through the Good Sam app will need to be explored with the developers.

4. Incremental Roll Out

The above will take time to deliver. In the meantime, we need to understand what support Local Authorities/Local Resilience Forums need to continue supporting Vulnerable people in their communities and to signpost people to local services and organisations. Support for local authorities could for example include more bulk food drops from government or supplementing skills/resources with other public bodies.

5. Communications

Communication will be crucial for reaching vulnerable people with the right information about how to seek help, and in supporting and encouraging the volunteers and neighbours playing their part.

However we must have a clear and robust offer and process behind it to avoid creating more confusion and concern for such a vulnerable audience. It would be deeply counterproductive and reputationally damaging to launch poorly thought

through services, or rush out advice which does not result in adequate support for these people or leaves them bounced between providers.

This work is in hand, in particular to ensure that there is a clear and effective customer journey between national services (gov.uk website), local services, and supermarkets.

In the meantime we must act to reassure the public there is work underway, give them what advice we know is urgent – in particular that services are already available at local level and managed through local authorities / resilience fora, and to make sure self-organising local groups continue to play their part. Defra comms will work with the Cabinet Office coordinating timing of an early announcement with their communities campaign.

Defra will need to work closely with OGDs, LAs and charity partners during the development of the proposition and associated comms campaign to keep reassuring partners and the public that this work is developing at pace and effectively.

An outline approach is outlined in Annex C. Full details of how we reach and activate the different vulnerable groups will be developed further as our understanding of where needs are not being met under current arrangements and urgently undertake insight work.

Further strategic communications advice is at Annex C.

6. Next Steps

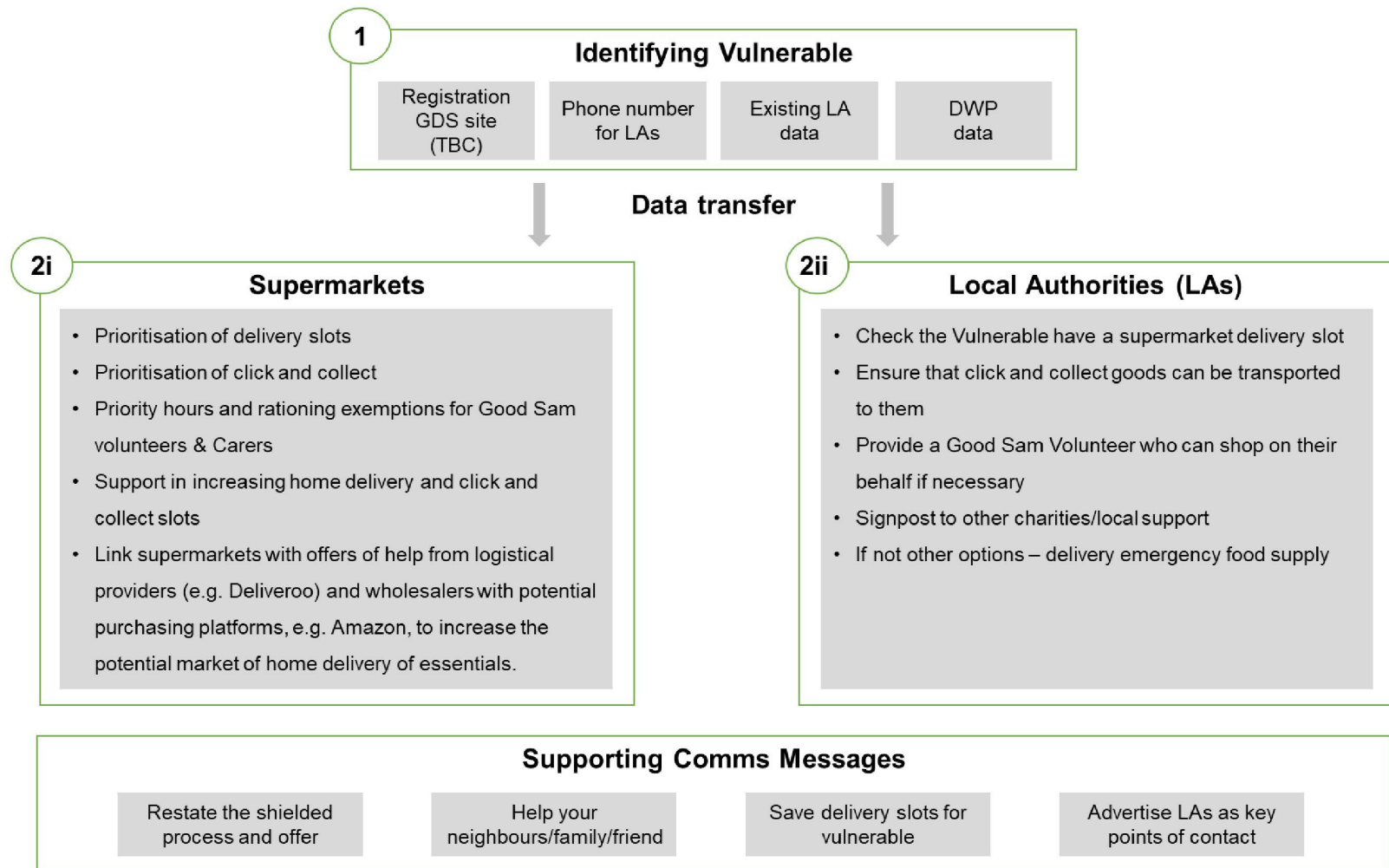
The above is a proposition which presents a series of significant issues that need to be resolved at speed including data, technical solutions (including payments between volunteers and the Vulnerable), legal considerations (including Public Sector Equality Duty), Local Authority capacity, financial and capacity of systems.

Annex A: Process flow chart

Annex B: Vulnerable groups and size estimates provided by Cabinet Office

Annex C: Communications Strategy

Annex A: Process Flow Chart



Annex B: Vulnerable groups and size estimates provided by Cabinet Office

There are many potential vulnerable and overlapping cohorts whose access to food and essential services may be compromised by the C-19 outbreak and consequent social restrictions. We have sought to define these groups through a cross-government commission, led by the Cabinet Office – see table below (this is as of 02/04/2020). The estimated population size of these groups is provided, where data is available although it is important to note that these groups are not mutually exclusive; there is likely to be significant overlap. The intention is to develop this view by setting out where personal level information about individual people who fall into these cohorts is held (either in National or Local Government or large national third sector organisations). This information could be used to push out individually targeted communications for those who are not digitally literate and would be unlikely to identify through the GDS service pathway being developed. This work is continuing at pace and the definition of non-shielded vulnerable is still being worked through so additions or redactions may be necessary.

Cohort	Estimated Size	Possible dataset	Specific data points held for contacting individuals (names, address, NI number, telephone, email)	Department and lead contact
Those in absolute poverty after housing costs	12,900,000	Households Below Average Income?		DWP
Those on low incomes, not in poverty i.e. below 70% but above 60% of the median incomes after housing costs	4,300,000	Tax data?		DWP / HMRC

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Those on very low incomes i.e. below the UC Standard Allowance after housing costs	298,000 claims (not individuals)			DWP
Those made unemployed already	No data Proxy: 500,000 new claims to UC in last 9 days	All UC claimants who are (newly) unemployed. Question if this could be restricted to newly unemployed. Effectively claims made after x date where there is no employment.		DWP
Those at risk of losing low income work	Business survey estimates w/c 30 March	None - suggest we might explore a signposting route from Citizens Advice		
Elderly living alone	2,4000,000	Pensions Credit recipients (low income pensioners) State pension Warm Home Discount data?		DWP BEIS

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Elderly under care of family	<p>Proxy: 1,300,000 sandwich carers in UK</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Individuals receiving informal care:</p> <p>6% of 65-74</p> <p>12% of 75-84</p> <p>31% of 85+</p>	Carers Allowance / Attendance Allowance?		DWP
Disabled, unable to work	2,300,000	ESA support group		DWP
Disabled, in work	4,400,000			DWP
Adults in need of social care	850,000 including self-funders			DHSC/NHS

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Looked after children	England 78,150 Mar 19 Wales 6,845 Mar 19 Scotland 14,897 Jul 17 NI 3,281 2018/19			DfE
Children in need (still with families)	708,840			DfE
Those with severe mental health conditions	4,871,900			DHSC/NHS
Those who are homeless	4,266 rough sleepers 162,660 ^[1] in temporary/insecure housing	CHAIN data (for London) - need a different way to target those with no fixed abode		MHCLG
Those whose residence is tied to their job	90,000			DWP
Sufferers of domestic abuse	2,400,000			HO

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Self-employed	5,030,000	Tax data		HMRC
Gig economy workers	2,800,000 estimate 974,000 0-hrs contracts			BEIS/DWP/HMRC
Black economy workers (e.g. sex workers)	No reliable estimate			
Those who are rurally isolated	3,000,000			DfT?
Asylum seekers and those with no recourse to public funds	29,504 asylum seekers	Immigration control data		Home Office
Workers in vulnerable economies ^[2]	6,900,000			
Full-time students without family support not entitled to UC	225,060 ^[3]			DfE/BEIS/DWP

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Those heavily in debt	2,460,000 ^[4]			
Prisoners (including HMPPS IRCs)	83,189			MoJ
Prison leavers				HMPPS and SRC datasets
Roma, gypsy, traveller community	400,000-500,000			
Victims of violence and abuse	<p>Domestic abuse – 2,400,000 (2019)</p> <p>Sexual abuse – approx. 4,000,000 (2017)</p> <p>Child sexual abuse – (difficult to estimate – approx. 3.1 million non-recent ie those over 18 who experience CSA when a child; police recorded 73,260 sexual offences where data to identify was a child)</p>	National Referral Mechanism		HO

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	<p>Modern slavery – estimated 10,000-13,000 (2014, HO)</p> <p>FGM – approx. 137,000 (2014)</p> <p>Honour-based abuse – (eg honour-based violence 1,353 2014)</p>			
Living in households with violence/abuse (eg children living in household with domestic abuse)	130,000 children live in homes where there is high-risk domestic abuse (Safelives)			HO
Adults receiving continuing healthcare (i.e. has a primary health need)	55,000			DHSC/NHS
Those with personal health budgets or personal budgets	450,000			DHSC/NHS

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to meet their identified health or social care need.				
People with dementia	850,000 in the UK. 676,000 in England			DHSC/NHS
Lone parents	700,000 working-age lone parents 1,200,000 lone parent families in absolute poverty	Child Maintenance?		DWP
Care leavers	29,930 now aged 19, 20, or 21			DfE
Those dependent on drugs or alcohol	Proxy: 268,251 adults in contact with drug and alcohol services			DHSC/NHS
Refugees	19,480	Immigration control data		HO

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Those with multiple complex needs	363,000	Multiple Complex Needs		HMT?
<p>People living in areas without access to sufficient retailers/transport</p> <p>NB we would need to decide how to define sufficient access to retailers/transport, considering e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility to sources of food, as measured by distance to a store or by the number of stores in an area. • Individual-level resources that may affect accessibility, such as family income or vehicle availability. • Neighbourhood-level indicators of resources, such as the deprivation of the neighbourhood and the availability of public transportation. (USDA, 2019) 	<p>Unknown</p> <p>A 2018 Kelloggs Food Desert study estimates 1,200,000.</p> <p>This was based on a very undifferentiated definition of 'deprived food deserts' – an area containing two or fewer supermarkets/convenience stores in the 25% most deprived areas. There are other dimensions that we may want to consider e.g. distance to supermarket, income levels etc.</p> <p>The figures refers to "1.2 million people in low income areas are estimated to be living in areas where many will struggle to access affordable and healthy food." So not necessarily an accurate figure. Depending on how we choose to define this, our number may be higher or lower.,000</p>	<p>Food Chain Survey (Defra) – contains details of all retailer stores and their location within the UK</p> <p>Webscraped data on food store locations (Defra)</p> <p>Food Hygeine Rating Service data on restaurant/takeaway locations (FSA)</p> <p>Access to food stores (DfT)</p> <p>Rural/urban classification geographies (ONS)</p> <p>Can be combined with census data, demographics, indices of deprivation etc to identify areas of limited access.</p> <p>This would need to be overlayed with other data sources such as DWP data to identify individuals in these areas, with due regard to GDPR considerations.</p>	Individual data held by DWP	DEFRA/DfT

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Special dietary groups	2,000,000 with allergens			DEFRA/DHSC
Troubled Families		Troubled Families		MHCLG

[1] Figure is for households, not individuals, and includes: households in temporary accommodation, households owed prevention or relief duty, and households owed main housing duty.

[2] This figure includes individuals working in; wholesale/retail trade and repair of motor vehicles, retail trade (non motor vehicles), air transport, accommodation, food and beverage services, film, TV, video, sound recording and music production, travel agency and tour operators, creative arts and entertainment, Libraries, archives, museums, sports, amusement and recreation activities.

[3] Figure is for the number of HE students from the most deprived quintile (index of multiple deprivation).

[4] Figure is for individuals reporting financial debt as a heavy burden.

Annex C: Communications Strategy

Objectives

- Ensure that NSV know how to access the support available and that they register online or by phone
- Ensure that existing support networks (friends/family/neighbours/volunteers) know how to provide help to the NSV and either;
 - Sign up as a volunteer
 - Help others to register for support or register for them
 - Continue to shop on behalf of others safely
- Ensure that the wider public are aware of the support being provided and understand that they can help others by shopping in store where possible

Audiences

- a. The Vulnerable – see previous definition
- b. Existing support networks
- c. Wider general public (consumers)

Communications risks

The audiences we need to reach provide a number of communications challenges which our strategy must address:

- a. The Vulnerable – this audience will be broad and will have varying needs for accessing information. For example, some will not be able to access online resources. A key challenge for the communications strategy will be to ensure that we are able to reach this audience in the most effective and consistent way.
- b. Wider public – to reach a mass audience and get cut through we will need to make sure messaging is visible across multiple channels. This will require budget. Messaging in this space could possibly contradict central campaign content which is strongly focused on asking people to stay at home.

Strategy

Customer communications will be at the forefront of ensuring that the Vulnerable are made aware of the support available. We will look at options including a mass mail-out using the data gathered, plus utilising existing government touch points with customers and partner channels to signpost the new platform and phone number. To note that budget would be required to carry out this work.

If budget is secured, then we will be able to explore the use of paid for search and other paid media options to build on any direct customer communications and

ensure that those looking for the information will be able to find this as easily as possible.

It will also be crucial for us to work with the food and drink industry, civil society and local authorities to utilise their own communications channels to share relevant messaging and to build broader awareness amongst the wider public and existing support networks.

More broadly, agreed messaging can be embedded in cross government and Defra led communications activity, including earned media, digital, partnerships and campaigns. Cabinet Office have previously explored the delivery of a community focused campaign as part of their wider Covid-19 response and we will look to urgently link in with that work should it proceed.