



COVID-19 - access to food for non-shielded vulnerable people (NSV)

Delivery proposition for consideration at GPSMIG

21 April, 2020



Notes view: 1

Summary & recommendations

- There are an estimated 1.7m at risk of not being able to afford food and 630k people at risk of not having access to food even though they could afford it (see annex 1)
- Progress has been made in increasing supermarket delivery capacity, putting in place local authority and charitable responses, and providing free food parcels and priority supermarket delivery slots to shielded people
- However, the need has not yet been fully met, and Government action is therefore required
- We have engaged local authorities, charities and retailers and expect them to be supportive of the proposed approach
- This proposal was considered and agreed x-gov at Task Force on Friday
- **GPSMIG is recommended to approve the proposed approach and next actions, including:**
 - **funding (£26.25m) for food charities (subject to DCMS / HMT approval);**
 - **the proposed delivery approach;**
 - **the proposed comms approach;**
- **and note the potential funding requirement of up to £7m, subject to HMT approval.**

Key elements of the proposed approach:

Work through local authorities and charities

Provide additional funding for food charities

Provide more prioritised access to online delivery slots

Make people aware of what support is available through a phased, targeted approach

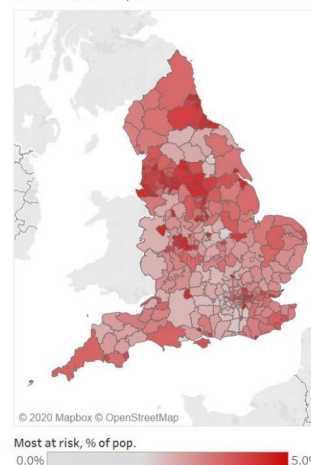
Spread information about what works

Actively monitor and evaluate

Scope and problem diagnosis

- This proposal is about reducing the risk of vulnerable people being unable to access food because they can't afford it, they are self-isolating, or the services they normally rely upon are not available.
- There is support in place – 95% of local authorities have a helpline and are providing support. The problems that require government intervention are:
 - Not everyone knows about the support that is available
 - There are not enough online delivery slots available, and there is no agreed way to prioritise slots for vulnerable people outside of the shielded group
 - Some people in our target group are not online, so are not able to use the online services that are available
 - Local voluntary groups are not yet able to identify and support all of those in need
 - Local authorities are not all able to provide a comprehensive support package, eg although 95% have a helpline and 90% answer within 5 minutes, only 50% are offering shop and drop support
 - Continue to generate data and insights on the problem and what interventions are working
- The proposed approach covers England, because food is a devolved issue. We are actively engaging with DAs including in the Task Force and the senior officials group.

Most at risk, %



Progress to date

The proposed approach builds on the progress already made. The progress made so far includes:

- Putting in place **free food parcels** and **priority supermarket delivery slots** for shielded people
- Local authorities and charities providing **helplines and support** – 98% of local authorities have a helpline and 90% answer within 5 minutes
- Supermarkets increasing their **online delivery / click and collect capacity**
- **Local retailers providing delivery services** and over-the-phone payment options so volunteers can collect and deliver food
- Delivery partners **working together to solve shared problems** eg creating and communicating about trusted ways to pay for volunteers, ID for volunteers (so they can access supermarkets and buy in bulk)
- **Mystery shopper survey** (see sidebar) and **engagement** with local authorities, supermarkets and charities to understand the current landscape and issues
- Engagement with supermarkets resulting in them agreeing to provide **400k extra delivery slots** for non-shielded vulnerable people
- We have engaged with local authorities, supermarkets and charities and expect them to be supportive of the proposed approach

Local authority mystery shopper exercise results:

All local authorities have online information about the support available

98% of local authorities providing a helpline; >90% answer calls in <5 minutes

71% provide signposting to charities

41% provide signposting to local (paid for) food delivery

50% provide direct contact with volunteers for shop and drop

Proposed approach

The proposed approach is a combination of measures by government, local authorities, charities and supermarkets. The proposed delivery elements for government are:

- **Provide funding to food charities** (£26.25m): Fareshare, the largest not for profit food distributor (£24m); the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) (£1.8m) to redistribute surplus food; and Age UK (£450k) to increase capacity of their national call centre (to help a wider group, not only older people). The grants would cover 12 weeks; we estimate it will take from 2 weeks from funding being agreed to Fareshare providing food to people. Star chamber with DCMS and HMT is due on Thursday 23 April.
- **Increase the number of delivery slots for vulnerable people**, working with local authorities and supermarkets prioritise access for those in need – includes Defra building a referral service and supermarkets making available 400k extra delivery slots (already agreed)
- **Help delivery partners to understand what works** and scale it up
- **Inform people about the options available** – it's important that this is targeted to the people most in need so we will take a phased, targeted approach
- **Provide surge call centre capacity** (from within the Defra Group) for national Age UK / local authority helplines
- **Actively monitor and respond** to issues, jointly with delivery partners
- Fully detailed costings are not yet available, but the cost beyond the provision of funding to delivery partners is estimated at under **£7m** for call centre capacity, digital build (based on 10 weeks @ £500k for a digital delivery team and call centre surge capacity) and comms – this estimate is subject to further work and then HMT approval for the release of funds

Triage process for individuals in need of help to buy food:

1. Individual calls local authority or charity helpline (OR is proactively called)
2. If they can seek support from friends or family for local shop & drop, encouraged to do so
3. If not, refer for local shop & drop voluntary services
4. If not, refer for online or phone food delivery ordering services

Proposed approach – actions in the next 2 weeks

- **Build a referral service** to allow local authorities, charities and job centres to refer people for priority online delivery slots – approach is to build and test with 4 early adopter local authorities and then iterate and scale over the following weeks. Key delivery considerations include:
 - A service that is easy to use for local authorities, charities and supermarkets
 - Data protection, accuracy and security
 - Agreeing a consistent approach to triage across all referring organisations
 - Avoiding creating demand / call centre traffic from those who are not in most need
- **Further user research & polling** to test assumptions and proposals and complete detailed equality impact assessment
- Work with retailers to develop and scale a way for people to **order food boxes over the phone**, for those who are not online
- **Communicate** primarily through charities, supermarkets and local authorities; high level national messaging (see annex for further details on the proposed comms approach)
- **Monitor and evaluate** – co-design a reporting dashboard with local authorities and charities to help us continue to understand the evolving situation and the impact of our interventions; continue to monitor any DA actions and implications
- **Develop spend proposition** and identify funding
- Continue to develop understanding of **risks and mitigations**

Delivery confidence, assumptions and risks

The key risks, dependencies and assumptions are:

- **Failure to reach all of those in need**, so that some remain without access to food – mitigating this risk through ongoing monitoring, research and evaluation and engagement with disability charities.
- **Confusion** about the support for shielded and non-shielded vulnerable people – preventing this through targeted approach to comms and delivery.
- **Generating unsustainable expectations and demand** among people who are not the most in need – targeted, phased comms approach is designed to avoid this.
- **Delivery failure** in respect of data management or service design and delivery, resulting in the proposed referral service for local authorities to supermarkets not being ready in time or not working as expected – incremental approach to delivery is designed to mitigate this, starting with a small number of local authorities w/c 20 April to build and test the approach and then rapidly scaling the service to all local authorities.
- **Misalignment of approaches between England and DAs** – engagement with DAs on proposition and targeted comms to seek to avoid this
- **Assumption that people will choose to order food boxes** over the phone, where there is no choice as to the contents of the boxes – approach is to test our assumptions quickly at small scale and iterate based on what we learn
- **Misalignment across government** – mitigated through ongoing engagement with the SRO for vulnerable people and other departments

Annexes

Annex 1: The cohort: estimated ~1.7m unable to afford; ~630k at risk of no access

'Most at risk' includes those people socially isolated or financially at risk now

Change in ability to physically access food:

- 1 **Short-term isolators:** Self-isolating at home due to COVID-19 exposure (will evolve over time)
- 2 **Vulnerable isolators:** Self-isolating at home as following enhanced social distancing
- 3 **Impaired access:** Unable to access food due to COVID-19 impact on essential delivery services
- 4 **Financially vulnerable:** No change in ability to physically access food – but affordability has changed

22m 'potentially food vulnerable'	
2.4m Most at Risk: ~630k Food Access, ~1.6m Food Affordability, ~110k Both Food Access and Affordability	
Category A: unable to leave house, can afford food (11.6m) ~1,100,000 ~55k 'most at risk' ~8,900,000 ~440k 'most at risk' ~1,700,000 ² ~135k 'most at risk'	Category B: unable to leave house, can't afford food (2.3m) ~260,000 ¹ ~10k 'most at risk' ~2,100,000 ¹ ~100k 'most at risk' Difficult to size as a subset of the 1.6m / 130k
n/a	Category C: able to leave house, can't afford food (7.9m) ~7,900,000 ~1.6m 'most at risk'
No change in ability to afford food	Potentially unable to afford food due to COVID (already severely food insecure)

Change in ability to financially access food:

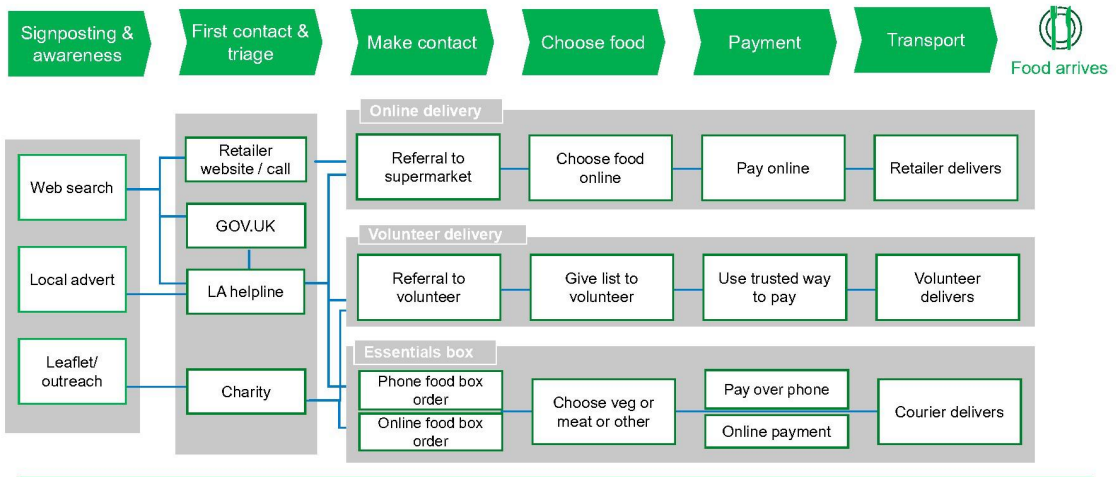
1. Based on 19% of individuals reporting a >25% loss of income, assume this proportion can no longer afford. We have not removed pensioners as the Food Foundation report does not suggest they are removed from the figures. 2. Assume none are impacted by loss of income due to COVID due to benefit level. Note: isolated defined as those lonely or self isolated (IoT survey), financially at risk now defined as the estimated number of the moderately and severely food insecure who may have lost their jobs or be facing food shortages due to reductions in income (equates insecure with low earners) Source: ONS, Food Foundation UK, DH, University of Cambridge, PHE

Annex 2: Summary of proposed actions to solve problems

☆ = not in place anywhere yet; all other proposals exist at least at small scale

Area	Problem	Local gov	Charities / Vols	Retailers	Central Gov
Awareness	People don't know what options are available to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mailshots; website signposting; helplines; active outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National helplines, broadcast comms, local contact, leaflets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Link to GOV.UK content in ads / on websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ GOV.UK content; broadcast / social comms; provide lines for delivery partners to use; paid adverts in local media for LAs
Identify & match to targeted support	Local authority advice and support is not universal / sufficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ LGA: support LAs to agree best practice advice / support and put in place in high risk areas 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Support info-sharing among LAs
	Lack of available online delivery click and collect slots / capacity to increase slots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triage and refer people who call helplines for reserved delivery slots OR essential goods boxes 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate x slots per week for NSVs, to be triaged and referred by LAs • Provide whitelisting for ess. goods box delivery to allow LA referrals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Provide referral mechanism through GOV.UK for local authorities, & charities to refer those in need for delivery slots
	Lack of linkup between volunteers and those who need help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Referral of people who call for help through GoodSam app/ other LGA: Support sharing info and experiences among LAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide volunteers through local authorities • Provide cross-charity ID cards / letters to volunteers (NEP W/P) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow bulk purchasing by volunteers • Allow priority access for volunteers with cross- charity ID card 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Fund Age UK helpline; provide surge contact centre capacity if required
Food Supply & delivery	Need to safeguard volunteers and NSVs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide triage / validation of need before referring to volunteer orgs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DBS check and train volunteers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Help GoodSam to onboard volunteers if needed (EA)
	Some NSVs not willing / able to use online services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone helpline with referrals to charities / volunteers / phone ordering service for boxes of essential goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Refer people to phone-based order service for boxes of essentials • Telephone / local referral to trusted volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide telephone ordering service for a limited range of goods ☆ Provide priority access to order (paid for) boxes of essentials 	
	Lack of trusted way to pay for volunteers / NSVs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comms on trusted ways to pay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comms on trusted ways to pay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 'volunteer cards' • Comms on trusted ways to pay • Accept phone payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Comms on trusted ways to pay (e-vouchers, plastic vouchers and open loop vouchers); ☆ Provide content for partners
	Volunteers harassed for bulk / multiple trips		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cross-charity ID cards / letters 		
Monitor & Adapt	Need to understand impacts of interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Report on contact and fulfilment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Report on contact and fulfilment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Report on take-up and fulfilment of reserved delivery slots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Collate data into a dashboard Mystery shopping/ Surveys of NSVs

Annex 3: Proposed food supply journeys for isolated NSV people



Annex 4: Communications: strategy

Objectives and Audiences

1. **Support those providing help:** Help mobilise existing support networks by encouraging those who are able to provide assistance to friends, family or neighbours who are unable to access food (but can afford it) by either collecting food and supplies for others or by shopping in store to free up delivery slots for others. Ensure clear advice through partner networks (charities, LAs etc).
2. **Inform those who need help:** To ensure that the right people get the right support for their needs by directing those who need help (and can afford food) to information which clearly explains what steps they can take to get access to food.

The target audience for those who need help is estimated at 660,000. This is for England only. It is estimated that the a large proportion of the audience are over 70 (530k) and that the highest concentration of the "most at risk" is in the North East and North West. These figures currently includes those who may also be unable to afford food. Our targeting plans will also factor in low online usage, BAME audiences and accessibility needs for disabled audiences



Strategy

A phased approach that focuses on making sure that we share the right messaging with the right audiences, in a way which prioritises the most in need but limits demand on LA and partners.

Phase	Purpose	Audience
Phase 1	Build awareness of helping others messaging amongst those who can provide help (in train)	Those who can provide help
Phase 2	Work with intermediaries including local authorities and charity groups to share messaging with hard to reach and most in need audiences via existing direct or local channels, signposting to local level support options e.g. the elderly, those with disabilities	Those who need help (via intermediaries)
Phase 3	Wider communications to act as safety net to capture anyone that needs support and may have been missed through local and direct communications. Nationally coordinated comms (using local & national channels) will direct to online guidance or other centralised point of contact (once this is established).	Wider public to capture those who need help

Annex 5: Communications: implementation

