



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

**George Eustice MP**  
Secretary of State, Department for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs

Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577  
defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk  
[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

To all MPs  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

15<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear colleagues,

**Food and Essential Supplies to the Vulnerable Task Force implements new fund for the financially vulnerable**

I am writing to update you on what we are doing to support those who need it most as a result of the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic.

This work has been the focus of the Food and Essential Supplies to the Vulnerable Task Force, chaired by Defra Minister, Victoria Prentis MP, for the past ten weeks. The taskforce's membership spans departments across government including Housing, Communities and Local Government, Work and Pensions, and ministers from the Devolved Administrations, who have been closely engaged on proposals, and highlights how across Government we are working to support people.

We understand that a number of people have suffered an acute income shock owing to restrictions which have been put in place to save lives. That is why the Chancellor has set out an unprecedented package of support to protect jobs and livelihoods across the United Kingdom. As a Government, we have been clear throughout that we will do whatever it takes to support people through this challenging time.

As such, on the 10th June the Prime Minister announced additional funding of £63 million for local authorities in England to help those who need it most due to the impact of coronavirus. Among those able to benefit will be families with children who, during school term time, would normally receive free school meals. As that scheme cannot continue through the summer holidays, we have stepped in to ensure parents and children can access the support they need.

Supporting jobs and livelihoods for people is just one part of a broader programme of work underway to assist those who are vulnerable. Further information on other support mechanisms currently in place for those who either cannot access or afford food can be found in Annex A.

Yours sincerely,

**GEORGE EUSTICE MP**



## Annex A – Additional support available to non-shielded vulnerable individuals

The Ministerial Task Force chaired by Defra Minister, Victoria Prentis MP, was set up on 2 April 2020 to ensure that non-shielded vulnerable individuals have access to food and other essential supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The taskforce's membership spans departments across government and includes ministers from the Devolved Administrations, who have been closely engaged on proposals.

The work of the Task Force is divided into two groups: **non-shielded** (those who are not clinically vulnerable but may have difficulty accessing food due to disability or having to self-isolate) and **economically vulnerable** (those who are unable to afford food and other essential supplies due to the economic impact of COVID-19).

### 1) Support for non-shielded individuals that are unable to access food

- **Aim:** To ensure that non-shielded vulnerable individuals such as those with disabilities or those who are self-isolating can access supermarket delivery slots.
- **What has been achieved:**
  - The establishment of the COVID-19 Supermarket Referral Scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to put non-shielded vulnerable individuals in contact with supermarkets so they can secure an online delivery slot.
  - Local Authorities and some charities can refer non-shielded vulnerable individuals to supermarkets.
  - The web-based referral system is now live for extending the scheme to all Local Authorities.

### 2) Support for the economically vulnerable

- **Aim:** To support those who cannot afford food and other essential supplies due to the economic impact of COVID-19. One strand of this work is the distribution of funds to frontline food charities, and the other is providing additional funding to Local Authorities to assist those who cannot afford food and other necessities.
- **What has been achieved:**
  - Defra received £13m from DCMS to fund the Food Supply for the Vulnerable - Support for Frontline Charities Programme. This was topped up by £3m from Defra.
  - The programme supports frontline food charities and is delivered through charity partners including WRAP, FareShare and other food distributors.
  - On 10th June, the Prime Minister announced additional funding of £63m to support those who cannot afford food and other essential supplies. This will be allocated to Local Authorities and support will be provided to people in severe financial difficulty at the discretion of Local Authorities.

With regards to the shielded programme, which is led by MHCLG, significant progress has been made in this area:

### 3) Support for shielded individuals

- **Aim:** To provide food parcel deliveries to those who are clinically vulnerable.

- **What has been achieved:**

- As of 9 June, over 2.8m food parcels have been delivered to those who are shielding.

- Defra continues to encourage those who no longer need food parcel deliveries to deregister.

Guidance for those unable to access food and essential supplies can be found on the following gov.uk webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-accessing-food-and-essential-supplies>