

First food parcels delivered to clinically vulnerable people

- Government confirms first boxes have been delivered to those at highest risk from coronavirus as biggest effort to deliver supplies to those in need since World War Two begins.
- 1.5m clinically vulnerable people have been advised by the NHS to stay at home for 12 weeks and be shielded from coronavirus. 900,000 vulnerable people have received letters from the NHS giving them guidance this week
- First of 50,000 free food boxes containing essential supplies and household items such as pasta and tinned goods will be delivered this weekend

The first food boxes have been delivered to those vulnerable people being shielded from coronavirus as the Government moved to support those most in need, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick announced today (Sunday 29 March).

The first 2,000 food parcels have already been delivered this weekend to those who cannot leave their homes because severe health conditions leave them most vulnerable to the virus.

More parcels are expected to go out next week from wholesalers across the country, bringing the first set of deliveries to more than 50,000. Depending on demand, hundreds of thousands of boxes could be delivered each week.

The packages contain essential food and household items such as pasta, fruit, tinned goods and biscuits, for those who need to self-isolate at home for 12 weeks but have no support network of family or friends to help them.

Since Monday, 900,000 extremely vulnerable people received letters from the NHS giving them guidance on how to shield from coronavirus. In total up to 1.5m will be asked to be shielded in this way. Others who did not receive letters but think they are part of this clinically vulnerable group should contact their GP.

It is part of a support network the Government is working around the clock to establish across the country, spearheaded by the Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

This weekend sees the start of extraordinary steps to support the most clinically vulnerable, while they shield from coronavirus.

We will support these people at this difficult time, and the scale of an operation like that has not been seen since the Second World War.

This is an unprecedented package of support and I want to thank the food suppliers, local councils and everyone who has come together to create this essential service in just a matter of days.

Andrew Selley, CEO of Bidfood, and Hugo Mahoney, CEO of Brakes, said:

At a time of national crisis the foodservice industry's two largest distributors are coming together to work with the Government to create packages of food and essential supplies that will be delivered to vulnerable people as part of the Local Support System.

In these difficult times, we're proud to join forces and play such a vital role in supporting people in need during their period of isolation. Together we are experts in food service and our distribution networks reach into every corner of the country. Our highly professional drivers and warehouse teams will be keeping the wheels turning in this vital national endeavour.

The government is working with a partnership of the food industry, local government, local resilience and emergency partners, and voluntary groups, to ensure that essential items can be delivered to those who need it.

Medicines will be delivered by community pharmacies and groceries and essential household items by food distributors, working with supermarkets, to ensure they do not worry about getting the food that they need.

The parcels, which will be left on the doorstep, will include pasta, cornflakes, tea bags, tinned fruit, apples, rolls of loo roll and biscuits.

- Food deliveries are currently part of a national service, as part of a wide range of support for extremely vulnerable people and are being organised by government in partnership with the grocery industry, local government and local resilience forums.
- Local authorities are working across the country with local partners and voluntary groups to meet their communities' needs.
- Those who request it will receive ongoing communications to reassure them that their ongoing medical needs will be met by the NHS.
- Community pharmacies are continuing to supply medicines.
- Those in need of social contact will have their details passed to local authority hubs, who will make contact and offer support.