

WIRRAL COVID-19 RESPONSE WIRRAL EMERGENCY FOOD HUB

GUIDANCE FOR PARTNERS, REFERRAL AGENCIES AND COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

*Version 1
Week Beginning Monday 30th March 2020*

**WIRRAL
CORONAVIRUS
HELPLINE
0151 666 5050**

Visit www.wirral.gov.uk/coronavirus or follow us at
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Preserve life | Protect the vulnerable people in our communities
Safeguard our children and young people | Support local businesses and the economy

WIRRAL **NHS** Public Health England

**CORONAVIRUS
PROTECT
YOURSELF
& OTHERS**

INTRODUCTION

Wirral Council and community food providers have come together to make sure vulnerable residents don't go hungry during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

Feeding Birkenhead, Supporting Wirral, Wirral Foodbank and other third sector food providers, are coordinating efforts and centralising their bulk food collection and distribution operations at a new Emergency Food Hub, managed by Wirral Council.

Residents experiencing difficulties in accessing food can visit www.wirral.gov.uk/foodhelp to submit their details online using a simple form or call the Wirral Coronavirus Helpline (0151 666 5050, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). **Residents should be encouraged or supported to use the online referral form wherever possible.**

Residents are also encouraged to visit www.wirralinfobank.co.uk for details of shopping and delivery services provided by community groups in their local area. The Infobank has an easy-to-use search facility which shows what help is available, simply by inserting a postcode. The Infobank also has a list of social supermarkets in Wirral.

Wirral children who normally get free school meals will receive vouchers to cover the cost of food as part of a partnership between the Council and local schools. This arrangement will be in place until the Government rolls out its intended national scheme to support children on free school meals. To further ease the pressure on families, the council will also provide the vouchers to eligible children through the Easter holidays. For more information on this scheme, go to <https://wirralview.com/news/meal-vouchers-wirral-schoolchildren>

Residents requiring financial assistance can continue to apply online for www.wirral.gov.uk/benefits-and-money/local-welfare-assistance

GENERAL GUIDANCE

There are two ways residents can be supported by the food network:

- Delivery of food hampers direct to their home;
- Being issued with a digital or physical gift card for a specified supermarket which can be exchanged for food at a local supermarket.

The following are eligible for food hamper delivery:

- Vulnerable residents who have been advised by NHS England to shield themselves for 12 weeks (government guidance available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19);
- Residents who are at risk because they are over 70 and/or have an underlying health condition;
- Residents / households in self-isolation as a result of coronavirus symptoms and who have no other means of getting food delivered (e.g. by a family member or via supermarket or other delivery services).

The following are eligible to receive a gift card for use in a local supermarket:

- Those not in vulnerable or at risk groups and/or who are not self-isolating but who are unable to buy food as a result of financial hardship. There may be some individuals in this category who may require a delivery for a specific reason and they therefore may be eligible for a food hamper.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Emergency Food Hub operates from 9am to 5pm weekdays. Requests for support received via the Helpline or online by 3pm will be processed by the Hub and hampers delivered the same day wherever possible. Requests for support received after 3pm will be delivered the following day. Residents will receive a phone call or text message to confirm delivery in advance. Deliveries will be made safely to the doorstep in line with social distancing measures and government guidance.

Digital supermarket vouchers will be issued by text or email within 24 hours of receiving the request subject to the appropriate checks being made. Delivery of physical supermarket gift cards (i.e. printouts) will be the same timescales as food hamper deliveries above.

An out of hours arrangement is in place for emergency food hamper deliveries to take place at the weekend should this be necessary (between 5pm Friday to 8pm Sunday). Residents calling the Helpline over the weekend to request support will be automatically re-directed to the Council's out of hours service. Digital or physical supermarket gift cards will not be issued over the weekend.

COMPLETING THE ONLINE FORM

Applicants need to complete a simple form, either online or with support via the Helpline. The form asks for key information such as number of people in the household and any specific dietary requirements or allergies. **All requests need to be submitted via the online form to be added to the Emergency Food Hub's workflow and delivery schedule. Postcode details are essential to ensure deliveries are made accurately and to help us identify communities where people are most in need of support.**

A third party (e.g. a carer or community / voluntary sector organisation) can call the Helpline or complete the online form on someone else's behalf as long as they have permission to share their contact details and other information. **Agencies who are completing the form on someone's behalf should include their details in the form where indicated, stating the name of their organisation and including the word 'assessed'.**

The online form asks residents to identify whether they have been advised that they need to be shielded. A GP letter has been circulated to patients identified as part of the shielding cohort. All patients who have received this letter and are requiring support are being asked to register at the following link www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable or ring the helpline number 0800 0288327. Those who are in urgent need of food may contact the Council directly.

If residents identify that they need additional support and/or practical advice in respect of benefits or other issues, they can be referred to Citizens Advice Wirral using the partner referral form at <https://citizensadvicewirral.org.uk/partner-referral-form/>

If residents wish to pay or would like to access a shopping or delivery service in their area rather than receive the emergency food hamper, the www.wirralinfobank.co.uk has an easy-to-use search facility which shows what help is available near to where they live, simply by inserting their home postcode. This includes help with shopping and delivery of groceries. The Infobank also has a list of social supermarkets in Wirral.

Wirral Change can support residents who may have barriers to accessing the Emergency Food Hub service via the Helpline or online form if their first language is not English or if they have other needs. Please call or 0151 649 8177 or email info@wirralchange.org.uk for advice and guidance.

HOW REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT WILL BE MANAGED

A database will be generated to manage requests submitted via the form which will be managed by the Emergency Food Hub. This will include scheduling the delivery of food hampers based on the information received and issuing supermarket gift cards to those in financial hardship via text, email or in print to their home address. The mechanisms for managing requests will be reviewed on a daily basis to identify issues and resolve.

Emergency Food Hampers

Emergency food hampers are likely to contain enough dried, ambient and fresh food to last 7 days (where supplies are available) and may also include essential items such as toothpaste and where relevant female hygiene products. Outside of basic dietary requirements, hampers will be prepared on the basis of providing balanced and nutritional meals and according to stock available. The quantity of food will be dependent upon the number of adults and children in the family. Bespoke orders will not be possible.

Once the system is up and running and database is in place, checks will be made by the Emergency Food Hub to monitor repeat requests and action will be taken (e.g. the resident will be contacted to check on their situation and understand if alternative support might be available in respect of accessing food). This contact will be co-ordinated by Citizens Advice Wirral working with the Emergency Food Hub.

Supermarket Gift Cards

Supermarket gift cards will be issued via text or email following a basic check undertaken by the Council in line with arrangements previously in place in respect of issuing food vouchers. If the resident does not have a smart phone or email address, a paper printout of the gift card will be delivered to their address.

Gift cards for a choice of supermarkets will offered where possible, however in the majority of cases the gift card will be issue for the supermarket nearest to where the resident lives (based on postcode).

Voucher amounts will be as follows:

- £30 single person
- £50 couple
- £70 1 child in household
- £80 2 children in household
- £90 3 children in household
- £100 4 or more children in household

A repeat request for a supermarket gift card (i.e. on the basis of ongoing financial hardship) will result in a referral to Citizens Advice for advice and support, e.g. in respect of benefits, prior to a further voucher being issued. This contact will be co-ordinated by Citizens Advice Wirral working with the Emergency Food Hub.

Wirral children who normally get free school meals are now receiving vouchers to cover the cost of food. There are plans for a Government scheme to support children eligible for free school meals. This is however not yet in place and the Council is working with local schools to bridge the gap in the meantime. Schools will be contacting families direct to ensure they can access this support.

Options are also being explored to make vouchers to available for Wirral's social supermarkets and this guidance will be updated accordingly.

Please direct any queries about this document by email to:

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