

Supporting Vulnerable People COVID-19 FAQ's

Updated 3 November 2020 by DfC/Belfast City Council

Q1: Can I get a food package delivered to me in the same way that I did in May?

- Food packages were introduced by DfC in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and were a short term measure to support those who were advised to shield by the Department of Health. This support has now ended and food packages are no longer available.
- We are acutely aware of the ongoing needs of the most vulnerable in our society and of the need to ensure they have access to alternative sources of help including access to food.
- You can visit the **AdviceNI** website for more information about supports and services available to you adviceni.net
- A more sustainable long term support offer has now been developed by the Department for Communities and Councils.
- The Department has invested £800k of financial support to Fareshare, who are working in partnership with local community partners (including but not limited to foodbanks), to ensure adequate food infrastructure and additional supply is in place across NI until the end of March 2021.
- Fareshare is a food redistribution charity, who have been brought on board to help supply community food providers. Therefore, Belfast City Council is encouraging local community organisations involved in the provision of food to vulnerable people, to sign up to a partner agreement with Fareshare ASAP, as that is the most effective method of securing ongoing food supply. Contact Méabh Austin to find out more Tel: 028 9024 6440.
- Anyone needing help with accessing food should contact the **COVID 19 Community Helpline** where an advisor will match them with local help and support tailored to their circumstances. Freephone 0808 802 0020, text ACTION to 81025, or email covid19@adviceni.net

Q2: I've been asked to self-isolate but if I do, I have no way of getting access to the food I need. Can I get assistance with this?

- Have you family or friends who would be able to help by shopping for you and bringing it to your home?
- Most of the larger supermarkets offer online delivery options and during COVID many have increased their delivery capacity with many more delivery slots available. If you are not able to secure a delivery slot the smaller shops such as Spar, Eurospar and Vivo stores as well as a large variety of independent retailers now offer home delivery.
- If you are a vulnerable consumer, you may be entitled to a priority online delivery slot. A list of the stores offering this service and their direct telephone number is available on the Consumer Council website / [Vulnerable Consumers](#).
- If you still need assistance, the **COVID-19 Community Helpline** will connect people to a wide range of supports including assistance with access to food that are available locally. Contact Freephone 0808 802 0020, Email: covid19@adviceni.net Text: ACTION to 81025.

Q3: I can't afford to feed my family. Where do I go to get support?

- The **COVID-19 Community Helpline** will have advisers on hand who will be able to talk through your circumstances and offer you advice as well as matching you to a wide range of support services. Freephone 0808 802 0020, text ACTION to 81025, or email covid19@adviceni.net
- There are also a wide range of resources available on the www.CovidWellbeingNI.info website. These resources are designed to help those whose mental health and emotional wellbeing have been impacted by the pandemic.
- The Department for Communities has introduced a short term financial support package for COVID-19 living expenses payable in the form of a grant through the **Discretionary Support**

scheme. If you or a member of your immediate family has been affected by COVID-19 you can apply for the **COVID-19 grant payment.** The grant is payable for short-term living expenses if you have a positive COVID-19 diagnosis or you are in self-isolation. Specific eligibility criteria must be met in order to receive the grant. You can contact the finance support service on Freephone 0800 587 2750 or you can make an application via the [COVID 19 Grant Application. Further information and Eligibility for the COVID 19 Grant](#)

- **Make the Call.** An Advisor will provide a full assessment of all income and benefits to make sure individuals are getting all the benefits, services and supports they are entitled to. Contact: Freephone: 0800 2321271 or visit [nidirect - Make the Call](#)
- **Income Related Benefits** are available dependant on income levels, health status and National Insurance contributions.
 - Universal Credit. Web Link: [Universal Credit. Web Link: Claim Universal Credit Online](#)
 - New Style Employment and Support Allowance. Web Link: [Claim New Style Employment and Support Allowance](#)
 - New Style Job Seekers Allowance. Web Link: [Claim New Style Jobseekers Allowance](#)

Q4: I am afraid to leave the house to go to the shops as I was asked to shield last time. Can I get my shopping delivered?

- Most of the larger supermarkets offer online delivery options and during COVID many have increased their delivery capacity with many more delivery slots available. If you are not able to secure a delivery slot the smaller shops such as Spar, Eurospar and Vivo stores as well as a large variety of independent retailers now offer home delivery.
- A list of the stores offering this service and their direct telephone number is available on the Consumer Council website / [Vulnerable Consumers.](#)
- There are other online resources to help secure a delivery – ‘[InYourArea](#)’ is a collaboration by Belfast Live and small businesses to help advertise who is offering delivery in each postcode area. There is a map on the Consumer Council’s website.
- If you have access to or use Facebook then ‘[Who is delivering? Northern Ireland](#)’ is a Facebook page that shares information on who is delivering fresh food, groceries and pre-made meals in your area. The [interactive map](#) will allow you to see what is available near you.
- If you still need assistance, the **COVID-19 Community Helpline** will connect people to a wide range of supports including assistance with access to food that are available locally. Contact Freephone 0808 802 0020, Email: covid19@adviceni.net Text: ACTION to 81025.

Q5: I am wary about going to my local chemist/pharmacy as I am extremely vulnerable. Can you help me to get my prescription delivered?

- If you are concerned about going to your local chemist/pharmacy, have you family or friends who could help?
- Many chemists/pharmacies are offering their own delivery service. You could check if any chemists/pharmacies in your area are offering this service.
- Your GP should ask which pharmacy you would like to collect your prescription from at the time of ordering – they may also be able to advise which ones locally are able to deliver or you can nominate one that you know delivers if you have found out in advance.
- If you don’t have family/friends who can help or if there aren’t any chemists/pharmacies offering a delivery service in your local area, you should contact the Freephone COVID-19 Community Helpline where an adviser will discuss your circumstances and connect you to appropriate services and supports including volunteer led prescription delivery services in your area. Freephone 0808 802 0020, Email: covid19@adviceni.net Text: ACTION to 81025)

Q6: I am struggling with the pandemic and am worried and anxious. Can I get help or talk to someone?

- The **CovidWellbeingNI** online hub is a website that offers a range of information, self-help guides and ways to get help to support your mental health and wellbeing during and after the Covid19 pandemic. Web Link: [CovidWellBeingNI Hub](#)
- If you need to speak to someone you can contact the **COVID-19 Community Helpline** (Freephone 0808 802 0020, Email: covid19@adviceni.net Text: ACTION to 81025) where an adviser will be on hand to offer advice and referral to appropriate support to meet your needs.
- You can also visit the **AdviceNI** website for more information about supports and services available to you adviceni.net
- If you feel you still need help or advice, please contact your GP.

Q7: I have been asked to self-isolate but if I do I won't have any income. Can I get any financial assistance?

- The Department for Communities has introduced a short term financial support package for COVID-19 living expenses payable in the form of a grant. If you or a member of your immediate family has been affected by COVID-19 you can apply for the **COVID-19 grant payment**. The grant is payable for short-term living expenses if you have a positive Covid-19 diagnosis or you are in self-isolation. Specific eligibility criteria must be met in order to receive the grant. You can contact the finance support service on freephone 0800 587 2750 or you can make an application via the website [COVID 19 Grant Application](#) [Further information and Eligibility for the COVID 19 Grant](#)
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Q8: I can't afford to heat my home or pay for electricity. Can I get any assistance with paying for utilities?

- **The COVID-19 Community Helpline** will connect people to a wide range of supports including assistance with fuel costs that are available locally. Contact Freephone 0808 802 0020, Email: covid19@adviceni.net Text: ACTION to 81025.
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