

The information Trussell Trust can provide combines generic guidance (either to the UK   
as a whole or to specific nations) with our specific guidance on food bank operation.

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In the FAQs that follow,, contents new to this edition is shown in red text **like this**.

New contents from earlier in the same calendar week is shown in green text **like this**.

General information and questions about the virus

Please note that this information is subject to change. We will endeavour to keep you as updated as possible. However, for the latest information please follow the links below.

The implications from last week’s budget are not yet fully clear. Where there is anything relevant, we will include it in future updates.

**Generic government guidance**

[For the public](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public)

[For employers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19)

[For employees and benefit claimants](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-support-for-employees-benefit-claimants-and-businesses)

[For over 70s and those with underlying health issues](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults)

[**NHS guidance for the public**](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

**Guidance issued in each part of the UK:**

[England](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

[Northern Ireland](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus)

[Scotland](https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/wuhan-novel-coronavirus/) Information is basic and mainly travel related

[Wales](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/) A selection of posters in English and Welsh are available here.

[For all areas](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

**What is coronavirus?** 

Coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. This strain, COVID-19, is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020.

**COVID-19 – the symptoms:**

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection:

* A new, continuous cough
* A high temperature

If you have these symptoms, you should stay at home for 7 days. If someone else in your household has these symptoms, you should stay at home for 14 days.

You should call NHS 111 or go to the [NHS 111 coronavirus advice website](https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19) if

* you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
* your condition gets worse
* your symptoms do not get better after 7 days

Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment.

**How can we** **prevent the spread of coronavirus**?

**Handwashing**

Handwashing is the best way to prevent infection. Hands should be washed regularly using hot water and soap for at least 20 seconds. Hands should be washed before and after cooking and eating, on arrival at work, after using the toilet and after coughing or sneezing.

If soap and water is not available, then antibacterial hand gel can be used. This must contain more than 60% alcohol to be effective.

You should avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

Signs should be displayed throughout work premises, kitchens and bathrooms giving advice on handwashing and general hygiene. 

**Coughing and sneezing**

You should cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue. If one is not available, you should cough or sneeze into your arm – not your hands. Tissues should be thrown in the bin straight away and you should then wash your hands as above. 

**Cleaning**

Regularly used and touched surfaces and objects, particularly desks, phones, computer mice, printers and door handles, should be cleaned regularly with antibacterial wipes or spray.

**People who are very high risk of severe illness**   
  
Guidance regarding people who are deemed to be extremely vulnerable who must self-isolate for 12 weeks: <https://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>

Specific food bank related questionsIf the UK is subject to a significant outbreak of this virus it is estimated that between 20%-30% of your staff/volunteers could be absent at any one time, and people at home looking after dependents may add to this number. It is imperative that food banks consider whether additional people need to be aware of their systems and processes to ensure issues can be dealt with.

The [latest government advice](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874732/230320_-_Revised_guidance_note_-_finalVF.pdf?utm_source=Foodbank+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=e8aa3d8036-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_03_24_09_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_74dcb2af0e-e8aa3d8036-430671013&mc_cid=e8aa3d8036&mc_eid=70a26c7902) explains food banks can legally continue operating and buildings that host food banks can continue to open for those sessions, provided we follow social distancing rules, because your work qualifies you as key workers ‘caring for the vulnerable’.  
  
It is possible that food banks may also be particularly subject to the effects of the virus on older people which may further reduce capacity - please see “What about our older or more vulnerable volunteers?” in the Volunteering section below.

**Agencies** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **How do we know if all agencies are checking need before making referrals?**  
     
   *We know many agencies are offering a reduced service but we hope all agencies will operate their usual standards when deciding about offering food bank vouchers. If a food bank sees a sudden increase from a small number of agencies it may be worth checking with them regarding any change to their policy. Please bear in mind they may be operating with limited staffing but if they appear to be not following the system you may need to have a conversation. If the situation does not improve, food banks retain the right to ask an agency to stop making referrals – as a last resort.*

**Benefit claimants** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Many of the people referred to food banks receive benefits. They are worried that if they self-isolate, they will not be able to reassessment meetings or present fit notes and may be sanctioned. What can we say to reassure them?**

*Please view current guidance* [*here*](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-support-for-employees-benefit-claimants-and-businesses)*. As of 19th March, the current advice is that:*

* 1. *People receiving benefits do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for at least 3 months, starting from Thursday 19 March 2020. People will continue to receive their benefits as normal, but all requirements to attend the jobcentre in person are suspended.*
  2. *disabled and sick claimants will continue to receive their payments while their future assessments are rearranged;*
  3. *people who need to claim ESA or UC because of coronavirus will not be required to produce a fit note;*
  4. *Jobcentres remain open and will continue to support people who are not able to use phones and online, including homeless people.*
  5. *claimants who are staying at home as a result of coronavirus will have their mandatory work search and work availability requirements removed to account for a period of sickness*
  6. *self-employed claimants on Universal Credit who are required to stay at home or are ill as a result of coronavirus will not have a Minimum Income Floor (an assumed level of income) applied for a period of time while affected*

1. **What about potential new claimants?**

*Those affected by coronavirus will be able to apply for Universal Credit and can receive up to a month’s advance up front without physically attending a jobcentre.*

*The 7 waiting days for ESA for new claimants will not apply if they are suffering from coronavirus or are required to stay at home – so it will be payable from day one.*

**Communication – internal** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **How do we communicate with our team?**  
     
   *If you do not have a communication policy in place it is wise to create one, so that messages can be efficiently sent to food bank staff and volunteers in any circumstance.  
     
   Ensure the contact details (telephone and email) of the staff/volunteers are available in a separate location as well as at your main premises (this could be a physical location or online). Please try to ensure that any personal data is held securely. If you intend to use email, remind your team to check their inboxes and spam boxes regularly.  
     
   If you are using telephone, have an information cascade system in place (e.g. telephone tree) which enables messages to be communicated throughout the team without one person needing to make all calls. Ensure that more than one person can begin that process.*

**Communication – external** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **How do we communicate with other key partners?**  
     
   *Ensure that the details of key external partners are available in a separate location as well as at your main premises (this could be a physical location or online). Please ensure that any personal data is held securely. It may make sense to send an email to key partners to alert them that you may be sending communications soon regarding changes to operations. If you do this by a group email, please use the BCC function unless you have permission to share personal email addresses.  
     
   A template letter for referral agencies is available* [*here*](https://www.dropbox.com/s/78qvwlj84icbrdf/FB%20Network%20Referral%20Agencies%20Letter%20Template.docx?dl=0)*.*
2. **How can we share information with the public more widely?**  
     
   *You will be able to inform people who are receiving vouchers by keeping your referral partners up to date and asking them to communicate information when a voucher is issued.  
     
   You may need to issue short pre-written messages for insertion into supporter newsletters, perhaps relating to any changes to food donation requirements. You can find templates for possible messages you may need to use below under* ***‘Template messages’*** *at the bottom of this FAQ.*

*We also suggest that you try to keep your food bank website and social media pages as updated as possible. Again, links to template content can be found at the end of this FAQ.*

*You should ensure that your website is up to date with any changes, particularly related to food bank centre opening, and may also consider a poster at food bank centres. If you have no changes, you may wish to put a clear “business as usual” message on your website.*

*Please also review the out-of-office message on your food bank email, and answer message on its phone. You may wish to say “Thank you for your message, we may not be able to get back to you as quickly as usual. Please check our website xxxxx.foodbank.org.uk to check opening times, how to donate food or volunteering opportunities.”*

*If you have a local radio station, they may be able to help you to spread the news you need to share.*

1. **What if we are invited onto a radio programme or for an interview with a local TV station?**  
   *If you are approached by any national or regional media outlets, please speak to the Trussell Trust media team before agreeing to the interview.*

*For local media enquiries, please read carefully our* [*food bank media guidance*](https://thetrusselltrust-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/emmat_trusselltrust_org/EQ5I_y93YxhNnCbKul18FNgB95yguaRB2SLIvdRFdxGv2Q?e=tAATgg) *and speak to your Area Manager or the Trussell Trust media team if you would like any guidance or support.*

1. **Is there anything we should be asking local churches to do?**

*Yes. Some of your local churches may be extremely responsive to requests for help. A template letter is provided* [*here*](https://www.dropbox.com/s/951a6roqd88gdow/17-03-20%20Urgent%20Letter%20to%20Church%20Leaders%20from%20TT.pdf?dl=0)*. An equivalent letter has been written to major denominational leaders by the Trussell Trust. A copy of this appeal can also be found here* [*https://www.trusselltrust.org/church-support/*](https://www.trusselltrust.org/church-support/)

**Data sharing** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Can we share personal information about people who have accessed food bank services?**

*Sometimes it will be necessary to share personal data with partners. Examples where you might need to share information include; if the food bank receives offers of support to help distribute food parcels from a local company or, you need to share volunteer contact information to help coordinate the response effort.*

*In response to the pandemic the UK Information Commissioner’s Office has made the following statement:*

*“We know you might need to share information quickly or adapt the way you work. Data protection will not stop you doing that. It’s about being proportionate - if something feels excessive from the public’s point of view, then it probably is.”*

*Where you do decide to share information, you must only share relevant information, and only when strictly necessary. As in the example above, if you partner with a local company to support delivery of food parcels to self -isolating households, you may choose to only provide an address and name and no other information. Please also refer to the text in bold and the template under question 4 below.*

1. ***I didn’t think we could share data. Is it allowed*?**

*Yes. Data Sharing is defined under section 121 of the Data Protection Act (DPA 2018) as*

*“the disclosure of personal data by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making it available”*

*This means giving personal data to a third party (including local government), by whatever means and includes when you give a third-party access to personal data on or via the DCS.*

*Sharing data with partners is essential to delivering your charitable activities and can help to demonstrate that you are meeting your charitable purposes. Managed well the benefits of data sharing include:*

* *better compliance with the law;*
* *better protection for individuals whose data is being shared;*
* *greater trust in the food bank by the public, whose data you may want to share;*
* *an improved understanding of whether and when it is appropriate to share personal data;*
* *greater confidence within the organisation that you are sharing data appropriately;*
* *increased confidence to share data in a one-off situation or in an emergency; and*
* *a reduced reputational risk when sharing data.*

1. **What are the principals of information sharing?**

*If you’re not sure whether you should be sharing personal data, think about whether the information you are sharing falls into one of the following categories:*

1. *Would the person expect me to use their information in this way (legitimate interests)?*
2. *Have they given me their clear and unambiguous permission to use their personal information in this way (consent)?*
3. *Is the person’s health or safety at risk if I don’t use their personal data (vital interests)?*
4. *If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then you can handle and share personal data.*

*You should also take particular care if you’re handling sensitive data, referred to as ‘special category data’ in data protection law. This is private information like your health records, sexuality, race, ethnicity and religion. If you are going to use this kind of information, you should ask further questions:*

1. *Do I need this information to protect a person at risk (safeguarding individuals)?*
2. *Have they given me their explicit consent to use their private information (consent)?*
3. *Would this information save someone’s life (vital interests)?*

*If the answers is yes to any of these questions, then you can also handle and share this type of information. Make sure you are doing only what is necessary and appropriate for the task at hand.*

1. **We have been asked to share our database with the local council as part of the coordinated government response. Can we do this?**

*Many local authorities are mobilizing efforts to provide food to vulnerable households – with a focus on the 1.5m people identified as extremely high risk to covid-19 infection under Social Shielding guidelines.*

*As part of this government coordinated response many food banks have been asked to share personal information about people who have used the food bank.*

*Before sharing access to personal data you hold, you must understand and demonstrate the sharing is:*

* *Necessary (what will the sharing achieve)*
* *Proportionate (are you sharing limited information about specific individuals)*
* *Protects the right of those affected (would the person expect you to use their information in this way)*

***It is very unlikely it could be considered proportionate for the food bank to share personal information about all people who have needed to use the food bank in the last six months. You must not share a data dump from the data system with another organisation unless you have checked that this is appropriate.*** *If you are being asked for this level of information by your local council please contact your Area Manager or our Network Services Helpline on: 01722 580171 Option 1.*[*Here is a template data sharing checklist to help you .*](https://www.dropbox.com/s/u723tcyewuegd8m/Data%20Sharing%20Checklist.docx?dl=0)

**Distributing food** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Some of our food bank centres are in church buildings. Is it true churches have been told that they must shut for all activities?**

*The Church of England, The Methodist Church in Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, the Church in Ireland, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Episcopalian Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church have expressed support for keeping churches open for food bank use, ensuring guidelines on social distancing are followed.*

1. **Can we change the way we give out food?**  
     
   *We have undertaken a survey of some food banks and they have reported that they understand their service is an essential service and will try to operate as long as possible. However, food banks should consider what need to do to enable their operation to continue for as long as possible, and implement appropriate steps to promote social distancing.*

*There are several existing models to make food available to people who need it. Food banks may wish to consider using one or more of these options in addition to their usual model, or to vary their usual model. You should only change your process if you decide this is the best course of action and you have the appropriate resource to do so. As the outbreak becomes more serious and there is increased danger of infection at public places, or your “staffing” levels are severely restricted, you may wish to consider:*

* 1. *Reducing your service to the minimum of fulfilling a voucher so that people spend the shortest possible time at the food bank. It is critical to minimise the time visitors spend at the food bank. You must maintain social distancing measures of 6ft or 2m between people at all times.*
  2. *Supplying emergency food boxes (EFBs) at fixed locations instead of opening the distribution centres. EFBs are pre-packed parcels which can be made available at a location which is readily accessible and open (with the agreement of that organisation) such as a fire station, and/or might be held directly by your most significant voucher partners. You might wish to operate this system with a skeleton staff at distribution centres. For guidance on how to distribute pre-packed emergency food parcels* ***see section 6.4 Pre-Packed Emergency Food Boxes in the Operations Manual.***

*We recognise the first issue may be “we don’t have enough boxes” so we are currently exploring if we can obtain “bags for life” from our partners.*

* 1. *Moving to a prepacked doorstep delivery service. If this is realistic for you, it may be a positive step to continuing your service because it will:*
     1. *allow you to operate with lower numbers and possibly at varying times to your usual service, thereby enabling more flexible volunteering options including repositioning distribution centre volunteers into the warehouse, or release them to make deliveries*
     2. *separate the food bank volunteers from the general public, thereby minimising the possibility of infection*

***We have produced specific guidance to help you*** [***move to a delivery model***](https://trusselltrust.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ec8261e9a533fd7c5c55815e6&id=de15572e5e&e=a18b3ecd18)***.***

*This option should be carefully thought through as it has several consequences. If the food bank does not have its own transport, volunteers must be adequately insured to use their own vehicles to deliver food. It is wise for the food bank to check details of -insurance and MOT status of vehicles and more information can be found in Chapter 13.10 of the Operating Manual.*

*Those delivering should ideally have a criminal records check (known as DBS in England and Wales). If this is not possible volunteer delivery drivers should be known and trusted volunteers of the food bank. They should not enter a house but give the food at the door. If there is suspicion that the delivery is to a location where the virus exists, it is advisable to take the food to the door, ring the bell and withdraw or phone the recipient to alert them that the food has arrived.*

*Home delivery should only be used in conjunction with the guidance in the “People who need help” section below, and the guidance on “social distancing” in the hygiene section.*

* 1. *Temporarily reduce or close distribution centres which may be in shared buildings where someone else has the authority to close the building down, even if you could continue to operate. This may mean that other sessions become busier and will require more volunteers or extended time.*

1. **We have reduced numbers of people available to volunteer (and we have several distribution centres), so we are struggling to cover the opening hours – what should we do?**  
     
   *There are several solutions you might consider including:  
     
   Recruiting more volunteers. There may well be people of working age who are available and keen to help. See the* [*bulletin 23/03/2020 for the latest information about available support*](https://mailchi.mp/trusselltrust/coronavirus-bulletin-23032020?e=70a26c7902#mctoc7)

*Reducing the number of centres that are to be opened or reducing the hours each centre opens. If centres are to be closed and volunteers are willing to travel to different locations, consideration should be given to closing those which will cause the least disruption.  
  
If centres are closed, every effort should be made to alert voucher partners (by email or phone) and the public, including alternative locations for the delivery of food donations. Websites and Facebook pages should be fully updated.   
  
If possible, posters should be placed at closed sites indicating alternative arrangements. If you operate from a shared building which is still open, details should be clearly displayed there for any people who may arrive for food bank purposes.   
  
Food bank telephones should be updated, if possible, with an answerphone message explaining the current situation. This should be regularly updated to reflect the current situation, as should “out of office” messages. Local media may be prepared to help spread the message. (Information issued via local media outlets relating solely to operational matters can be agreed locally without the need to contact Trussell Trust media; however, please see “***Communication – external"** above)

It is imperative that usual security arrangements are not relaxed, placing staff and volunteers at risk. If there are insufficient people you may need to close a session. **Lone working should not be allowed**.

1. **Can we change the 3-day parcel to a longer timeframe?**  
     
   *This is a decision for you to consider. When doing so you need to consider the likely increase in demand and your stock levels; and the extra weight of the pack. Our advice would be to wait and see what develops before taking such action, this situation is likely to last months not weeks .*

*We strongly recommend that you do not ration your stocks below the standard recommended parcel because this may increase the number of visits to the food bank and will make the lives of already struggling people more difficult.*

**Finance and administration** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **How do we make sure our food bank continues to function?**  
     
   *The first thing to do is to assess what is necessary to ensure the food bank can operate. Some of the usual functions may be important but not critical (logging vouchers to the DCS for example).   
     
   Once there is a list of critical activity, work out how to undertake this and recognise any additional risks that may be incurred. Where you have specific controls to manage risk (e.g. two people signing cheques or counting cash), any changes to your usual practice should ensure that risk is kept at an acceptable level. Trustees may need to be involved in discussions with the Project Manager to make these decisions.*
2. ***What do we do if we’re unsure we’ve enough money to pay for what’s needed?***

*Managing your cash flow on a regular basis will ensure you have the key information you need to make decisions which are in the best interest of the charity. A simple cashflow forecast sheet has been* [*created in Google Sheets*](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/196OQ7M_yqVEd-59WoQ6Rw9pBFyDvx6cTQOx7x64jrQg/edit?usp=sharing) *to help you assess the immediate financial situation of the food bank.*

*Before committing any additional expenditure you will need to know what your fixed costs are and when you will need to pay them. For example, if one of your normal centres has closed and you need new premises to operate from?*

*You may also need to review your financial controls procedure to ensure you have cash available where it is needed. For example, you may review the amount of petty cash you hold at a food bank warehouse or revise authorised spending limits for key personnel e.g. Project Manager.* ***You must record any decision to revise your financial controls with authorisation from the trustees****.*

1. Our food bank’s governing charity is a limited company. Is it right that there is an extension on when we need to submit our company accounts?   
     
   *Yes. The government has given a* [*3-month extension*](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/companies-to-receive-3-month-extension-period-to-file-accounts-during-covid-19?utm_source=f3101d97-c140-4859-9f49-b4f3d326d612&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) *to the period in which companies have to submit accounts.*
2. **In the Budget, the government announced a £500m hardship fund for Local Authorities. What is this? Can we use it?**   
     
   *We need more information on what this fund is and how it’s intended to be used. We are currently speaking to government about this to find out more information.*

**Food stocks** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Should we change the content of the food that we give to people?**  
     
   *We have no way of knowing how long the virus will affect us, but it may have peaks and troughs for several months. We also have no way of knowing how the virus will affect donations, so we recommend that food banks consider how to manage the stock they have to ensure it lasts as long as possible. Food banks that are usually able to give people more than the contents of the standard packing list may wish to consider moving to those list suggestions.  
     
   Given the need for regular hand washing to try to stop the spread of the virus, we encourage food banks include soap in each pack if possible.*
2. **How can we make sure we keep our food stock sufficient for need?**  
   *Food banks are highly reliant on public donation and this may vary if large numbers of the public are dealing with the virus and its effects. If they see PCP baskets constantly full at supermarkets, they may consider donating is not necessary; so we recommend that PCPs are emptied regularly.   
     
   If stocks become low, local churches and other organisations that support food banks can be approached for emergency donations either across the contents of a parc el or for specific shortages. See item 4 in the section “Communication – external” for a template letter for churches.*

*Try to keep your food bank website regularly updated to keep the public informed about the specific items you need.*

*In addition, you may want to consider encouraging people to make online shopping orders with deliveries made direct to the food bank warehouse.*

1. **Is there any other advice about collecting from PCPs?**

*It is advisable that those collecting from PCPs can identify themselves to members of the public who may assume panic bulk-buying. If at all possible, wear branded food bank clothing and/or take foodbank ID.*

*Tesco have announced an elderly shoppers hour from 9am to 10am on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. They have suggested that this would be a good time to collect from PCPs, if that is workable for you. They also recommend it as a good time for instore food bank purchases.*

1. **Our Tesco have removed the PCP. What can we do?**

*Tesco have emailed all stores to ask them to put back any PCPs that have been removed or if required move to an alternative location. If your PCP has been moved in store, we have created* [*this poster*](https://trusselltrust.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ec8261e9a533fd7c5c55815e6&id=90e71aeb31&e=a18b3ecd18) *to show donors where the PCP now is. Please check with the Store Manager or Community Champion they are happy for the poster to go up in store. Please do let* [*Network Services*](mailto:foodbanknetwork@trusselltrust.org) *or your Area Manager know if your PCP isn’t back on the shop floor and we will ask Tesco to get in touch with your store.*

1. **We collect food from a supermarket “back of store”, should we continue to do so?**

Yes, as long as you have the capacity to collect the food, will be able to distribute it and can you ensure it is hygienically stored at the warehouse until it is distributed.

1. **Should we appeal for money to allow us to buy food?**  
     
   *The general principle of food bank is to attract donations of food rather than money which is then spent on purchasing food. However, we recognise that some food banks do regularly receive monetary gifts from people specifically for food purchase. If food stocks and donations are running low a food bank may wish to consider appealing for donations of money which can then be spent at a supermarket. If the purchase is significant, buying online with a delivery may be sensible.  
     
   Food banks that decide to appeal for money may wish to consider doing so through a recognised donation system such as a Just Giving appeal page. If so, it is worth adding a clause into the appeal which says that if the money is not needed to directly buy food it will be used to support the running of the food bank. We know that some of you use apps such as “Banquet” and if so you may be able to appeal for more support from those who help you in this way.*
2. **Are there any arrangements in place for us to buy or obtain large amounts of stock?**

*Whilst a food bank may have the funds to make purchases, securing the food will be dependent on supermarkets having supplies and being willing to supply bulk orders.*

*We’re really pleased to be able to let you know that all Asda store managers have now been told they have the ability, with their discretion, to wave buying restrictions. These decisions are made on a store by store basis. Please contact your local store manager to see what arrangements can be put in place.*

*A food bank going into an Asda store with some food bank ID should speak to the manager about being able to buy the stock they need without restriction on quantity. Our conversations with other partners are underway and we’ll keep you updated.*

1. **We have surplus stock. Can we offer it to another food bank, and how?**

*Please see the section on* [**Governance**](#Governance) *in conjunction with this response. If you have surplus stock that you can afford to give away, and your governing document allows this, please let your Area Manager know.*

1. **What about ad-hoc supermarket food collections. Should we cancel them, or seek more?**

*At the moment we are recommending that ad-hoc collections be cancelled, for any ad hoc collections scheduled before May. For Ad-hoc collections that do go ahead, they must to be manned by volunteers who are not in a high-risk group Please bear in mind that there will be people of working age who will be willing and available to volunteer to help out through this crisis. Any ad hoc should be organised in a way so that appropriate social distancing is maintained – e.g. volunteers standing separately outside the store near – but not too - the queue of waiting shoppers, and periodically collecting the donation trolley. This will not work at some stores.*

*Tesco have confirmed food banks can still go ahead with any of their Taste at Tesco Ad-Hoc Bookings if they so wish over the next month. If however, your foodbank doesn’t feel comfortable going ahead with your Ad-Hoc or think a monetary collection would be more suitable given the limits on food items please* [*email Taste at Tesco*](mailto:charitybookings@tasteattesco.com) *- who can amend your booking.*

*We are also talking to Asda regarding the support they may be able to offer and we will update you when we have more details. You may wish to contact other supermarkets to see if this is still possible with them.*

1. **Supermarkets are restricting how much people can buy. Will food banks be able to do multiple purchases for shortage items?**

*Tesco and Asda have advised that you should speak to the store manager to see if they would be happy to allow multiple purchases of certain items. It will be at their discretion, and you should check with them ahead of time. This advice is likely to hold good for other supermarkets with which you have a good relationship. Tesco also recommend that you make any instore food bank purchases during the designated times for elderly shoppers: 9am to 10am on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.*

**Governance** <[back to index](#Index)>

**See also the specific and extensive FAQs for trustees at the end of this document**

1. **What are the responsibilities of trustees in response to Covid-19 ?**

In response to the ongoing pandemic, trustees retain responsibility for the governance of the food bank.

Trustees have a responsibility to ensure effective oversight of the food bank; that in response to the unfolding crisis the activities of the food bank remain safe and effective.

You must also ensure that you continue to operate in your charity’s best interest - including making sure that your activities remain in-line with your charity’s purposes, set out in your governing document. The key resources of the food bank include:

* 1. People – keeping the food bank’s volunteers, staff and trustees safe
  2. Food Stocks – how to balance the supply of stocks against the increase in demand for help
  3. Finances – responsible and effective use of the charity’s assets and resources in exceptional circumstances

In such a rapidly developing and fluid situation it is critical that the food bank has effective decision-making procedures in place. Appropriate assessment of the emerging risks will allow the food bank to adapt to the challenges faced in ways that are both safe and effective.

1. **How should we organise and manage our response?**

It is recommended that the trustees established a quorate Executive Group.

The Executive Group should have enough trustees and co-opted representation from key parts of operational management team e.g. Safeguarding officer, Warehousing manager, Project manager etc. We suggest between 6 and 8 people form this group.

The team will be in regular communication. Perhaps daily initially, with the frequency of meetings being reviewed as the picture unfolds. These meeting may be virtual or over the phone if meeting in person is not possible.

The Trussell Trust previously produced a Local Disaster Response guide, designed to help the trustees consider the key strategic and legal issues as part its disaster response. A full version of this document can be [accessed here](https://www.dropbox.com/s/d7eiwiw16udnwrz/Disaster%20responsev3.pdf?dl=0)

It is recommended that you delegate responsibility for key areas of activities to members of the executive group.

1. **What if a key member of the executive group becomes incapacitated or unwell?**

In the event that a member of the of the Executive group is incapacitated e.g. forced to self-isolate, it is a good idea to adopt a deputising system. For example, one person could be the lead responsible for volunteer coordination but work closely with the lead for safeguarding and vice versa. This way if someone becomes unwell the other group member can pick up this critical function.

1. **Our governing document does not allow us to take decisions electronically**

Updated guidance from the Charity Commission in England and Wales (20th March 2020) mirrored by regulators in the other nations helpfully suggests; where there is no such clause in your governing document [allowing you to hold meetings electronically] and you decide to hold meetings over the phone or using digital solutions, they will understand but **you should record this decision.**

1. **We’ve been developing our response plans but how long do we need to plan for?**

In the Prime Minister’s briefing on the 19/03/2020, the PM suggested the Pandemic will last for months and social distancing measures for a minimum of 12 weeks. The food bank needs to consider how it will resource its activities during this emergency for the medium term.

1. **Our governing documents Object clauses limit us to distributing food in a specific area. We have surplus food we would be happy to share with another food bank that is struggling, can we give them food?**  
     
   *Under the strict terms of Charity governance you are only allowed to use your assets to support your charity Objects. We previously asked the England and Wales Charity Commission for a general waiver of this requirement if a no-deal Brexit occurred, but we were told that food banks would need to make individual applications to amend their Objects clauses.*

*If you have surplus stocks you can reasonably offer elsewhere, and you are geographically constrained by an Objects clause, please talk to your Area Manager. It might be that another food bank within your area does not have a similar constraint, and could release more of their stock to help other food banks in need while using some of your surplus stock locally.*

1. **Do we have to report anything to the charity regulator if our usual operation is significantly changed or reduced?**

*The information that follows is from the Charity Commission for England and Wales but will be common to Scotland and Northern Ireland.*

*“Charities should continue to report serious incidents using* [*the current guidelines*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity) *and their own judgement. The Charity Commission will advise if and when this situation changes.”*

1. **We’re an unincorporated charity does this create additional risks?**

*Yes. Trustees of unincorporated charities should be very careful what liabilities they take on, because the trustees may end up being personally liable. If you have any questions or concerns please get in touch.*

1. **We have some unrestricted reserves can we use them to buy food?**

*Many food banks will come under financial pressure as income sources change or food donations reduce and demand for help and support increases. It will be critically important for the trustees to understand the financial situation of the charity and act accordingly.*

*Where the charity has reserves, the use of these to purchase food or pay for delivery service may be an option. You should also take account of any restrictions on these funds or other plans that the charity had to use reserves - it may not then be possible to deliver on those plans. Further guidance on using charity reserves can be found on your charity regulators website:*

*England and Wales:* [*https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector*](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector)

*Northern Ireland:* [*https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/news/covid-19-coronavirus-information*](https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/news/covid-19-coronavirus-information)

*Scotland:* [*https://www.oscr.org.uk/news/charities-and-coronavirus-an-update-from-the-regulator*](https://www.oscr.org.uk/news/charities-and-coronavirus-an-update-from-the-regulator)

**Grants** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Can we apply to the Trussell Trust for emergency grants?**

*We are really pleased to be able to highlight two pots of grant funding we will be opening to food banks.*

*First, is our Emergency Fund - if there is anything you need funding for in order to adapt you model, meet increased need or just to keep going please apply to the Coronavirus Emergency Fund and we will aim to approve applications within 3 days. Applications for this fund are open.*

*We are able to offer grants of up to £5,000. Please go the* [*online application form*](https://trusselltrust.wufoo.com/forms/q1k6rdsg0c374hm/)*.*

*Second, thanks to new support from Asda we will shortly be establishing a £1m grant fund for food banks to respond to what is needed after the immediate crisis has passed. This won’t be an emergency response fund, but a grant fund for what you think will be needed in your area when we come through this – we will share more information on this significant resource for food banks as soon as we’re able to.*

1. **Are there any other grant funds that we can apply for?**

*Alternative sources of emergency funding can be accessed via the* ***Charities Excellence Framework*** *page on* [*Linkedin here*](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/coronavirus-charity-funding-announcements-ian-mclintock/)*. This includes details on nation specific funding opportunities.*

*Discount retailer* ***B&M*** *has set up a national £1m fund to support UK food banks. Each one of its 670 stores will support a local food bank with a £1,500 donation of food, cleaning and personal hygiene products for families. All you need to do is register via* [*this link*](https://www.bmstores.co.uk/news/covid-19-1-million-foodbank-support)*. Then you’ll be able to go to any B&M store, and you’ll be given £1500 of credit to purchase any food or non-food items you need.*

*The Charities Aid Foundation has allocated £5 million to fund an emergency grant programme. One-time grants of up to £10,000 are available to cover core costs, staffing, volunteer costs, supplies and equipment, communications or other critical charitable areas. The application form* [*is here*](https://service.charitiesaidfoundation.org.uk/acton/ct/10250/s-0aa0-2003/Bct/l-4a1a/l-4a1a:130/ct7_0/1?sid=TV2%3AVgUjiph7i)*.*

1. **We have received an Asda grant and are due to submit a report in the next few months. Will this still be required of us?**

*We are happy to be flexible in the coming months when it comes to Asda grant reports. We might still advise you when a report is due, but we recognise that you may well want to wait until things eventually return to normal.*

1. **We have recently received an Asda grant award and have been told that there are deadlines for having some things in place, such as new appointments or the lease of premises. Will we still be expected to meet these deadlines?**

*Again we are happy to be flexible. We recognise that many developments will have to be put on hold during this crisis. The agreed funding will be protected, unless you advise us that a particular grant-funded project or expenditure has been abandoned.*

**Hygiene and avoiding passing on the virus** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Are food banks essential services, or is government advice that they should close?**

*The latest* [*government advice*](https://trusselltrust.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ec8261e9a533fd7c5c55815e6&id=6a40beccc3&e=a18b3ecd18) *explains food banks can legally continue operating and buildings that host food banks can continue to open for those sessions, provided we follow social distancing rules, because your work qualifies you as key workers ‘caring for the vulnerable’.*

1. **Are there any special measures we should take about personal cleanliness and general cleanliness?**  
     
   *Everyone who works or volunteers at a food bank should wash their hands on arrival at the food bank (and as often as necessary) following the approved guidance which should be found on a poster near hand washing sinks. Correct, thorough handwashing with soap will clean hands adequately. Please see the general guidance at the top of this document.  
     
   Disposable towels should be used for drying hands.  
     
   Alcohol sanitising gel should be made available for frequent use; if not available, staff/volunteers should wash their hands with soap thoroughly as often as is required.   
     
   Surfaces (chair backs, tables, preparation areas, sinks etc) should be cleaned regularly, at least at the beginning and end of sessions, and between times as necessary.  
     
   Multiple use crates may also need wiping.*
2. **What about tea and biscuits we usually offer to people when they arrive?** *In line with government guidance on* [*Social distancing*](#Social_distancing) *you should stop all wraparound support and services, like a cup of tea, cake and chat – we know these are the things that make us who we are, but we must put these to one side to ensure the safety of everyone who needs our help during this time   
     
   Where tea and coffee facilities are available to volunteers, you must ensure cups and mugs are not contaminated. All reusable items must be appropriately washed using a proprietary washing-up liquid or better still in a dishwasher run on the full cycle. Any drying requirements should be by draining, not using tea-towels. As a temporary option, single use cups might be considered and single use plates.*
3. **Should staff/volunteers wear gloves or face masks at the food bank or consider other PPE clothing/equipment?**  
     
   *Care is required as some people have latex allergies. Wearing gloves will protect that person to a degree but it will not prevent cross transmission if the gloves pick up the virus from one handled item and transfer it to another person or surface. The NHS and PHE do not recommend wearing gloves.*

*The World Health Organisation advice is that only two types of people should wear masks: those who are sick and show symptoms, and those who are caring for people who are suspected to have the coronavirus. A mask is not seen as reliable protection against infection. Volunteers may feel safer wearing masks, but must take special care to avoid hand contamination when removing the mask and avoid a false sense of security.*

*WHO, NHS and PHE advice is that frequent hand washing with soap and water is the most effective precaution. The use of gloves or masks should not become a substitute for hand hygiene.s.*

1. **What is the current guidance for people who think they may be infected by the Corona virus?**

*On 16th March 2020 it was announced that if you have the symptoms of coronavirus infection (COVID-19), you should self-isolate for 7 days; and if someone else in your household has the symptoms, you should self-isolate for 14 days. You should not call NHS111 but just go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days contact*[*NHS 111 online*](https://111.nhs.uk/)*.*

Please keep up to date with the guidance issued specifically by your nation of the UK by following the links at the top of this FAQ.

1. **We don’t have access to hand sanitisers or hot water at our food bank centre. What should we do?**

*NHS guidance makes it clear that it is important to wash hands regularly with soap and water. The guidance does not indicate that hand sanitisers a preferable to soap, nor that hot water is required. You have a duty of care to provide hand washing facilities, but would not be seen as negligent as long as they were consistent with the NHS guidance at the time.*

1. **We anticipate that sometimes during a food bank session we could have a lot of people waiting in a confined space. Given the advice about avoiding crowds, what should we do?**

*We would encourage you to always seek solutions that are practical, but dignified* *and compassionate.* *You must ensure you can enforce* [*social distancing*](#Social_distancing) *measures at all times.* *That might mean negotiating to use a larger space in which visitors can wait 2m apart, with tables spaced well apart. In some cases, it might be possible to offer a delivery service or open for longer hours.*

1. Should we quarantine new food donations for 3 days, or wipe it down, in case the virus is present on the packaging or the outside of an item?

*There has been no guidance to suggest taking this sort of action, which could very well be impracticable. What matters most is that all parties maintain personal hygiene.*

**Insurance** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Do we need to speak to our insurance company?**  
     
   *If you intend to operate differently to normal it would be advisable to check the changes with your insurance company before making those changes.  
     
   Food banks should check how long any owned buildings can be left unoccupied, should the need to close occur. It may be necessary for premises to be checked periodically to ensure insurance remains valid. If you do not own the building, you may also need to liaise with the owner.*
2. **Could our food bank be held liable if a volunteer or staff member believes they contracted coronavirus during food bank activities?**

The Trussell Trust’s own insurer has advised that it is “extremely unlikely that you could be held liable” in these circumstances, not least because with an incubation period of up to 14-days, it is difficult to determine the source. That said, you have a duty of care to your staff and volunteers and you should ensure that;

* 1. adequate hand-washing facilities are provided
  2. regular hand washing is expected
  3. volunteers and staff members do not attend food bank activities if someone from their household has displayed symptoms within the last 14 day.

*You must make sure that all volunteers are adequately trained and advised of the associated risks of the tasks they are undertaking. Training must include the hygiene guidance to ensure they keep as safe and secure as possible. Please refer to the training videos referred to in the volunteering section below. These include appropriate training content.*

For queries on insurance, we recommend you get in touch with your insurance broker or insurer to clarify specifically what cover you have in place. Insurance policies need to be reviewed to check what cover, is provided for public and employers liability, or other factors arising from what is termed as a ‘notifiable disease’ or an ‘epidemic/pandemic’ and that there are no other exclusions on making claims.

*If you have any concerns or uncertainties, it is important that you speak to your own insurer.*

1. **We might need to take on new volunteers. Does this have insurance implications?**

*You are likely to have given your insurer an indication of the number of active volunteers the food bank has. You should advise them if you need to revise that number upwards. If new volunteers are simply replacing existing ones, then that won’t apply.*

*We know food banks are receiving offers of support from all parts of our communities. We are working to develop ways to support food banks to harness these generous offers of help. The emergence of ad hoc groups of people who want to volunteer is both welcome and a challenge.*

*Where you are offering new services e.g. doorstep delivery with new groups of volunteers you should risk assess these activities. Some useful resources on conducting risk assessments are included below:*

[*Sayer Vincent LLP – Risk Assessment Made Easy*](http://www.sayervincent.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/RiskAssessmentMadeSimple-SayerVincent-July2015.pdf)

[*DIY committee – example risk assessments*](https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/download/example-risk-management-templates-volunteer-now)

**Local emergency response** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. The local council has approached us to be part of the local emergency response team. What should we do?  
     
   *There is an easy temptation to offer to “step up” and be part of a wider emergency response. Care should be taken before entering into such agreements. Trussell Trust has a template for dealing with wider emergencies which can be* [*found here*](https://www.dropbox.com/s/d7eiwiw16udnwrz/Disaster%20responsev3.pdf?dl=0)*. Please give due consideration at Project Manager/Trustee level to the content of this document before agreeing to be part of a wider response. You may currently be struggling to offer your usual service.*

*Please also refer to the section on* [*data sharing*](#Data_sharing)*, particularly question 4.*

1. What it we are asked to help with the hubs or “local support systems” to help the 1.5 million in England, identified by the NHS as being at higher risk, who are told to self-isolate?  
     
   *It is important that food banks remain focussed on helping those who cannot afford to buy food.*

*Food banks do not have the stock or capacity to also support those who have the financial means, but have difficulty undertaking food shopping due to self-isolation or other reasons.   
Local authorities are charged with delivering local support services, to ensure make sure those who are self-isolating and without support network will get basic groceries and medicines.*

*We are working on guidance around working with local authorities which we will issue shortly.*

*Please also refer to the section on* [*data sharing*](#Data_sharing)*, particularly question 4.*

**People who need help** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Who should we offer food to? What if food banks have supplies but supermarket shelves are empty?**  
     
   *Food banks provide an essential emergency service for people unable to afford food. However they are stretched community charities, and they do not have capacity to provide food to people who can afford to buy the essentials but are self-isolating and have issues accessing food as a result. We have created* [*these*](https://trusselltrust.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ec8261e9a533fd7c5c55815e6&id=c817210d1f&e=a18b3ecd18) [*two*](https://trusselltrust.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ec8261e9a533fd7c5c55815e6&id=bb7b360665&e=a18b3ecd18) *posters to which you can add the appropriate local contact details to, print out and put in your centres to make it clear you are there for those who cannot afford food.*
2. **Someone arrives at the food bank who is suggesting that they feel unwell with virus-like symptoms.**  
   *The person should be advised to self-isolate. If they are already on your premises, initially seat them apart from other people and arrange for them to go home as soon as possible. As an immediate precaution, surfaces they may have touched should be disinfected including entrance/exit doors and handles and wipeable seats they may have used. If necessary, you may need to undertake a deep clean.*
3. **Can food banks help people who need to self-isolate or who have the virus and cannot go out to buy food or are not able to work?**  
     
   *Please see item 1 in this section.* *Food banks can assist anyone who meets the criteria for a voucher, such as sickness or enforced self-isolation which has caused a lack of funds. It is not appropriate to meet the needs of those who simply cannot get to the shops (but who have funds) as other solutions will exist such as online shopping or a neighbour/friend helping out.  
     
   If food banks do respond adapt the model to offer delivery you must maintain social distancing measures.  
     
   If a referral agency contacts the food bank to authorise a voucher for someone who is self-isolated and meets our criteria, we suggest that the agency emails the details through in place of a voucher, if e-referral is not possible.  
     
   If the person is a vulnerable adult the food bank may need to signpost them to their local emergency social services team or contact the team on behalf of the person. It is advisable that food banks check they have these numbers available at centres which should be included in your safeguarding policy.*

*We further strongly recommend that you fulfil all genuine voucher requests on a “first-come, first-served” basis and do not commence any system which might discriminate against any group of people. If demand rises and food stocks fall to dangerously low levels, please let us know and we will do our best to support you.*

1. **What happens if people arrive without a voucher saying that a referral agency is closed?**

*We recommend that you process this as a self-referral, completing a voucher at the food bank. This may mean you will need a stock of blank vouchers at food bank centres. You may wish to verify whether particular agencies are closed or not, and you should feel able to apply discretion where you believe there is good reason to question a self-referral. We appreciate that this may mean an increase in the number of vouchers filled out by the food bank.   
  
At present we are not recommending that you vary or relax the use of the voucher system. We know you encounter issues from time to time and will make individual decisions as needed. We recommend you continue to follow this procedure unless future guidance is issued for a national change of policy.*

1. **School closures may bring an increased need for support to free school meals families. What should our response be?**

*The government has announced that schools will receive food vouchers, redeemable at shops and supermarkets, for children eligible for free school meals and many schools are continuing to provide packed lunches to eligible children. We will update our advice as soon as there are more details of this scheme, and its implications.*

*In the meantime, our advice is that we know some food banks have been asked to run extra activities, like lunch clubs, on behalf of schools. We do not think it’s logistically possible for food banks to take these on right now. We advise you to support families referred to you as you normally would, but push back on approaches from schools or local authorities asking you to deliver additional support in the place of schools. Behind the scenes, we’re pushing for an increase in child benefit payments immediately to allow parents to cover the additional costs of food and childcare, and we’ll keep you updated on how this develops.*

1. **People visiting our food bank centre are asked to complete State of Hunger surveys. Should we continue with this?**

*No. Please discontinue State of Hunger surveys through this period.*

1. **Some of the people visiting the food bank don’t have English as their first language. Is there any help we can give them?**

*The Government has released translated the guidance for* [*self-isolation*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance) *and* [*social distancing*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people) *into the following languages: Arabic, French, Mandarin, Cantonese, Polish and Welsh. Coronavirus guidance in a wide range of languages is also provided by* [*Doctors of the World*](https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/)*.*

**Security** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **We are concerned about the security of our buildings where there is reduced or no current activity. What can we do?**

*The first thing to consider is removing or storing as securely as possible items which may be attractive to opportunistic criminals, such as computers, scales, phones etc.   
  
Also ensure that data relating to voucher subjects, staff, volunteers and other personal or sensitive data is securely locked away.  
  
Once you have done this, it may be you can do little more; but it is worth organising a team to undertake periodic checks to ensure buildings remain secure, in conjunction with the advice from your insurer. If you do not own your building, you may also need to speak to the building owner.*

**Social distancing** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Social distancing is very important to reduce infection. How do we achieve this in the food bank operation?**

*It is very important to take what steps are possible to promote social distancing, where this is practicable. These steps will be very much dependent on the options available to you, but could include:*

1. *Attending to any visitor over the age of 70 as an immediate priority, isolating them as far as possible and helping them as quickly as possible.*
2. *Negotiating the use of a larger space as a food bank centre in which visitors can wait, with tables and chairs spaced well apart.*
3. *Extending the hours of food bank centre or warehouse sessions.*
4. *Not requiring signatures from foodbank visitors to avoid handling the same pen.*
5. *Rostering volunteers in fixed pairs or very small teams, so they are always with the same colleagues.*
6. *Maintaining a 2-metre distance between volunteers at all times* *except where overridden by immediate overriding emergency safety concerns.*
7. *For collections and deliveries, deploying self-selecting buddy-pairs of volunteers who trust each other to maintain healthy social distancing at other times.*
8. *There may be situations where lone working is preferable and inherently safe. If considering lone working, you should look carefully at the balance of competing risks. Solo food collections from safe locations may be quite acceptable. However, solo home deliveries should not be undertaken to locations where the deliverer might be or feel at personal risk.*
9. *Having a table at the food bank centre where volunteers place the prepared food package, to which the person collecting it then comes forwards; and a similar arrangement in the warehouse, to separate warehouse volunteers from deliverers and collectors.*
10. *Asking clients to wait outside, if it is not raining and there is insufficient space inside.*

*Whatever steps are taken, they should be as dignified and compassionate as possible for those needing food bank assistance.*

**Staff (paid employees)** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Have there been any changes to Statutory Sick Pay?**  
     
   *Yes – the government has announced that SSP will be paid from day 1 rather than from day 4 of an illness but details have yet to be released. This is applicable to all who self-isolate because they or their family have symptoms.*
2. **Should we allow emergency time off for dependents (illness or example school closures)?**  
   *Being as flexible as possible will benefit you and your staff. If you do not have a written policy, it is sensible for the trustees to consider what they will do if staff members need to take time off to be with dependents and cannot undertake work related activity. If the food bank has a written policy, it may wish to consider amending it.*
3. **A staff member has been told to self-isolate because of the virus. What is their sick pay situation?**  
   *If a person has been instructed to self-isolate, sickness related systems immediately come into operation. If a food bank operates a “paid” sick leave scheme, trustees may wish to consider the possible effect on the food bank’s finances. They may also wish to consider any variation they might make to the scheme especially if someone is absent more than once under “sickness” conditions and exceeds any agreed timeframe for payment to be continued.*
4. **A staff member has decided to self-isolate as a precaution. What are the rules?**  
     
   *If someone makes a decision to stay away from work but has no evidence that they have been in contact with the virus, they are not entitled to be on leave due to sickness and therefore are technical absent without leave. Given the nature of this crisis, we recommend that food banks are cautious and explore the concerns raised with the person before making any decisions which may affect that person’s employment.*

*As employers, you have to make reasonable adjustments and mitigate as many factors as possible if a concern is raised, but once you have done all that you reasonably can, you have the right to ask the staff member to meet the terms of their contract or risk disciplinary measures. Trussell Trust “People and Culture” team is available for limited advice should the need arise and can be contacted on 01722 580209 or* [*people@trusselltrust.org*](mailto:people@trusselltrust.org)

1. **Does the staff member need a sick note?**

*No. It is at the employer’s discretion whether they request a sick note. If they do, their employee can obtain a sick note through* [*NHS 111 online*](https://111.nhs.uk/) *but should not go to their GP surgery for one.*

1. **We haven’t received self-certification from an employee by 7 days from the date they informed us they had become unwell.** *Due to self-isolation advice being for two weeks, it may be impossible for an employee to produce a certificate for two weeks.*
2. **If the food bank is closed and a member of staff can undertake any work from home, or the staff member is at home because of dependents requirements, what do we do?**  
   *You will need to discuss any feasible and useful activity that can be undertaken from home and, if paid on an hourly basis, the number of agreed hours. You will need to make sure that data relating to other people is not put at risk by someone working from home, especially if using personal computer equipment.  
     
   It may be possible for a staff member to look after the food bank telephone from home during this period and answer queries from those who call.  
     
   There is an allowance for working from home to cover heat and light which is approved for tax purposes, limited to a maximum of £18 per month.*
3. **We have someone who works for us intermittently on a valid self-employed basis. Will they get SSP?**

*Self-employed people are usual not eligible for SSP, but the government has stated that it will now be making it "quicker and easier to get benefits" including those on a zero hours contacts, or those earning less than £118 a week.*

1. **The government has said that the children of “key workers” will still be able to attend school. Will food bank staff count as “key workers”?**

*The government has said for this purpose, “key workers” include “those essential to the running of … charities”. Government guidance for* [*England*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision) *and* [*Wales*](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/coronavirus-key-workers-schools-government-17951387) *is the same.*

*A list of key workers has been published for* [*Northern Ireland*](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/list-key-workers)*. The list includes this provision:*

*“Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods”  
We are checking with the NI Department of Education whether this includes food bank volunteers and staff.*

*Advice has also been issued for* [*Scotland*](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus---school-and-elc-closures-guidance-on-critical-childcare-provision-for-key-workers/)*. Councils have been asked to draw up a list of key workers for their area and ministers have defined this as people who are “in posts which ensure that essential services can be delivered and cover tasks within the local community which support the vulnerable and aid community resilience”. It is expected that this will closely mirror the guidance for England and Wales.*

*We have prepared a* [*template letter*](https://www.dropbox.com/s/y883grkqh59yl6s/Food%20bank%20-%20key%20workers%20template%20letter.docx?dl=0) *for food bank staff that can be used to prove they are key workers.*

**Travel** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. We have had to ask staff/volunteers to travel further than usual to keep some of our warehouses/ centres open. Do we need to reimburse them?  
     
   *Food banks may not have a travel policy. It is reasonable for people to ask for their additional costs to be reimbursed and if requested food banks should consider doing so. This can take the form of reimbursed public transport costs (against a receipt) or using the Inland Revenue guidelines for the use of private vehicles. This must always be done in a transparent and consistent way.*

**Volunteers** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Should we be actively recruiting new volunteers?**   
     
   *Yes, we would encourage you to recruit new volunteers.* *The Trussell Trust is also supporting with a national recruitment drive, so, in addition to appealing to local churches or the community as a whole, please also contact volunteering@trusselltrust.org with information on the roles you are looking for.*
2. **Can the Trussell Trust help us get volunteers for our food bank?**

*Yes! We recognise that the current circumstances may pose a significant challenge for you to operate with your existing volunteer base, either because of a reduction in your existing volunteer capacity due to sickness/self-isolation, or resulting from the need to change the way you’re operating.*

*From last week, we have launched a concerted effort to recruit volunteers who are aged under 70 and do not need to self-isolate, who may be able to help add capacity to your food bank over the coming 3 months or more. Since last Wednesday, we have had over 4000 volunteer applications to our central site.*

*To better help you manage your volunteers, we have fast-tracked the development of our planned Volunteer Management System, and launched it at* [*www.trusselltrust.org/volunteering*](http://www.trusselltrust.org/volunteering)

[*More information can be found here.*](https://www.dropbox.com/s/e0xuorvqd4saau5/Emergency%20volunteers%20for%20your%20food%20bank.docx?dl=0)

1. **What help is there to train new volunteers?**

*We were really pleased to be able to share news of our new volunteering platform with you earlier this week. Following on from this, here are the training videos we will be using to train the warehouse volunteers and driving volunteers we recruit through the system. You are welcome to use these with any volunteers you are talking to in your area.*

[*Volunteering at a food bank*](https://trusselltrust.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ec8261e9a533fd7c5c55815e6&id=c235a5acda&e=a18b3ecd18)

[*Volunteering as a driver*](https://trusselltrust.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ec8261e9a533fd7c5c55815e6&id=40989a1c78&e=a18b3ecd18)

[*Volunteering in a food bank warehouse*](https://trusselltrust.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ec8261e9a533fd7c5c55815e6&id=379f3a2adc&e=a18b3ecd18)

1. **How do we manage our volunteers?**  
     
   *Volunteers are just that – they offer their help and you cannot compel them to continue to volunteer if they do not wish to. Equally for any who want to volunteer more, you should monitor and regulate their hours to ensure they are not doing too much.*
2. **What do we say to people who have been told to self-isolate if they wish to volunteer?**  
     
   *If volunteers have been told to self-isolate, they must follow those instructions and not visit the food bank. If they do arrive, they must be politely and sensitively asked to leave immediately.*
3. **What do we do if a volunteer becomes ill at the food bank?**  
     
   *If possible, isolate the volunteer. They and the food bank should then follow the advice given.*
4. **What about our older or more vulnerable volunteers?**  
     
   *The government has advised that people over the age of 70, pregnant women and those with “underlying health conditions” are to stay at home for 12 weeks. The advice, including details of the relevant “underlying health issues” can be found* [*here*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults)*. You have a duty of care to your volunteers and should very strongly advise them to follow the government advice . You can refuse to allow somebody to volunteer if you feel that is in the best interests of the individual, the food bank and their other volunteers.*
5. **Can volunteers lone work?**

We do not recommend lone working for volunteers. For volunteers working in warehouses and distribution centres normal operating procedures must be adapted to include social distancing measures, following the Public Health guidelines and those already outlined above.

Where the food bank is adapting its operating model, to deliver food parcels to self-isolating households, we recognise lone working may be necessary due to challenges managing social distancing measures in a shared car. In these cases, it is recommended:

* 1. The food bank uses drivers who are DBS checked to deliver to the doorstep.
  2. If this is not possible we would recommend that you use a well-known and trusted volunteers of the food bank to make doorstep deliveries.
  3. If you do need to ask volunteer drivers to lone work then there must be a documented lone working procedure for them to follow.
  4. If you are fortunate enough to have two volunteers from the same household, you may wish to consider them for home deliveries, assuming they are otherwise satisfactory for that role.
  5. Where absolutely necessary, you may consider asking two people to make deliveries together but travelling in separate cars. We recognise that this raises issues, but may be required due to the challenge of maintaining social distancing in a shared vehicle.

You should ensure communication is in place to let volunteers know the name and contact details of the food bank safeguarding officer(s). The telephone advice service provided by thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS) remains accessible to food banks for any safeguarding concerns or issues 24/7.

**Thirtyone:eight can be contacted on: 0303 003 11 11**

1. **Should we be actively recruiting new volunteers?**   
     
   *Yes, we would encourage you to recruit new volunteers.* *The Trussell Trust will also be supporting with a national recruitment drive, so, in addition to appealing to local churches or the community as a whole, please also contact volunteering@trusselltrust.org with information on the roles you are looking for.*

1. **Some of our volunteers are getting very stressed. Is there any help we can offer them?**  
     
   *The charity CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) have reached out and offered their helpline service to all of our amazing food bank staff and volunteers during this stressful time. The CALM helpline on 0800 58 58 58 is staffed by professionals (social workers, support workers) who are there to listen if you need it. It is open every day, 5pm – midnight, and is free, anonymous and confidential.*
2. **Will our volunteers count as key workers in order to be exempt from parking restrictions?**

*Parking restrictions are decided by local councils. Many appear to be exempting key workers from parking restrictions: some are asking people to leave a note in the car, others are asking people to apply for exemptions online. Food banks will need to check their local authority website to see what the advice is.*

**Vouchers** <[back to index](#Index)>

1. **Can I pick the virus up from handling food bank vouchers?**  
     
   *There is currently no advice regarding transmission in this way. If staff or volunteers are worried, they could wear protective gloves or have the voucher dropped into a clear plastic bag, but every effort should be made not to alarm the person with the voucher or unintentionally upset them when they are already at a low ebb.*
2. **Can we abandon the voucher system?**  
     
   *Please do not abandon the voucher system. Our data will be extremely valuable and important to inform ourselves and government agencies about the impact of coronavirus on the need for emergency food provision.*
3. **We would like to start using or make more use of e-referral so that agencies don’t have to see people face to face, and we aren’t handling paper vouchers. What advice is there?**  
     
   *Please check the bulletin of 25th March for a major item about e-referral. Some of the Some of the key benefits to the system include;*

* *Voucher codes can be issued remotely over the phone and/or emailed to a person in crisis*
* *You do not have to manually insert voucher details into the Data Collection System as this will be done by the referral agency, saving valuable volunteering time*
* *When vouchers are generated the agency is able to see the most geographically and up to date food bank centre locations based on the person’s (or, in the absence of an address, the referral agency’s) postcode*
* *It enhances our evidence base for influencing and campaigning, as well as anticipating potential demand*

*To help you, we are offering*

* *free tablets to the network – these will come with a SIM card and a monthly data package, paid for by us, to provide internet access if wi-fi is not available, and will also have the required software already installed*
* *simple guidance and resources*

*to add a range of national and local referral agencies to e-referral in the very near future*

1. **If the referral looks like it is related to the coronavirus, should we record this on the voucher?**  
   *Yes! Please record this in the notes section, including the word “virus”. Please select “Sickness” as the crisis type, unless there is a more compelling category. These steps will help us to analyse the impact of the virus on food bank services.*
2. **Will we still have to ensure that food bank data is up to date by 3rd April?**

*No. While up-to-date data will be very valuable in tracking the impact of coronavirus on food banks, we understand that it may not be practicable to have data for March in place by early April and we are revoking that request.*

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**Template messages for external communications**

*Please adapt the following templates for messages to local media and the public.*

*You may find helpful this prepared* [*template message to supporters*](https://thetrusselltrust-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/maddys_trusselltrust_org/EcNkaeDjjQ5GjjeUzBgi1ewBy8fx15PLgMYWup3TBtDIEw?e=UT6p0r)

**For specific donations:**

We’re still supporting people with emergency food at our centres – while we have not run out of all donations, there are certain items we are running low on. Your support is vital – if you’re considering donating, we’re particularly in need of [**the top 3-5 items you most need**]. Thank you!

**To reassure the local community you are still open**:

We’re still supporting people with emergency food at our centres – it’s hard for us to say how things will unfold in the coming weeks, but we will continue to provide help wherever possible and if anything changes, we’ll let you know immediately. In the meantime, please continue donating vital food supplies. We’re particularly in need of [**the top 3-5 items you most need**]. Thank you!

**To explain if you have to run a reduced service:**

We’re still supporting people with emergency food but we are running a reduced service due to measures put in place to slow the spread of infection. Help will continue to be available – [**insert details of the reduced service and how people can access help if they need it**]. If anything changes we will let you know immediately.

In the meantime, please continue donating vital food supplies. We’re particularly in need of [**the top 3-5 items you most need**]. Thank you!

**To explain if you have to close temporarily:**

We are having to temporarily close the food bank due to measures put in place to slow the spread of infection. Emergency support will continue to be available at [**insert details of where people can access help – see suggestions below under ‘Distributing Food’**]. As soon as we are able to reopen, we will let you know.

**For food bank media post**

*The following two templates may help you prepare content for websites or social media*

[*Template social media posts*](https://thetrusselltrust-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/emmat_trusselltrust_org/EZOz1ek-mMRHoVRjJ-D79JABsFYONTeJM6LPe82N7OuGHg?e=VWwl32)

[*Template web copy*](https://thetrusselltrust-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/maddys_trusselltrust_org/Ebx01OikTe5HrqiVpMF_7gQBoUfkKdCUmRP-3xoiqAcdHg?e=mqE2M7)

**Links to other supporting resources**

[Template letter for referral agencies](https://www.dropbox.com/s/78qvwlj84icbrdf/FB%20Network%20Referral%20Agencies%20Letter%20Template.docx?dl=0)

[Template letter about “key worker” status of volunteers and staff e.g. when travelling on food bank business](https://www.dropbox.com/s/y883grkqh59yl6s/Food%20bank%20-%20key%20workers%20template%20letter.docx?dl=0)

[Template letter for supporting churches](https://www.dropbox.com/s/951a6roqd88gdow/17-03-20%20Urgent%20Letter%20to%20Church%20Leaders%20from%20TT.pdf?dl=0)

[Trussell Trust’s letter to church leaders](https://www.trusselltrust.org/church-support/)

[Trussell Trust’s position and guidance for the public](https://www.trusselltrust.org/coronavirus-food-banks)

[Trussell Trust template for dealing with wider emergencies](https://www.dropbox.com/s/d7eiwiw16udnwrz/Disaster%20responsev3.pdf?dl=0)

**What can you do so that we can help you?**

1. *Raise any issues you don’t have answers for regarding food bank procedure during the outbreak, sending them to the* [*virus@trusselltrust.org*](mailto:virus@trusselltrust.org) *email address. We will respond via the next update unless we feel we need to contact you directly.*
2. *Inform your Area Manager if your stock levels are becoming significantly depleted. We cannot guarantee to resolve your situation, but we will do all we can.*