



Cardiff Covid-19 Food Response

State of play March – June 2020

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Scope

The findings and recommendations in this report relate to activity in the Cardiff local authority area between March and June 2020.

Background

Covid-19 has brought tremendous challenges on all aspects of our society. We are all facing a public health crisis of which we have not seen in a very long time. It is important during the pandemic that the population has access to sufficient and nutritious food as we know both physical and mental health are negatively impacted by poor diets.

We have heard from various food organisations across Cardiff that the scale and the nature of the support they are providing has changed dramatically and rapidly since the start of the crisis. To coordinate, expand and amplify the incredible response, Food Cardiff convened the Covid-19 Food Response Task Group. The Covid-19 Food Response Task Group members include Cardiff Council, C3SC, FareShare Cymru, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and Cardiff Foodbank.

Cardiff Council, C3SC and Food Cardiff set up a network of Anchor Organisations to co-ordinate a volunteer response in an area e.g. resources (e.g. volunteers, knowledge) and to act as a point of call to other organisations, community groups or grassroots movements in their local area. Where possible, Anchor Organisations also act as Food Response Partners to support the physical distribution of food in an area e.g. accepting referrals of people needing food, receiving and storing food for other organisations, community groups or grassroots movements. This network has enabled a strong co-ordination pathway, streamlining access to food and resources, communication and funding.

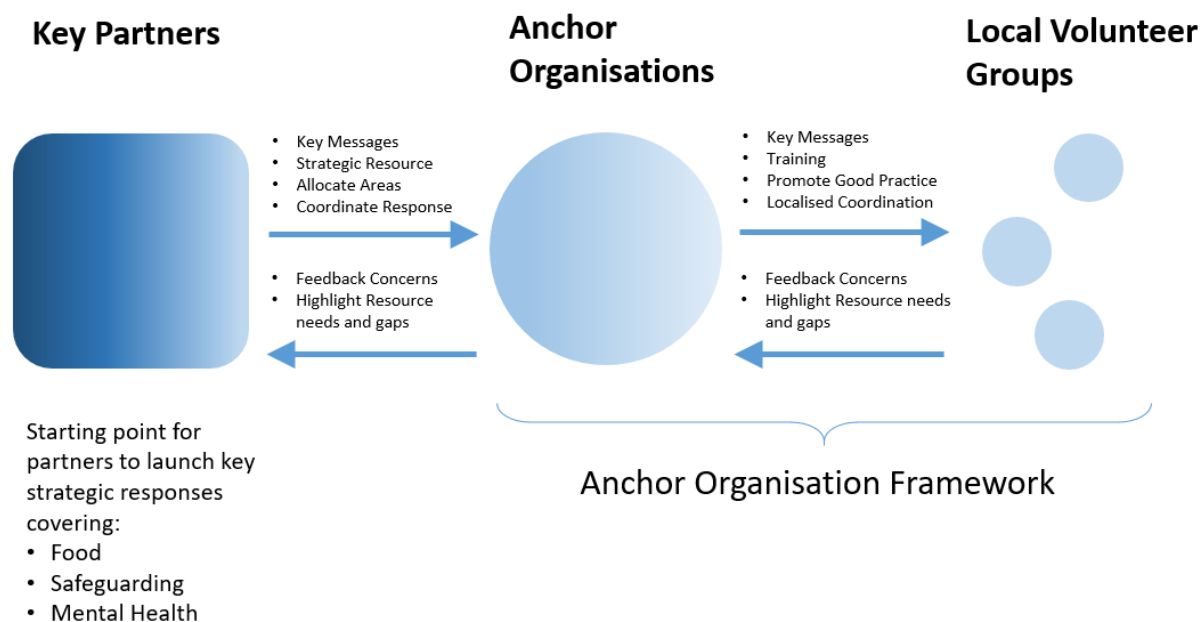


Figure 1. Anchor Organisation Framework

Summary of Groups Needing Food Support

During this time, there were two main cohorts of people needing support (which are not mutually exclusive)

- People unable to access food (e.g. 'Shielding Group', those self-isolating, carers of those shielding)
- People unable to afford food (e.g. people who have lost jobs, have insecure income, in 5 week wait for Universal Credit, usually accessing Free School Meals)

Group	Support mechanisms	Gaps
Shielding Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government shielding parcels (supported by Cardiff Council telephoning and door knocking to ensure people entitled can receive these); • Supermarket priority delivery slots; • Volunteer shopping services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parcel contents not large enough to feed individual; • Non-shielding family members or carers not entitled to parcel; • Parcel not providing dietary or culturally appropriate food.
Free School Meals (FSM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 options for families to choose from, depending on circumstance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfer via Parent Pay • Supermarket voucher <p>These have continued throughout summer holidays. Parcels of food offered in some circumstances (e.g. family self-isolating).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for holiday FSM allowance was diverted from the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP), which offered more than meals (enrichment activities and nutrition skills) and supported food insecure children not eligible for FSM support as well as those on FSM.
Food Insecure, able to leave home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice-line took a cash first approach to boosting household income e.g. benefits, council tax reductions, DAF; • Foodbank vouchers and parcels were distributed at hubs and Foodbank distribution centres until June; • Foodbank vouchers were distributed at hubs and parcels from Foodbank distribution centres from June; • Third sector and voluntary services including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Food For Life" project providing hot meals • Dusty Forge and Wyndham St pantries • Butetown Community Centre food parcel project • Religious settings (churches, mosques etc.) distributing food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third sector services do not cover whole city and often have limited capacity within their community; • Most third sector services reliant on grant funding and unsure of long-term financial sustainability.
Food Insecure, unable to leave home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, plus Cardiff Council Food Parcels for those self-isolating; • Support from third sector and grassroots volunteers, helping with shopping or providing food parcels/meals; • www.volunteercardiff.co.uk repurposed to offer details of local companies offering food deliveries, essentials and support services as well as act as a portal between volunteers and organisations needing volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, plus additional gaps as not all third sector services could offer delivery.

Monitoring Food Insecurity

Food Security means being sure of your ability to secure enough food of sufficient quality and quantity, to allow you to stay healthy and participate in society. Food Insecurity is a measure of severe material deprivation.

The Food Foundation have been carrying out a series of [You Gov Polls](#) to establish the extent of Food Insecurity across the UK. Unfortunately the sample was not sufficiently large or representative enough to draw out Wales level data. However **UK results** (22nd May 2020) during this period identify worrying trends:

- Nearly five million adults in the UK (4.9 million¹) (9%) were still experiencing food insecurity, despite the fact that supermarket shelves are now better stocked. 1.7 million¹ (12%) children live in these households. This is 2.5 times higher than prev-Covid-19 levels, which was 2 million adults (4%).
- Households which face at least 1.5 times greater than average levels of food insecurity are:
 - Households with a BAME adult compared to respondent of white ethnicity
 - Households with a disabled adult
 - Households with children dependent on free school meals
 - Households where adults are self-isolating
- Of those who were experiencing food insecurity, more than half (54%) or 2.6 million, have not received any offers of help (via leaflets, social media, phone, friends or family). 800,000 (16%) tried to get help but were unsuccessful. 1.1 million¹ (24%) who required assistance did find help.
- 5 million (52%) have not tried to get help, either because they did not know who to ask, they didn't want to ask, or because they felt ashamed of asking for support.
- Of those facing food insecurity only 19% said their local council was helping people struggling to access enough good food to eat.

There is growing research that households with children, disabled people, minority ethnic households and larger families are at higher risk of food insecurity at any time, which has been heightened since the COVID-19 lockdown.

Wales-level data was available for the YouGov survey of 4343 adults in Great Britain (213 adults in Wales) conducted on 7th-9th April:

- **677,000 adults in Wales had lost income as a result of Covid-19**
- **50,000 adults in Wales had lost all their income**
- **38% of adults in Wales who had lost income didn't believe they were entitled to help**

These statistics indicate that there were gaps in provision e.g. those not accessing support from Local Authorities. However, without Cardiff specific data it was difficult to understand the extent of the problem across the city or indeed whether interventions to mitigate the impact of Covid 19 on Food Insecurity were effective.

Recommendation 1: Cardiff Council adopt the approved method for measuring Food Insecurity (USDA Food Insecurity Module) in city-wide surveys e.g. Ask Cardiff 2020 to monitor levels of food insecurity in the city.

Findings from Food Response Task Group

Shielding Food Parcels

Over 14,000 residents in Cardiff were classed as extremely medically vulnerable and had to 'shield' for 12 weeks, not leaving the house including for food and medication. Welsh Government provided food parcels for people shielding who had requested support. Cardiff Council made great effort to ensure all shielding residents were aware of the food parcel support available, by phoning, door-knocking and flyering.

Between 23rd March and 30th June 1,932 food parcels were delivered to those shielding: 777 in April, 770 in May and 385 in June.

Though this support was welcome, there were reported concerns about the nutrition quality and quantity within the Welsh Government food parcels (in particular lack of fruit and veg, size of parcel and no consideration of dietary and cultural needs). There was also a gap where only the person who was shielding could receive a parcel. Carers and children in the household who were by de facto shielding were not entitled.

The vast majority of people shielding did not request a food parcel. The other means of getting food included: priority supermarket delivery slots, volunteer shopping services, friends and family and third sector support. The 14,000+ figure also included shielded people living in care homes, many of which worked with local suppliers to ensure a consistent supply.

Recommendation 2: Food Cardiff Partners to maximise support to the shielded group through existing support mechanisms, prioritising income maximisation (e.g. Discretionary Assistance Fund, benefits checks), digital access (e.g. online shopping) and raising awareness of local food infrastructure (e.g. voluntary shopping services).

Recommendation 3: Any future provision for food parcels for those shielding should meet the Government recommended dietary guidelines (Eatwell Guide), plus take account of dietary and cultural needs and provide for the whole household. This should apply to any provision whether delivered through a national Welsh Government or local Cardiff Council scheme.¹

Cardiff Council Money Advice and Food Parcel Service

Cardiff Council undertook an enormous amount of work to embed a cash-first approach to the food response. The Money Advice Team expanded their advice line staffing and set up a triage system to help callers access the benefits they were entitled to e.g. Universal Credit, contributory benefits, Free School Meals, Discretionary Assistance Fund and Council Tax reduction (see Appendix 1 for the referral route). The Advice Line number was promoted through local radio, social media and through partners to maximise uptake.

In the event that the caller was self-isolating and food insecure, Cardiff Council would provide a food parcel. From 23rd March – 30th June Cardiff Council distributed 3,792 food parcels.

Through the Food Response Task Group, Cardiff Council worked with Cardiff & Vale Public Health Dietetics to maximise the nutritional content of the parcels and tailor the contents to cultural and

¹ N.b. Shielded parcel contents were previously determined by Welsh Government. Adequate funding would need to be provided in order to meet this recommendation.

other dietary requirements. Cardiff Council also worked with Cardiff Foodbank to enable Foodbank Vouchers and Parcels to be distributed together at the four open Hubs in the city.

Though in June there was a reduction in the number of people self-isolating and requiring food parcels, Cardiff Council are expecting to see a high number of people facing food insecurity in the medium-long term. [Up to 10,000 jobs in Cardiff are at risk](#). As deferred repayments for certain debts are called in, it is likely there will be a rise again. The Money Advice Team have launched a [new website](#) to help mitigate some of these negative effects.

Recommendation 4: Food Cardiff partners to continue to ensure Cardiff residents have access to good quality advice in order to maximise income, for example by further rolling out Food-Related Benefits Training and Nutrition Skills For Life to public and third sector services.

Free School Meals (FSM)

As of 18th May 2020, there were 12,478 children entitled to FSM, an increase of 350 children since 1st April 2020. Volumes of new applications were 25% higher than in March and this is likely to increase due to the risk to jobs post-lockdown.

The majority of families had been receiving bank transfers via ParentPay of £19.50 per child per week, in place of breakfast clubs and free lunches.

Cardiff Council also worked to ensure children from families with no recourse to public funds could also access Free School Meal support.

We welcomed the announcement that this provision would continue through the summer holidays but identified a gap in support for wider holiday provision schemes that tackle social isolation and are available for food insecure children not entitled to Free School Meals e.g. SHEP.²

Recommendation 5: Cardiff Council to continue to provide Free School Meals or equivalent provision across term-time, including to those with no recourse to public funds. Maximise the uptake of FSM to existing and newly entitled families, by ensuring ease of access and by raising awareness.

Recommendation 6: Cardiff Council to map holiday provision needs across Cardiff and ensure quality assured holiday provision is available for vulnerable and food insecure children across the city. Maximise the number of vulnerable and food insecure children attending Cardiff Council run provision, including the School Holiday Enrichment Programme.

Cardiff Foodbank

Once an individual is referred for a foodbank voucher, they can bring the voucher to the nearest distribution centre, where it can be exchanged for a parcel containing a minimum of three days' nutritionally balanced food. They are designed to provide short-term, emergency support with food during a crisis. The aim is to relieve the immediate pressure of the crisis by providing food, whilst also offering additional support to help people resolve crisis.

² Subsequently to this report period, Cardiff Council and partners launched Cardiff Summer Squad and worked closely with Children's Services and SHEP co-ordinators to run holiday provision schemes in 9 primary schools and 2 secondary schools.

Cardiff Foodbank saw a significant increase in food parcels provided in March, April and May 2020 compared to the previous year. It is particularly concerning that there was a large increase in the number of children that have been in a home where an emergency food parcel has been needed.

Across Wales, there was an 89% increase in need for emergency food parcels in April, compared to the same period last year. During this time, there was also a 101% increase in the number of children receiving support.

Table 1. Number of food parcels given out by Cardiff Foodbank in March, April and May 2019 and 2020

Month	2020	2019
March	Total: 2404	Total: 1123
	Adults: 1380	Adults: 686
	Children:1024	Children: 437
April	Total: 2940	Total: 1096
	Adults: 1832	Adults: 710
	Children: 1108	Children: 386
May	Total: 1559	Total: 1074
	Adults: 982	Adults: 682
	Children: 577	Children: 392

There was a month on month increase by those reporting low wages as the reason they require a foodbank parcel. Given the predictions of an economic downturn, Cardiff Foodbank are anticipating a further increase in clients. Should there be further delays in benefit claims this will add to the numbers.

Third Sector and Grassroots Response

The response across the third sector and community grassroots groups has been enormous. We know that 48 organisations plus 23 Covid-19 Mutual Aid support groups provided food parcels, community meals and/or shopping services. The Food Response Task Group co-ordinated this effort through a network of Anchor Organisations and Food Response Partners, who have been supporting grassroots groups and communities with training, mentoring and acting as food distribution hubs. We do not have the data to understand the full picture of this, however FareShare Cymru who are one of the major suppliers of surplus food for community projects have reported a surge of demand. FareShare Cymru and many of the Anchor Organisations and Food Response Partners are still predicting that the level of need will continue into the future.

Between 16th March and 24th May, FareShare Cymru redistributed 60.8 tonnes of food in Cardiff, enough for 144,676 meals. This was roughly double the redistribution levels pre-Covid.

Recommendation 7: Food Cardiff Partners to learn from and continue developing the Anchor Organisation and Food Response Partner network to link voluntary and third sector support with local authority services.

Case Study 1: Your Local Pantries

Two “Your Local Pantries” in Cardiff have been supporting households with an affordable food shop delivered to the door.

The first, run by **Action in Caerau and Ely (ACE)** has operated as a community shop since July 2019. They quickly pivoted to a home-delivery system to ensure the most vulnerable members still had access to fresh, affordable food, supplied by FareShare Cymru. Between April and June the Dusty Forge Pantry delivered 583 food parcels to 111 households. Households received 3 bags per week (one ambient, one chilled / frozen and one fruit and veg) during lockdown. They prioritised Pantry members that were shielding and low-income households not eligible for Free School Meals. Pantry members pay £5 a week and receive approximately £25 worth of food, making it an affordable shop and enabling the project to be less reliant on grant funding. In addition to Pantry deliveries, 36 households in Ely and Caerau (targeting elderly and disabled residents) received a packed lunch and ambient food parcels each week for the month of June provided by Mary Immaculate High School. Additional lunch packs have been distributed by Pentrebanne Zone and Care and Repair.

South Riverside Community Development Centre (SRCDC) were beginning to develop the Wyndham St Pantry at the beginning of lockdown. SRCDC accelerated and adapted this process to meet the sharp escalation of need caused by Covid-19 to the local community, providing 813 food parcels in the first 3 months. Additional funding allowed the service to launch at a reduced cost of £2.50 in April. The food parcels plus 3 bags (one for fruit and vegetables, one for cupboard food and an additional meat, vegetarian or halal bag) are free from July to October 2020. The Pantry provides food for people in Riverside, Grangetown, Canton and Butetown where there is a disproportionate number of people who support large households through self-employed or zero hours/flexible hours employment, a high BAME community and other groups struggling before the pandemic. SRCDC lead the project but partnered with multiple organisations and local volunteers to pull together and respond quickly, including: Women Connect First, Oasis, Horn Development Agency, Food Cardiff, Cardiff Council, the local community pack back team and the VEST service; as well as development support from ACE. The pantry is supplied mainly by FareShare Cymru but SRCDC also worked with a local butcher to provide halal meat and a local chef to bake bread, which enabled the project to support local businesses. SRCDC are now planning to move towards the traditional pantry model and create a shop space where customers can pick what they want off the shelves, at least 10 items (worth around £25) for £5.

Case Study 2: BAME Covid-19 Food Rescue

A collective of four organisations came together to support Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority households in Cardiff struggling to afford and/or access food during the pandemic. Women Connect First, Hayaat Women Trust, Henna Foundation and Horn Development Association Cardiff set up a scheme to distribute food parcels, which cater to the BAME community, using Butetown Community Centre as a base. The group is in the process of compiling data but initial findings are:

- Approximately 2,000 food parcels delivered April-June
- Approximately 300 households supported (plus additional walk-ins and other households not yet counted)
- 90% of households from BAME communities which also include refugees and asylum seekers
- Many of these households found it difficult to afford food due to loss of jobs and lack of childcare
- The project also supported women who are in refuge from domestic violence and families with children experiencing sickle cell syndrome
- Project workers are now employed to help meet the demand and develop the work

The project initially relied on donations from organisations and supermarkets to supply the food boxes, with additional products purchased to ensure the boxes were culturally appropriate. Items included rice, pasta, pulses, beans, fresh and canned fruit & vegetables, spices, soups, milk and toiletries. Some households reported using this service because it was more culturally suitable than the Welsh Government or Council food parcels.

Women Connect First also kept its activities and services ongoing throughout the pandemic and have helped families claim laptops and tablets to help with school work, run activities such as cooking for fun and extended an afterschool club with activities on zoom every week.

Case Study 3: Rumney Coronavirus Support Group

Rumney Coronavirus Support Group was set up on 14 March 2020 as a non-constituted community group comprising entirely of volunteers. The group aimed to get help quickly to elderly and vulnerable people residing in East Cardiff (CF3) who had been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. During the height of the 'first wave' in April and May the group had 15 Neighbourhood Support Teams (NESTs): 9 in Llanrumney and Rumney and 6 in Trowbridge and St Mellons. There were 76 volunteers from these areas who were supporting their local neighbourhoods with:

- ✓ **'Rapid response' delivery (within 24 hrs):** groceries, supplies and medicines.
- ✓ **Urgent 'top-up' scheme:** for people who couldn't afford it, they helped pay for urgent essentials, e.g. groceries or utilities.
- ✓ **Activity packs** for families during closure / restriction of schools and nurseries.
- ✓ **Fact-checked information and advice**, including signposting to other agencies and leaflets on Coronavirus, Council Advice Line and local food suppliers.
- ✓ **Safe social contact** e.g. by phone, text, email, social media, through windows and front doors at a safe distance.
- ✓ A **Facebook Group** for volunteers and people in need of information, advice or support, with over 220 members by June.
- ✓ A **food donations supply line** to the Health Charity (NHS Wales), Cardiff Foodbank, St Teilo's School foodbank and hostels for homeless people; working with Sainsbury's.

The group ensured volunteers worked in pairs and were briefed with professional safeguarding and health & safety guidance, with a professional Nominated Lead on these issues.

The NESTs in Trowbridge and St Mellons soon grew into a new support group, **Coronavirus Action St Mellons & Trowbridge (CAST)**: a community action partnership between Rumney Coronavirus Support Group, Eastern High and Bethania Church.

This group took a range referrals from self-referral, the CAST helpline (based at Eastern High) and other community groups and charities such as the Foodbank, FareShare, Age Cymru, Cardiff Council; also schools and housing agencies.

By the end of June, the Neighbourhood Support Teams had delivered **352 bags of safe fresh food (bought and donated) to 46 households in most need in Rumney & Llanrumney and 255 bags to 33 households in Trowbridge & St Mellons**. The groups ensured that all of these households knew about the Council Advice Line and encouraged them to contact the Council for food parcels. They also enabled residents to collect food parcels from St Mellons Hub, and collected and delivered them to those who were self-isolating or shielding.

Public Engagement and Good Food Cardiff

To bolster the Covid-19 food response, Food Cardiff co-ordinated a mass public engagement campaign. Food Cardiff launched a new online food information hub at www.foodcardiff.com and asked people across the city to get behind the good-food response by supporting local food businesses, reducing food waste and growing their own food. Ideas, actions and success stories were shared across social media via #GoodFoodCardiff.

C3SC also set up and regularly updated seven service directories, one of which specifically related to shopping and food delivery during lockdown.

The partnership built on this by working with community growing organisations, Anchor Organisations, Food Response Partners and Mutual Aid Groups, with support from Food For Life Get Togethers to encourage households in Cardiff to grow their own vegetables during lockdown. Almost 14,000 plants, seeds and growing kits were distributed during lockdown as part of the “Cardiff Growing Together³” campaign. A team of 70 volunteers across 16 projects reached 3,000 households with seeds or plants, with more than 100 people joining online growing classes.

Food Cardiff subsequently launched “Cardiff Cooking Together” as a platform for community groups to share recipes, food tips and celebrate different food cultures from across the city.

What has worked well

- **Partnership working and local co-ordination:** the existing food partnership infrastructure (Food Cardiff) enabled the Food Response Task Group and Anchor Organisation model, which reduced duplication and maximised impact.
- **Cardiff Council input and resource:** as shown above, Cardiff Council have taken a holistic and responsive approach to ensuring Cardiff residents can both access and afford good food.
- **Third Sector pivoting:** many third sector organisations changed existing or accelerated developing projects to focus on the immediate food needs of communities.
- **Grassroots response:** new grassroots groups such as the network of Mutual Aid groups were quickly and organically established. A [recent survey](#) ranked Cardiff the ‘most community spirited’ area in the UK with 73% of people reporting that they supporting their neighbours.
- **Speed of response:** All of the above mobilised quickly, in response to a rapidly changing situation, which mitigated some of the potentially large issues.

³ <https://foodcardiff.com/blog/growingtogether/>

Challenges

One of the biggest problems is that these are short-term solutions to a long-term challenge. Food insecurity was exacerbated and some of the underlying causes are set to continue through the Covid-19 recovery and beyond. In particular:

- **Funding:** Public sector, third sector and grassroots responses were all reliant on limited and Covid-19 specific funding. Though some models (e.g. Your Local Pantry) have an element of financial sustainability, most projects do not have the level of funding to fully meet the short-term need, or to continue beyond the immediate crisis.
- **People:** Much of the food response has relied on volunteer time and effort, often from people furloughed or unable to work during lockdown. Many of these volunteers will be returning to work or will have less time available as lockdown eases. Paid staff have also been able to focus more time specifically on the food response, but will need to return to previous roles and/or priorities post-lockdown.
- **Tackling Root Causes and Dignity:** Receiving food aid, shopping assistance or temporary financial measures (e.g. credit card payment holidays) do not tackle the root causes of not being able to afford and/or access food and could delay rather than solve problems. They also don't always offer the most dignified solution, for example by limiting choice of food or unintentionally creating a stigma. The long-term food response should focus on tackling the root causes of poverty and take a cash-first approach to ensure people maximise their income.

Appendix 1 – Advice Line Referral Route

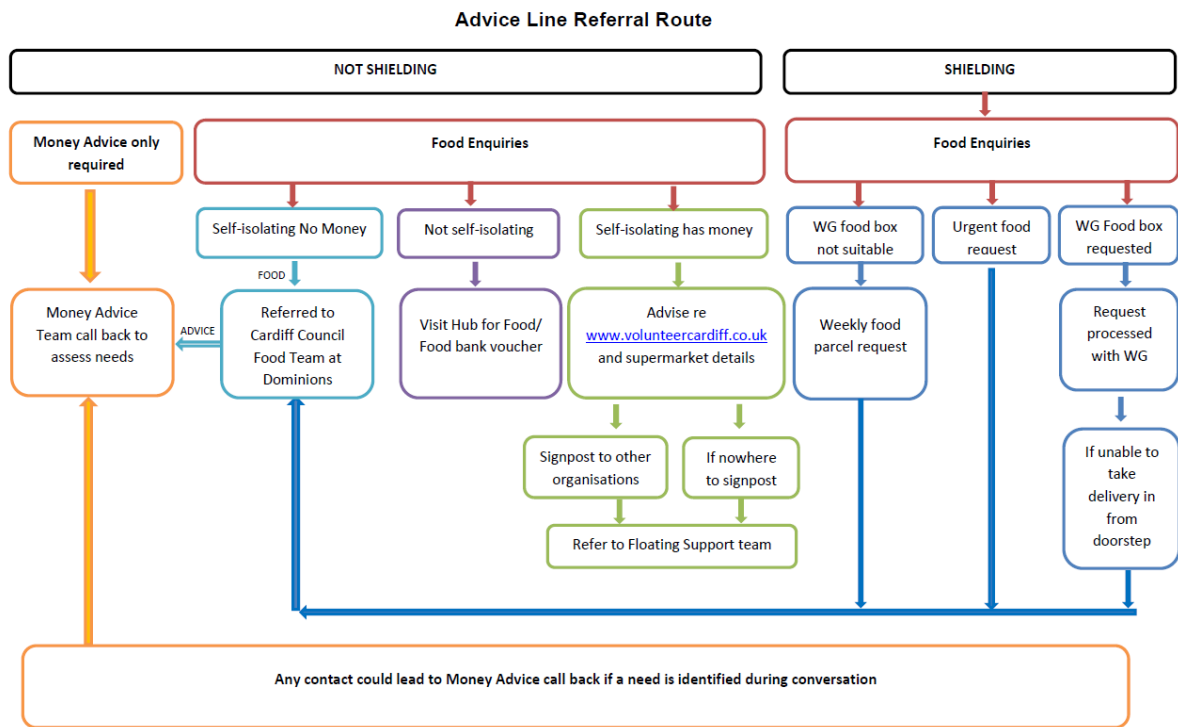


Figure 2. Cardiff Council Advice Line Referral Route

Appendix 2 – Covid-19 Food Response Task Group Members

With thanks to the following organisations who co-produced this report:



Thanks to ACE – Action in Caerau and Ely, South Riverside Community Development Centre, Women Connect First and Rumney Community Support Group for providing case studies for this report.