

## Meals on Wheels UK – Provider Resource



*Developed by the Meals on Wheels UK project, University of Bristol*

### How to communicate the full value of Meals on Wheels

#### Why this matters

Meals on Wheels is often described as a food service - but providers know that its value goes far beyond the meal itself.

Research and provider experience consistently show that Meals on Wheels supports people to remain independent at home, improves wellbeing, and provides reassurance to families.

However, this full value is not always well understood by those outside the sector.

This guide offers simple ways to communicate the broader impact of Meals on Wheels when speaking to families, professionals, commissioners, or local partners.

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#### Meals on Wheels is more than a meal

Meals on Wheels services typically provide:

- regular access to nutritious food
- consistent social contact
- informal wellbeing checks
- early identification of concerns
- reassurance for families and carers

As one provider described:

**“For many people, this is not just a meal - it’s their main point of contact that day.”**

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#### What difference does the service make?

Evidence and provider experience show that Meals on Wheels supports:

- independence and ability to remain at home
- improved nutrition and regular eating
- reduced social isolation
- increased sense of safety and reassurance
- earlier identification of changes in health or wellbeing

In many cases, this helps prevent escalation of need and reduces pressures on health and care services.

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### **A simple way to describe the service**

Some providers find it helpful to use a short, clear message:

**“Meals on Wheels is a preventative service - it helps people stay well, independent, and connected at home.”**

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### **Adapting your message for different audiences**

#### **Families and carers**

Focus on reassurance and day-to-day impact:

- “Someone will check in regularly”
  - “They’ll know your relative is eating properly”
  - “It provides peace of mind if you don’t live nearby”
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#### **Health and social care professionals**

Focus on prevention and support:

- “It helps people maintain independence at home”
  - “It supports safe discharge from hospital”
  - “It provides regular contact and monitoring”
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#### **Commissioners and policymakers**

Focus on system impact:

- “It is a preventative, community-based service”
  - “It helps delay or reduce the need for more intensive care”
  - “It supports people to remain in their own homes for longer”
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### **Linking national evidence to local practice**

You may wish to connect wider messages to your own service:

- “We see that reflected here in our local area...”
- “Demand for this type of support has been increasing...”
- “This is the kind of support that helps people stay at home longer...”

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## Using evidence

Some providers find it helpful to include one simple, evidence-based point to support their message. For example:

- the service supports independence and safety at home
- it provides regular contact and reduces isolation
- it contributes to people feeling more secure and supported

You do not need to use multiple examples - one clear point is often enough.

## Final note

Every service is different, and you know your local context best.

This guide is intended as a prompt. You may already be communicating the value of your service in ways that work well for your community.

**Further information on the benefits of Meals on Wheels is available here:**

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/policybristol/policy-briefings/care-meals-carers/>

## Help us improve this resource

This guide has been developed based on ongoing engagement with Meals on Wheels providers, alongside insights from people who use the service and those who refer to it.

We recognise that many providers are already doing excellent work to communicate the value of Meals on Wheels in ways that resonate locally, whether that's with families, health and care professionals, commissioners, or community partners.

We would really value your input to help ensure this resource reflects the realities of practice across the sector.

If you've found effective ways of explaining the value of your service, we'd be very interested to hear from you.

You might wish to share:

- how you describe your service to families or carers
- how you communicate impact to local authorities or commissioners
- messages or approaches that have helped raise awareness locally
- examples of what has worked well (or what hasn't)

We are particularly interested in practical examples, including simple wording, short messages, or approaches that have helped others understand the broader value of Meals on Wheels.

Please share your ideas via our [WhatsApp Community](#).

Your input will help us continue to develop resources that are practical, relevant, and shaped by providers across the UK.