

Meals on Wheels UK – Provider Resource



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

What makes Meals on Wheels different from other meal delivery services?

Why this matters

People often compare Meals on Wheels with other types of meal delivery, such as supermarket deliveries or prepared meal services.

While these services can be useful, Meals on Wheels offers something different.

This guide helps providers clearly explain that difference to families, professionals, and decision-makers.

Meals on Wheels: more than food delivery

Meals on Wheels combines food provision with support.

Alongside meals, services provide:

- regular, reliable contact
- wellbeing checks
- informal monitoring of changes in health or behaviour
- reassurance for families and carers
- support to remain independent at home

What makes it different?

Meals on Wheels	Other meal delivery
Regular, consistent contact	One-off or irregular delivery
Known driver or volunteer	Anonymous courier
Wellbeing checks	No monitoring
Safeguarding role	No safeguarding function
Supports independence	Focus on food only
Builds relationships over time	Transactional service

How to explain this in practice

Some providers find it helpful to use simple comparisons:

- “It’s not just a delivery - it’s someone checking in regularly”
- “It’s a relationship, not a one-off service”
- “It combines food with care and support”

Why this difference matters

This distinction is important because Meals on Wheels:

- helps identify issues early
- supports people who may otherwise struggle to eat
- provides reassurance to families
- contributes to wider health and care outcomes

When this is particularly important

Meals on Wheels may be especially valuable for people who:

- live alone
- have limited mobility
- are recovering from illness
- are at risk of malnutrition
- need regular contact or reassurance

Final note

Other meal delivery services may meet some needs. However, Meals on Wheels provides a broader, more supportive offer for people who require more than food alone.

Help us improve this resource

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

We recognise that providers often need to explain how Meals on Wheels differs from other forms of meal delivery (whether to families, professionals, or local partners) and that this can vary depending on local context.

We would really value your input to help ensure this resource reflects the ways services are described and understood in practice.

If you have found effective ways of explaining what makes your service different, we would be very interested to hear from you.

You might wish to share:

- how you describe your service to families or carers
- how you explain the difference to professionals or referrers
- comparisons or examples that have helped people understand the value of the service
- feedback you've received from people using your service

We are particularly interested in simple, clear ways of communicating this - including short phrases, examples, or approaches that have worked well locally.

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.