

Meals on Wheels UK – Provider Resource



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

What information should Meals on Wheels providers include on their websites?

When someone is looking for Meals on Wheels, they often start online. This might be an older person, a family member, a carer, a social worker, a hospital discharge team, or another referrer.

[Research from the Meals on Wheels UK project at the University of Bristol](#) found that people value clear, practical information when deciding whether a service is suitable. This includes information about the meals, what support is provided, delivery reliability and flexibility, and cost.

This checklist is designed to help providers make their websites clearer, more useful, and easier to act on.

Why this matters

Clear online information can help people:

- understand whether your service is right for them or someone they support
- make referrals more confidently
- reduce unnecessary phone or email enquiries
- compare options where more than one service is available
- access support earlier

Even simple changes (such as making your delivery area, contact details, costs, and eligibility criteria easy to find) can make a real difference.

Website information checklist for Meals on Wheels providers

1. Basic service information

Include:

- Name of the service
- Type of provider, e.g. council-run, charity, social enterprise, private provider
- Delivery areas covered
- Full address and postcode, where appropriate
- Whether the information on the page is up to date
- State when the page was last reviewed or updated

Tip: If you only deliver to certain postcodes, villages, towns, or neighbourhoods, list these clearly and keep these up to date.

2. Contact details

Make it easy for people to get in touch.

Include:

- Telephone number
- A working email address
- Contact form, if available
- Opening hours for enquiries
- Expected response time, if possible
- What to do if someone cannot get through

Tip: Families and referrers often need to make decisions quickly. If your inbox or phone line is not monitored daily, say when people can expect a response.

3. Who the service is for

Explain who can use the service.

Include:

- Main target population
- Age criteria, if any
- Whether you support people with disabilities, dementia, mental health conditions, recovery after hospital discharge, or other needs
- Whether people can self-refer
- Whether referrals are accepted from family members, carers, social workers, NHS teams, or others
- Whether an assessment is required

Tip: Avoid assuming people know they are “eligible”. Spell it out clearly.

4. Meals provided

People want to know what they will actually receive.

Include:

- Type of meals, e.g. hot, chilled, frozen, or a mix

- Whether any preparation is required to eat the meal (e.g. reheating in the microwave/ stove/ oven)
- Number of courses (e.g. main and dessert or soup and a main)
- Whether the service provides lunch only or meals for other eating occasions too (e.g. light breakfast for the next day)
- Whether light meals, sandwiches, desserts, snacks, or tea-time options are available
- How often the menu changes or rotates (e.g. variety of meals)
- How many choices are available per meal (e.g. choice of two mains and two desserts)
- Sample online menus
- Portion sizes, if useful
- Nutritional information, where available
- Food hygiene rating

Tip: A sample menu can be very helpful.

5. Dietary needs and preferences

Include:

- Whether you cater for specific diets
- Provide examples, e.g. vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, texture-modified, diabetic-friendly, low salt, cultural or religious dietary needs
- How allergies are handled
- How people should tell you about dietary requirements
- Whether meals can be adapted to meet specific individual needs or preferences

Tip: If you cannot cater for certain needs, say so clearly and kindly.

6. What support is provided alongside the meal

Meals on Wheels is often valued because it is more than food.

Include whether you provide:

- Wellbeing checks
- Social contact
- Escalation of concerns to family, carers, and/or professionals
- Plating up the meal
- Cutting up food

- Prompting or reminding, where appropriate (e.g. to have a drink or to take medication)
- Signposting to other services
- Additional support, such as delivering basic groceries or providing other practical help
- Who delivers the meals (e.g. if the drivers are DBS-checked, or if it's usually the same driver delivering to someone)

Tip: Explain what happens if a driver or volunteer is concerned about someone's wellbeing.

7. Delivery frequency and timing

Include:

- Days of delivery
- Whether weekend or bank holiday meal deliveries are available
- Typical time window of the delivery
- Whether delivery times can vary
- Minimum number of meals per week, if any
- Whether short-term support is available, e.g. after hospital discharge
- How much notice is needed to start, pause, or cancel the service, or change meals

Tip: Reliability and flexibility were highlighted in our research as important information for people considering Meals on Wheels.

8. Cost and payment

Be as clear as possible.

Include:

- Cost per meal
- What is included in the price
- Whether delivery is included
- Whether prices differ by number of courses or meal type
- Whether subsidies or funding support are available
- Payment options, e.g. direct debit, card, invoice, phone payment, pay-as-you-go
- When payment is taken, e.g. in advance or in arrears
- What happens if someone has difficulty paying

Tip: Cost is one of the key pieces of information people value when deciding whether to access a service.

9. How to start using the service

Make the next step obvious.

Include:

- How to enquire
- How to refer someone
- What information is needed to register
- How quickly the service can usually start
- Whether a trial period is available
- Who can complete the referral
- What happens after someone gets in touch

Tip: A simple “Start a referral” button or short online form can make the process easier.

10. Testimonials and real experiences

Including short testimonials or real-life examples can help people understand what your service is like in practice.

These might include:

- feedback from people receiving the service (including about the taste and quality of the meals)
- comments from family members or carers
- examples of how the service has supported someone
- short quotes highlighting reliability, quality of food, or wellbeing support

Tip: Keep testimonials short, clear, and anonymised where appropriate. Focus on real experiences that reflect what people value most about the service.

Quick website check

Before publishing, ask:

- Can someone find your delivery area in under 30 seconds?
- Can they see how much the service costs?
- Can they tell whether you provide wellbeing checks?
- Can they find a working phone number or email address?
- Can a family member or referrer understand how to start the service?

- Is the page written in plain language?
- Has the page been checked recently?

Based on research and provider experience

This checklist is based on findings from [research](#) by the Meals on Wheels UK project at the University of Bristol, and ongoing engagement with Meals on Wheels providers, service users, and referrers. In a qualitative study with service users and referrers, participants highlighted the importance of clear information about meals, services provided, delivery reliability and flexibility, and costs, when considering accessing Meals on Wheels.

Help us improve this resource

We know that many services are already doing excellent work to make information accessible online, and that there are different ways of presenting this effectively.

If there's something we've missed, or if your website includes features that have made it easier for people to find and use your service, we would really value hearing from you.

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

Your input will help us keep this resource practical, relevant, and shaped by providers.