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| Press Release | Mid Devon Logo |

**Date issued: 31 March 2020**

**Mid Devon Support Countywide Shielding Hub for the Most Vulnerable**

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| Emergency food parcels have arrived in Devon to be distributed to the county’s most vulnerable residents, who have been told by the Government to ‘shield’ from coronavirus (COVID-19) for at least 12 weeks.  Those identified as being at high risk of severe illness from coronavirus because of underlying health conditions should have received a letter from the NHS with instructions on how they can best protect themselves.  People can also [register themselves on the Government website](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable) if they have a medical condition that makes them extremely vulnerable to coronavirus, or register on someone’s behalf.  Devon County Council has been urgently phoning these people over the weekend to find out what their needs are and how best to support them, particularly with anything they need immediately such as vital food and medical supplies or additional care.  Volunteer staff redeployed from other council services are busy packaging up the emergency food parcels at an undisclosed distribution hub on the outskirts of Exeter where the food, which was organised by Government and dispatched from a local wholesaler, arrived earlier today.  The parcels, which are free and contain 7 days-worth of mostly non-perishable food for one person, will then be delivered to district areas using Devon Highways vehicles driven by Civil Enforcement Officers from the County Council’s parking team.  District and city councils are locally managing the delivery of support within their communities to ensure the food parcels are delivered to residents as quickly and efficiently as possible.  Stephen Walford, Chief Executive of Mid Devon District Council, said  “This is part of a national effort to rapidly deliver vital support to our residents with the highest medical needs that put them at the greatest risk. For those that perhaps live alone and don’t have family, friends or social care services to help, the robust shielding measures implemented to avoid the spread of the virus can also mean being cut off without vital food or medical supplies. I am very pleased we’ve been able to work with county council colleagues to roll out this emergency service and ensure our most vulnerable residents continue to get the food, medicines and additional care they need as quickly as possible.  ‘I would like to thank the council officers that have worked tirelessly to make this happen, particularly those that have stepped in and stepped up while being redeployed from other roles. We will continue to make every effort to provide the essential services that local people rely on during this extremely challenging time. I would also urge everyone to continue to follow the Government’s advice on staying at home and away from others.”  The Government [has published guidance about the medical conditions](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#how-can-you-get-assistance-with-foods-and-medicines-if-you-are-shielding) that they consider make people extremely vulnerable, and the NHS is contacting those identified to provide further advice.  If you’re not sure whether your medical condition makes you extremely vulnerable, [register on the Government website anyway.](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable)  If you think you fall into one of the categories of extremely vulnerable people listed and you have not received a letter by Sunday 29 March 2020 or been contacted by your GP, you should discuss your concerns with your GP or hospital clinician.  Fraudsters are increasingly targeting individuals and organisations with emails, text, phone calls and WhatsApp messages offering advice, treatment, products and services for coronavirus or asking for donations, so measures are also being put in place to ensure those making contact with vulnerable people about receiving support from the ‘shielding hub’ are reliably identifiable, and residents are aware that they will never be asked for bank details or request money.  The latest national advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) is available on the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) and [NHS website.](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)  You can find local guidance and information about the impacts on services in Mid Devon [on our dedicated Coronavirus page](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus-covid-19-service-updates/)  ENDS |