

Hancock not confirmed elderly protected from self-isolation hunger



Health Secretary confirms coronavirus plan for over 70s to be forced into strict isolation at home or in care homes for four months

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health, is unable to say whether he has assessed the ability of councils and care companies to feed older people forced to self-isolate in line with government plans.

The revelation, obtained via written question in Parliament by Luton North MP Sarah Owen, comes despite the Health Secretary today confirming government plans for over 70s to be **forced into strict isolation** at home or in care homes for four months in the coming weeks.





The Prime Minister's adviser, Dominic Cummings, has reportedly also initiated **conversations with Uber and Deliveroo** about taking food to the old and vulnerable when they are put into forced isolation.

In a written question Sarah Owen, MP for Luton North, asked:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability of local authorities and care companies to provide food and meals to elderly and disabled people who receive care in their homes in the event of a covid-19 outbreak.

In a **reply**, published on Friday, Health Minister Helen Whately answered:

The Department of Health and Social Care has indicated that it will not be possible to answer this question within the usual time period. An answer is being prepared and will be provided as soon as it is available.



Rehana Azam, GMB National Secretary, said:

"The Government says we need a 'wartime-style' response but they will be setting their troops up to fail if they haven't done due diligence on their COVID-19 plans.

"Councils have lost a quarter of their budgets after a decade of self-defeating Tory austerity and our care sector is on its knees due to chronic underfunding, understaffing and repeated failure to support our care sector and its workers.

"The suggestion that companies like Deliveroo and Uber can take the vital task of keeping nearly 9 million older people properly fed is frankly not a serious one.

"But food provision only scratches the surface of the care and support people will need from properly-equipped professional staff to preserve life and maintain health.

"Matt Hancock risks spreading confusion and panic by taking to the airwaves to confirm his plan without properly assessing its feasibility, let alone properly consulting with the workers he expects to deliver it.

"GMB is calling for an urgent taskforce to bring unions, councils and care providers together to draw up and deliver proper plans to protect older people.

"We need less shambolic communication and more joined-up working in the national interest and for the public good. We stand ready to work together."





Sarah Owen, MP for Luton North, said:

“The Minister’s inability to answer this simple question will be deeply concerning to carers and patients.

“This Government needs to act now, and not leave this burden on the shoulders of already overstretched local authorities.

“Food provision was not adequately covered in the guidance recently issued to care companies either.

“Care workers and patients need to be reassured that they will have all the necessary resources including food and personal protective equipment, so that they can continue providing vital care, especially to the elderly and disabled who cannot leave their homes.”

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