

Parcel companies need to support at-risk groups during the Covid-19 pandemic

Recommendations

1. Parcel delivery companies should allow at-risk groups to use the safe place option to specify their accessibility needs.
2. Parcel delivery companies should communicate this to all consumers, irrespective of the contract held with retailers.

The country is living through a time of national crisis as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Parcel delivery companies have an important part to play in supporting communities and individuals during this difficult time. We've already seen industry rise to the challenge. Delivery workers have been designated key workers by the government, and parcel delivery companies and their drivers are working tirelessly to meet the increased demand.

As people follow government advice to stay at home, they rely on parcel delivery companies to bring them the goods they need. This process needs to be accessible for everyone, including disabled people and people with mobility issues. Many of these people are at increased risk of severe illness from Covid-19, meaning they are being advised by the government to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. Therefore, making sure they can receive their parcels in a way that best suits their needs is more vital than ever.

We understand the need for parcel delivery companies to protect consumers and their drivers from Covid-19 and support attempts to reduce physical contact when delivering goods. However, **we're concerned that contact-free deliveries are not currently accessible for some disabled people and those with mobility issues in 2 ways:**

- Default delivery to a safe place risks items being placed where disabled people can't reach them
- Delivery by placing a parcel on the ground and waiting for someone to come to the door means that a disabled person needs to reach down to the ground to pick it up; not something that everyone easily can do

Ideally, the solution would be a dedicated drop down list or an open text box on an app or website, that prompts people to specify accessibility needs. We made this recommendation in a [report](#) last year. This would ensure that drivers know exactly how and where to leave a parcel.

We acknowledge that this is a longer term project and therefore unlikely to be implemented immediately as a response to the pandemic. However, we do think there are some quick and easy changes that can be made immediately to allow at-risk groups, including disabled people, to access their deliveries.

Parcel delivery companies should allow at-risk groups to use the safe place option to specify their accessibility needs

Parcel delivery companies should have a text box on their app or website to allow people to specify a safe place. **During this crisis, the safe place box should be used for people to specify their accessibility needs as well.** This should be explained clearly above the box, so that at-risk groups are aware that the safe place function can be used for this purpose. It could say: "If you're disabled or part of an at-risk group, please tell us about any accessibility delivery needs you have". We'd also encourage parcel companies to use the safe place box to allow people to let them know if they are self-isolating.

In addition, the safe place option should have the following features:

- The safe place text box should have enough text capacity to allow people to specify their accessibility needs.
- 'Leave in a safe place' should be placed above 'Delivery to neighbour' to make it obvious that it's the preferred option during this period.

Parcel delivery companies should communicate this to all consumers, irrespective of the contract held with retailers

A key part of making delivery processes accessible is informing people that they can specify their needs. **Delivery companies should clearly signpost to the safe place option through all communication channels.**

Delivery companies should also ensure everyone gets this information. The level of communication delivery companies have with consumers can be dictated by their contractual relationship with shippers. **During this crisis, all receiving consumers should receive comprehensive communication from delivery companies,** regardless of contracts with shippers. This is a temporary measure that will make it easier for at-risk groups to stay safe when getting home deliveries.