West Sussex Meals Services
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Health & Independent Living Support | Support at Home

Who is this service for?

Anybody living in West Sussex can receive meals on wheels. However, if you meet certain eligibility criteria you will not be charged VAT, meaning that you will pay a lower rate.You are eligible for the lower (non-VAT) meals price if:

- Criteria 1 OR 2 are met
- OR if criteria 3,4, AND 5 are met

If you do not meet this criteria, you can still receive meals with VAT applied

1. You receive care or support that is paid for by West Sussex County Council (e.g., personal carers that are funded by WSCC)
2. You receive any of these financial benefits
   a. Attendance Allowance
   b. Carers Allowance
   c. Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments
3. You are 65 or over
4. You have a long-term medical condition
5. You are unable to prepare, cook, or otherwise source hot nutritious food without meals on wheels

Please note that the Tea Pack does not have VAT applied, this means everyone pays the same price for Tea Packs regardless of eligibility.

What is the relationship between HILS and West Sussex County Council?

HILS is contracted by West Sussex County Council to provide meals on wheels across the county until at least 2027. HILS will be working closely with the County Council during this time to ensure the service develops and thrives.

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How do I sign up for meals / sign up a friend or family member / refer a patient or client?

Anyone can refer themselves or someone else for our meals services by completing our referral form on our website or you can contact us if you would prefer to complete a referral form another way (e.g. over the phone or by post). New clients can start receiving meals straight away, they will also receive a Welcome Pack with a menu that they can choose from - but there is no rush, until you return your menu to us you will receive meals suitable for your dietary and cultural or religious needs.

How much do meals cost?

Please see our West Sussex meals page for information on lower (non-VAT) prices.

Clients who are not eligible for the non- VAT rate will be charged £11.99 for 2-courses or £14.09 for 3-courses respectively. When you order a hot meal, you can choose to order a tea meal as well for £4.60. This is delivered at the same time as your hot meal for you to enjoy later.

When you are referred, or refer yourself, to the service we will ask you some simple questions to determine whether we are required by the government to charge you VAT on your meals. Most people who use our service are exempt from paying VAT

How do I pay for my meals?

We will send you a bill for the meals that you have had at the end of every month. You can pay by Direct Debit, over the telephone, or on our website with a debit or credit card, by cheque, or by postal order. In your Welcome Pack, you will receive more details about how to pay.

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Can I cancel orders?
Yes, our service is extremely flexible. Orders can be cancelled or changed at no cost if you contact us before 8.30am on the day of delivery. If you call out of hours, you can leave a message on our answer phone which will be picked up in the morning.

Who delivers meals and performs wellbeing checks? Are they trustworthy?
Our meal delivery drivers always perform wellbeing checks when they deliver your meals. Every HILS team member has had a police record check and will always be wearing their ID badge and uniform when visiting clients.

Is it the same person delivering and performing the wellbeing checks daily?
We try to ensure the same team members deliver your meals and perform wellbeing checks wherever possible, but this may vary depending on availability and how regularly you receive meals.

Are the meals of good quality?
Our annual client survey shows that around 90% of clients consistently rate our meals as 'Excellent' or 'Good'. We are very proud of both the quality and variety of our balanced, nutritious meals, which adhere to strict national catering guidance. We have been working with specialist caterer, apetito, for over 10 years and are always striving to increase the range of meals on offer.

Will I have to eat the same meals all the time?
We have a wide selection of meals, suitable for dietary, ethnic, and religious choices. Our menu repeats every four weeks and our Nutrition and Wellbeing team has created some simple coding to make it easier for you to choose meals to suit you. If necessary, we can bespoke our menu just for you to suit your needs. We refresh our menu twice a year, in winter and in summer. If you want to set up your own, personal menu, it is not a problem - just let us know.

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Is there a minimum weekly order required?
No, there is no requirement for you to have a meal every day, every week, or even every month. Our service is completely flexible and you can have the meals as little or as often as you would like.

Do you have options for dietary or religious needs?
Yes, we offer a wide range of menu options that cater to different dietary needs (e.g., diabetes, gluten-free, Halal). We can also provide Pureed, Minced & Moist, and Soft & Bitesize food for people following special diets.

Will the food be hot on the arrival?
Yes, meals are delivered hot and ready to eat between 11am and 2pm every day. Please note, our Lunch Meals are delivered hot and ready to eat. HILS strongly recommend these are eaten at the time of delivery, and are NOT to be reheated.

Can you guarantee a delivery time?
Meals are delivered between 11am and 2pm every day. We can't give you exact delivery times, but generally we'll be with you at a similar time every day.

What happens if I'm not at home?
If you don't plan to be at home, please let us know by 8:30am on the day and we will not make a delivery. If you are not at home when we come to deliver your meal, we will always try to call you and check with your emergency contacts to make sure you are okay. If we cannot find you and are very concerned, we may call the emergency services. We call this our No-Reply procedure.

What happens if I can't physically answer the door?
If you have a key safe, we can use your personal code to access the key and enter your property. A key safe is a small, secure metal box installed on the outside of your house where you can safely keep an extra key, key safes can be opened by someone who knows the correct code. This can be helpful for people who have regular visitors who may need to gain access to the property (e.g., family, carers), or for people who might easily forget or lose their key. If you do not have a key safe and think this might be useful, these can be purchased online and installed by yourself, a friend, or a family member. You can also speak to the Prevention Assessment Team (PAT) at West Sussex County Council on 0330 2224222 or prevention@westsussex.gov.uk if you need help getting a key safe. If you do not come to the door or are not in the house when we deliver your meal, we will contact your family, friends, or neighbours to make sure you are okay. That is why it is important that you tell us in advance if you plan to go out when we usually deliver your meal.

Will you let me know if my loved one is unwell?
Yes, we will inform a client's emergency contacts if we are concerned about them. In serious circumstances, if we cannot get hold of their emergency contacts, we will call emergency services.

Will you unpack the meal/will I be served the meal?
Yes, our staff can help to remove lids, plate the meal, get cutlery and cut up a meal.

Can I have more than one meal per day?
Yes, you can also order a Tea Pack