

## C&V Helpdesk FAQs

### **Q. What is this helpdesk?**

This helpdesk is operated directly by the Community and Voluntary Supports and Programmes Unit within the Department of Rural and Community Development, in order to provide accurate and timely information to our community and voluntary organisations as they respond to the Covid-19 situation.

### **Q. Who is it for?**

The helpdesk is particularly directed at charitable, community and voluntary groups operating at a small, local level. It has become evident that there are a number of issues being raised by this particular subgroup, surrounding an increased demand on services, a lack of resources to meet this demand and access to supply chains. It is not anticipated that this helpdesk will deal with the queries of individual volunteers.

### **Q. I have a medical or service query that would be better directed to the HSE. How do I contact them?**

The Department are unfortunately not in position to address medical queries, however our colleagues on the HSE Live Team will be better placed to explore a solution for you.

They can be contacted by phone: Callsave 1850 24 1850, they are open from 8am to 8pm on weekdays and 10am to 5pm at weekends. They also have a “Find a Service” information tool available online using the following link: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/hselive/>

### **Q. What is the Community Call? How can our group get involved?**

With the “Community Call” initiative, each local authority in the country has established a Community Support Forum to lead the co-ordination of COVID-19 community supports. Members of each local forum include representatives from HSE, An Post, local community groups, PPNs and Local Community Welfare Offices. There is also a dedicated community support helpline for each local authority.

These measures will look to assist at-risk members of the public in accessing non-emergency and non-medical supports and advice during the current public health emergency. Contact details for each Community Support Forum across the country can be found at the following link:

[https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/local\\_authority\\_community\\_support\\_helplines.pdf](https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/local_authority_community_support_helplines.pdf)

**Q. Where can members of the public go with other queries?**

Do not seek information on social media. If you need help or have concerns or questions, please turn to reliable sources of information. Health advice can be found at [www.hse.ie/coronavirus](http://www.hse.ie/coronavirus) or by calling 1850 24 1850.

The ALONE Helpline 0818-222-024 or the Senior Helpline 1800-80-45-91 are available for older people who may have questions or concerns.

**Q. When will it go live?**

20 March 2020

**Q. Where is the Department's Communications Pack available?**

The pack can be found on the Department's website at [www.gov.ie/drcd](http://www.gov.ie/drcd).

This contains a range of practical supports for the assistance of all of our C&V groups on how to recruit volunteers, do's and don'ts for volunteers, sensible volunteering, how to protect against fraud and build trust, etc.

**Q. Who will appoint the Community Outreach Coordinator? Where will they be based? How do we get in touch with one?**

The Community Outreach Programme is being mobilised by Irish Rural Link and The Wheel to reach out to those who are most isolated through providing information and supports from trusted local sources. Irish Rural Link can access these vulnerable people through its member network, including 3000 local Meals on Wheels groups. Further details, including contact details, can be found at the following link: <https://www.wheel.ie/covid-19-community-outreach>

## Queries Regarding the Charities Regulator

The Charities Regulator is developing Covid-19 and charities – Frequently Asked Questions, which is available from <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en/information-for-charities/coronavirus-covid-19-and-charities>

## Volunteering Questions

### **Q. We need more volunteers, where do I go?**

R: If you registered with your local Volunteer Centre, then you can advertise volunteer roles through them and the national database I-VOL. The service is completely free and supported by funding from DRCD. You should contact your local Volunteer Centre to let them know the role is in response to COVID-19 and they will prioritise promotion of this role. If you are not registered with your local Volunteer Centre, then it's very simple to do so. Simply find the details of your local Volunteer Centre on this link - <https://www.volunteer.ie/about-us/vcs-and-viss/find-your-vcvis/>, contact them and they will register you. You can then advertise roles as above.

### **Q. The action plan indicates 19 counties with Volunteer Centres, what are these counties? Which counties do not have Volunteer Centres?**

A list of Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Information Services is available online on the Volunteer Ireland website <https://www.volunteer.ie/>. All counties have a volunteering service either through Volunteer Centres or Volunteer Information Services.

### **Q. What if there is no Volunteer Centre in my county?**

In counties where Volunteer Centres have not yet become operational, Volunteer Information Services already exist to provide volunteering support. A list of Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Information Services is available online on the Volunteer Ireland website <https://www.volunteer.ie/> And you should contact the Centre or Information Service nearest to you.

### **Q. Will there be an age limit or restricting volunteers from vulnerable groups?**

While we welcome volunteers from across the age spectrum, potential volunteers from the at risk age cohort would be advised to have due regard to their health situation when considering volunteering.

### **Q. If I am in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance or the COVID PUP do I need to fill out a VW1 for with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection?**

No, the requirement for those in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance or the COVID PUP to complete a VW1 form is lifted for the period of the emergency provisions.

## Queries Regarding Garda Vetting

### **Q. What about the cost of Garda Vetting?**

While some organisations currently charge individuals for the administrative cost of the Garda Vetting process, there is no charge from the Garda vetting bureau for this service at present for applications from individual bodies.

### **Q. How do I organise Garda Vetting/Is Garda Vetting required?**

Your local volunteer centre is also a registered organisation with the National Vetting Bureau and carries out the service for volunteer-involving organisations in their county. We encourage organisations to engage with their local Volunteer Centre in relation to how best to manage the Garda Vetting process.

## Volunteer Training/Hygiene/Safety

### **Q. What about training for volunteers? In hand hygiene / infection control / data protection?**

An online pack can be downloaded from the HSE's website (<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>)

The pack contains:

- The most up to date posters on Coronavirus COVID-19 (please display and share these with your teams and service users, and please replace any previous posters with the updated version);
- Videos on Coronavirus COVID-19 that you can share and display.

### **Q. How can volunteers protect themselves from getting the disease?**

All volunteers or visitors should follow the HSE Guidelines on Covid-19 in the course of their activities. Again, we are placing huge emphasis on Sensible Volunteering and protection of the most vulnerable.

### **Q. We need additional hygiene equipment/personal protective equipment (PPE) for our volunteers – where can we source this?**

We acknowledge the importance of protecting volunteers providing vital services, and we are currently actively working with our colleagues in the Department of Health on the matter of hygienic and personal protective equipment supplies.

The following HSE guidance is available on the use of PPE in the context of Covid-19: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/> It is primarily intended for clinical settings, but some of this advice can also apply to other services that involve caring for the vulnerable. This may help you gain a better understanding of what equipment you will need and how best to use it.

## Service & Funding Concerns

**Q. We have to stop our services and X number of people will not have access to meals, food deliveries, etc. Can you make sure someone is reaching them?**

It is important to identify instances where services have stopped in the community so we can address these gaps and ensure vulnerable members of our community are getting the supports they need. If you know of a support service that has stopped due to COVID-19, you should let us know by return email. We will then work with organisations locally such as County Councils, PPNs and Volunteer Centres to put a replacement service in place as quickly as possible.

**Q. We have run out of money, is there a grant available?**

The Department of Rural and Community Development recently launched a €2.5 million fund to support community and voluntary groups involved in the delivery of COVID-19 community response efforts.

The COVID-19 Emergency Fund, will provide immediate and urgently needed funding totalling €2.5 million. This will be available to groups that are participating in the Government's "Community Call" initiative which is being led by the Local Authorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local Authorities will administer the funding to groups involved in the Community Call effort on behalf of DRCD. Local Authorities will be making contact with those groups participating in Community Call in the very near future with further details. The need for funding assistance will be kept under review.

Priority will be provided to organisations which incur costs on direct delivery of frontline services to people, such as Meals on Wheels and other similar activities. These individual grants will generally be modest in nature however it is expected that higher amounts will be provided where the need is greatest.

The Government is aware of the challenges faced by charities, social enterprises and other community and voluntary organisations and is committed to working closely with the sector in managing through these. Assurances have been provided in relation to the continuation of exchequer funding supports for organisations in the sector. The Government Wage Subsidisation Scheme announced recently will also support employers in the sector to retain

staff who are employed under non-exchequer funding sources. DRCD is continuing to liaise with representatives of the sector in relation to the challenges faced at this time.

In the first instance, you should contact the source of existing funding to examine flexibility regarding such funding.

(In the case of Pobal funded groups, you should contact Pobal directly in this regard)

**Q. We got our supplies from the local bars and restaurants which are now closed, is there alternative sources available or someone who can take on our clients?**

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## Personal Concerns (Contact HSE)

**Q. I need medication for ailment, can I call in to my pharmacy to pick it up?**

If you have respiratory symptoms, do not attend your pharmacy in person. Phone your pharmacist if you need to order a prescription. Ask a family member to collect any medicines you need.

If you have coronavirus, continue to take any medication you were already taking, unless you are told not to by a healthcare professional. This includes anti-inflammatories (NSAID) such as ibuprofen, naproxen or diclofenac.

**Q. I have just travelled home from abroad, should I self-isolate?**

You will need to restrict your movements if you return to Ireland from any country.

You should also follow the advice from the Department of Foreign affairs if you are thinking about travelling abroad.

**Q. What is restricted movement and self-isolation**

To help stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) you may need to either restrict your movements or self-isolate.

Restricted movements means avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. You will need to do this if you are a close contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus and you are still well.

Self-isolation means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people. You will need to do this if you have symptoms of coronavirus.

**Q. How can deaf people keep up to date with developments around coronavirus?**

Deaf people can contact HSELive using Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS).

IRIS is available from 9am to 7pm, Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm on Saturday. To access the service using Irish Sign Language, book an appointment or email hselive@hse.ie.

**Q. Are our pets affected by the coronavirus?**

There is no evidence that pets such as cats and dogs can catch or spread coronavirus.

**Q. I have received a package/parcel from an area affected by COVID-19, what should I do?**

There is no evidence of a risk of contracting COVID-19 from packages from areas affected by COVID-19. From experience with other coronaviruses, we know that these types of viruses don't survive long on objects, such as letters or packages. The best way to protect yourself is to use good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene as described in FAQ 14.

**Q. Is it safe to handle money that may have been handled by someone with COVID-19?**

There is no evidence of a risk of contracting the virus that causes COVID-19 by handling money. The best way to protect yourself is to use good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene as described in FAQ 14.

## Support Measures for Businesses (including Social Enterprises)

- The Government has announced a National Covid-19 Income Support Scheme to provide financial support to Irish workers and companies affected by the crisis.

- An eligible employer will be supported by up to 70% of an employee's take home income up to a maximum weekly tax free payment of €410 (i.e. 70% of take home weekly income of €38,000 per annum).
- Firms that need to reduce hours or days worked can avail of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection **Short Term Work Support** through their local Intreo Office.
- The Government has agreed with Local Authorities that they should defer rates payments due from the most immediately affected businesses, primarily in the retail, hospitality, leisure and childcare sectors, until the end of May. This measure will be implemented by each Local Authority in its own area.
- **Revenue** engages with viable businesses experiencing temporary cash flow or trading difficulties that affect the timely payment of tax. Revenue will engage with any viable business that experiences temporary cashflow difficulties, including difficulties arising from exceptional circumstances such as the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak.
- Interest on late payments is suspended for January/February VAT and both February and March PAYE (Employers) liabilities.
- Current tax clearance status will remain in place for all businesses over the coming months.
- All the **Banks** have announced that they will offer flexibility to their customers, and they may be able to provide **payment holidays** or **emergency working capital facilities**.
- A **deferral of up to 3-months on loan repayments** will be available to many businesses. In addition, the banks are adopting a customer-focussed approach to these businesses with a wide variety of tailored supports including extensions of credit lines, risk guarantees, and trade finance.