

Question: 4.371 To Ask the Minister for Rural and Community Development what supports including financial are being considered/put in place to support charities and community groups during the pandemic.

Aindrias Moynihan TD

REPLY

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Michael Ring)

The Government is aware of the challenges facing community and voluntary organisations and is committed to working closely with the sector in managing through these, recognising that it will require a whole of Government approach.

In this context, my Department recently launched the COVID-19 Government Action Plan to support the community response. This Plan, which was put together in partnership with other government departments, State agencies and our extensive network of community and voluntary organisations, sets out areas of initial focus in supporting a community response to COVID-19. These initiatives provide support for volunteering, funding to ALONE for their crisis telephone support line and an email helpdesk facility to assist smaller community groups with their queries.

My Department has also put in place the COVID-19 Emergency Fund. The €2.5m fund provides immediate and urgently needed funding to community and voluntary 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 are administering this fund. Further detail, including allocations by local authority area is available at

<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/bee6ea-minister-ring-announces-25-million-fund-for-community-groups-involve/>

The Community Services Programme (CSP), currently supports over 400 community organisations. My Department recently developed a 2020 Support Fund which will provide an additional once off payment to these organisations to cover a 12 week period from 26th March 2020, ensuring that they can pay their full-time CSP supported employees a maximum of €350 net per week, with a proportionate amount for part-time CSP supported employees.

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, while recognising that it will require a whole of Government approach. Assurances have been provided in relation to the continuation of exchequer funding supports for organisations in the sector. It is also worth mentioning that the Government Wage Subsidisation Scheme announced recently will support employers in the sector to retain staff who are employed under non-exchequer funding sources.

My Department is continuing to liaise with representatives of the sector and with Departments with relevant policy responsibility in relation to the challenges faced at this time.