

Irish Rural Link

Protocol for Community Groups and Volunteers in delivering services

With the continued outbreak of the Covid 19 and cases expected to increase exponentially over the coming weeks and months, High Risk Groups – the elderly and those with an underlying health condition, are being advised to self-isolate and limit their contact with people.

Many community groups already deliver essential services to older people living alone and in remote areas. Services like Meals on Wheels, Befriending Service, Home-help, and many more alike will continue albeit with significant changes to the delivery of the service in the interest of their clients, their volunteers and staff.

The coming weeks and possibly months will be challenging for everyone but can be more difficult for the elderly and vulnerable who live alone. While people and communities are being urged to help out and check in with their elderly neighbours, many voluntary groups across the country have begun to mobilise their members to help out on different initiatives. However, some precaution needs to be taken with regard the safety and welfare of elderly people living alone and other vulnerable people.

The Department of Rural and Community Development have engaged with organisations involved in working with communities and those in High Risk Groups to develop a protocol on how best to ensure that the most vulnerable continued to be cared for but in a safe and secure way.

This protocol outlines measures to be taken to help out those who are elderly and living alone and other vulnerable people during Covid-19 outbreak, while at the same time maintaining their security and safety while they self-isolate.

These measures include:

- **Client centred:** The safety of the person who is self-isolating is of the upmost importance, as is their security in their own home. We are proposing that the volunteer bringing groceries, medicines, fuel or other items is known to the elderly or vulnerable person.
- **Supplies delivered** should only be those ordered by the householder.
- **Personal Choice:** The person who is self-isolating must have the option to contact someone they know in their area.
- **Payments for goods delivered should be arranged between the supplier and the householder.**
- **Affordability issues** should be referred to Social welfare or local known charities who have a record of providing help in a confidential manner.
- **Number of Volunteers:** We propose two volunteers attend to the one household at the one time.

- **Advance notice:** Volunteers should contact the person ahead to let them know their time of arrival.
- **Photo ID:** Volunteers should carry and show photo ID to the person when they arrive and if they have to enter the person's home.
- **Maintain Social Distance:** Leave items at door and keep 2 metre distance from the person who is isolating or inform the person the drop has been left to the door.
- **Protect yourself:** Ensure all personal hygiene is adhered to. Wash hands, wear gloves, masks and use hand sanitiser.
- **Keep person informed:** Help the person stay informed of updates etc. through trusted sites and media sources, i.e. HSE website, Gov.ie website and through the news bulletins if do not use computer or have access to technology.
- **Volunteers must work in co-operation with the HSE, Gardaí and all state agencies that are relevant.**