

COVID-19 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Press Release

17 March 2020: Community-based Organisations Will Play Key Role in Implementation of National Action Plan on COVID-19

Charity sector will work with government in coming days to support and clarify details of the plan which was published late yesterday.

The Wheel, Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organisations, has welcomed the Government's new National Action Plan in response to COVID-19. The plan, which was published late yesterday (16 March), is aimed at "adopting a nationwide cohesive approach, in close collaboration with voluntary and community organisations, such as charities, local voluntary groups, volunteers" to "contribute to the national effort in supporting those more vulnerable people in their communities".

Commenting on the publication of the National Action Plan, Deirdre Garvey, CEO of The Wheel said: "In the document the Government very clearly acknowledge community and voluntary organisations will be at the heart of the State's coordinated response to COVID-19. It is important, therefore that these organisations can contribute their expertise to planning and decision-making."

The National Action Plan outlines a number of key actions that will require the involvement of Ireland's 29,000 charities, community and voluntary organisations and social enterprises. Specifically, the plan notes the importance of:

- promoting empathetic community engagement
- supporting community solidarity activity
- maintaining essential health and social services (which many community and voluntary organisations already deliver in partnership with the State)
- expanding and protecting public and private sector workers involved in essential services (including employees of community and voluntary organisations)
- clarifying arrangements for public service special leave
- ensuring business continuity plans are in place for all agencies and bodies under aegis of all government departments
- continued payment of childcare subsidies to providers for services directed to close, and
- providing a range of liquidity and loan finance to SMEs.

Ms Garvey added, "We will be working closely with the Government to ensure that community and voluntary organisations have access to the necessary resources to implement these actions, and to enable them to continue operating existing services, retain, recruit and re-allocate key staff in response to emerging needs.

"It is important that headings in the plan such as 'Business Continuity Planning across the Public Service' and 'Economy employment and business supports' consider the



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sector's requirements, as the charity sector absolutely needs to maintain or increase the level of trained and specialised staff to deliver key services.

“In addition, it is essential health and social care charities are involved in issues such as developing protocols for staff dealing with potential high risk cases,” Deirdre Garvey said.

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