

COVID-19 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Press Release

26 March 2020: Covid-19 Community Action Plan to Support Community Response 'An Important First Step', Says The Wheel

The Wheel has welcomed the publication of the Government's Action Plan for the Community Response to COVID-19, saying it represents an important first step in developing supports for charities and voluntary action to address the crisis.

Commenting on the launch of the Action Plan, Deirdre Garvey, CEO of The Wheel said, "In the coming weeks and months, charities and community organisations will be at the heart of the national response to the COVID-19 crisis. The measures announced today by the Minister of Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring TD, will help community and voluntary groups to recruit much-needed volunteers. The additional funding for helpline supports for older people, and helpdesk for smaller charities will also go some way to support the community response."

"In particular, we welcome the plan's commitment on the need to 'provide a central framework within which the community response can be delivered, so that it is sustainable over the longer-term', acknowledging that 'the sector will itself be challenged' and that 'new flexibilities in the use, re-prioritisation and reassignment of resources' are required and that this needs to 'be factored into future review and evaluation of programme delivery targets and performance delivery agreements already in place for 2020'", said Deirdre Garvey.

She added that many charities and community groups are currently operating at capacity and that the collapse in income from fundraising may hamper their ability to sustain essential services for vulnerable people in the community, including older people, people with disabilities and homeless people and people who need increasing support with their mental health, during this difficult time.

"The charity sector absolutely needs to maintain or increase the level of trained and specialised staff to deliver key services in the community. We will continue to work closely with DRCD and other sections of government and relevant agencies and the broad community sector to deliver increased community support," said Deirdre Garvey.

In particular, these next steps should include:

- resources to enable charities dealing with key areas such as anti-poverty, serious health conditions and older people to continue to function in order to deliver on the action plan
- supports to enable charities to accommodate hugely expanded volunteer numbers to ensure best practice and governance is applied co-ordination between DRCD, the community and voluntary sector and regulatory bodies such



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- as Charities Regulator and Data Protection Commissioner to enhance and protect both services and the general public in the role out of the Action plan; and
- Provision of an immediate 'resilience fund' for charities, similar to the £20m announced yesterday in Scotland, which has a similar-sized charity and community and voluntary sector to Ireland.

“We look forward to working closely with DRCD and other relevant agencies to ensure that the huge commitment, enthusiasm and determination of the general public to respond and deliver social solidarity through charitable, community and volunteering effort is fully and quickly enabled,” Deirdre Garvey said.

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