

PRESS RELEASE: 27 May 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARITIES FACE UNPRECEDENTED SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS IN WAKE OF COVID-19

*Summit of 500 charities hear frontline charity services risk collapse
in the coming months*

The Wheel, the national association of charities, today warned that charities' frontline health and social services will come under unprecedented strain in the coming months as the full social and economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis materialise.

In an address at The Wheel's National Charity Summit, Deirdre Garvey, Chief Executive of The Wheel, told the online gathering of 500 organisations that charities are playing a key role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic, but that funding for many of their essential health and social services will run out in the coming months.

"The Government's €35 million COVID-19 Stability Fund was a very welcome lifeline for many frontline services," she said. "But the collapse of fundraising income and uncertainties about statutory funding sources are stymying organisations' ability to plan for an anticipated surge in demand for services in areas such as mental health, poverty relief, homelessness, and disability supports."

The scope of the challenge for the sector was highlighted in a survey published by the Charities Regulator this month. Two-thirds of respondents said services were already restricted. Alarming, 54% say they may be unable to continue providing services for more than 6 months.

"Social enterprises and community-based organisations countrywide face similar threats to their very existence. The community sector must be brought into the core of plans to revive and rebuild our economy and society," Deirdre Garvey said.

"There has been an extraordinary collective effort to really put people and community first in this crisis, and the community, voluntary and charity sector has played an immense role in partnership with the HSE and other state agencies," she added, noting that the Government and leading political parties have signalled that the community, voluntary, and charity sector will continue to play a key role in the country's social and economic revival after the COVID-19 emergency.

In this light, The Wheel calls for commitments to meet the specific needs of our sector, including:

1. Retention of a Cabinet-level Minister for community development;

2. A sustainable funding model for the sector, including multi-annual funding and a working group to examine procurement policy;
3. Streamlined compliance requirements to eliminate rampant duplication of reporting;
4. A clear framework for collaborative working with Government to advance the "Community Call" initiative launched during the COVID-19 crisis;
5. Implementation of Sláintecare involving relevant community-based services; and
6. Community participation in initiatives to deliver the Climate Action Plan.

Deirdre Garvey finished by saying, "The country has put people's health and wellbeing first in recent months. Great sacrifices have been made. Community and voluntary action has been a prime mover in our collective positive response as the needs of the economy have been de-prioritised to bring the virus under control. From this experience, great opportunities now present to shape our future so the economy sustains lives as well as profit, and nurtures the community values, as well as the community and voluntary action, that have served us so well in recent months."

-ENDS-

For more information or to arrange an interview contact Gert Ackermann on 086 176 9287.

NOTE TO EDITORS

- According to the Register of Charities there are over 10,000 charities registered in Ireland, and a further 20,000 community and voluntary organisations in the wider nonprofit sector.
- Registered charities in Ireland employ 189,000 people and have an estimated annual turnover of around €14.5bn.
- The Wheel (in association with Irish Rural Link) is the national coordinator of the COVID-19 Community Outreach programme, which is a vital component of the Government's *Community Call* initiative rolled out in each local authority area.

ABOUT THE WHEEL

The Wheel is Ireland's national association of charities, community and voluntary organisations and social enterprises. With over 1,750 members, it is the largest representative body for the charity, community, voluntary and social enterprise sector. Visit www.wheel.ie for more information. [Follow us on Twitter.](#)