

Galway Isolation Support

DRAFT - Organising Document



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INTRODUCTION

We have a great sense of decency and community in Galway that will be tested during the coming months with the Covid-19 outbreak in Ireland. We will get through this with minimum cases and deaths by taking action together in a positive, safe and coordinated way. Community and voluntary efforts will likely be needed to support and supplement the efforts of the state over the coming months, and it will help to get organised while we have some time. The response has been incredible - on Thursday 12th of March we put up a form asking for volunteers and 48 hours later we have over 400! It's great to know that people living in Galway care about each other and want to be part of the solution.

This document is intended to be a proposal of how we organise ourselves and make use of volunteer effort during this crisis for the consideration and agreement of the people who volunteered to support. It covers:

- Objectives
- Proposed activities
- Working principles
- How do we organise ourselves

OBJECTIVES

1. Support people & families in isolation and people in vulnerable risk categories

More and more people will need to go into self-isolation as Coronavirus spreads in Ireland, and people in vulnerable groups (older people, people with underlying medical conditions) will need to minimise unnecessary contacts. It's also important to reassure people that may have to go into isolation that they won't need to have 2 weeks of supplies and therefore bulk buy.

2. Support people & families working in frontline roles

We will need people working in frontline roles during this crisis (health staff, council workers, army/gardai/civil defence, cleaners, garbage disposal, retail workers, transport drivers & warehouse workers, electricity/water/sewage

workers, social welfare officers etc.) to keep being able to go to work. If different types of staff become overwhelmed, they may need to work very long hours to deal with the crisis. They and their families will need our support.

3. Support and supplement efforts of the state in responding to the crisis

The state and public services are mostly set up for ordinary times. In extraordinary times, they will need extra capacity to deal with this crisis. It's an objective of this group to support state efforts and increase the capacity of the public services to respond.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

Subject to safety & further planning, potential activities of Galway Isolation Support could be:

Potential Activity	What is it?	How will it meet objectives?
Isolation support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Getting shopping, medication for people in isolation ● Meal preparation for sick people ● Dog walking for people in isolation 	Supporting people and families in isolation
Telephone support & signposting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Setting up a local telephone line and staffing it with volunteers (local number redirecting to mobile numbers) ● Telephone support can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Linking people in isolation with volunteers ○ Passing on official and evidence-based advice ○ Providing a listening ear & social contact to those in isolation 	Supporting people and families in isolation Support and supplement efforts of the state in responding to the crisis
Replacing at risk volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Replacing volunteers who are in risk categories in frontline volunteer roles (e.g., meals on wheels for COPE). 	Supporting people and families in isolation Support people & families working in

		frontline roles
Admin support for frontline organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing administrative work for frontline organisations (state and charity sectors) who will have increased pressure due to Coronavirus situation 	Support and supplement efforts of the state in responding to the crisis
Childcare for frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing babysitting/childcare for children of people working in frontline roles so that they are supported to do their vital work 	Support people & families working in frontline roles
Meal & PPE preparation for frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering meals to people working in frontline roles so that they and their families are supported to do their vital work • Ensuring frontline workers have access to appropriate personal protective equipment 	Support people & families working in frontline roles
Home care support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide low-level home help to older people so that carers who need to isolate can be replaced and so that professional home care hours can be used for higher-need patients so that more people can be discharged from hospital 	Supporting people and families in isolation Support people & families working in frontline roles

WORKING PRINCIPLES (For agreement)

1. Decentralised and local support

In times like these, local knowledge, community connections and empowering local people to take action will provide better outcomes than a centrally planned organisation that doesn't have local knowledge or relationships. Where possible, our activities should be decentralised to a neighbourhood / village level. Ideally, we should also provide support that is sensitive to culture/language (e.g., Irish language in the gaeltacht) and religion.

2. Build up robust systems where everyone is replaceable

Any effort over the next few months could need to deal with regular changes of people as people become sick and/or need to isolate. No-one should be irreplaceable and we should aim to build simple and robust systems where possible rather than complex ones that are easy to break down.

3. Take positive action around risk management & safety

While it is important to take action in a crisis, and it is inevitable we will make mistakes, it's important that we don't make things worse through negligent action. In our activities, we should:

- Do an assessment of risks, taking advice from public health officials / publications & experienced volunteers
- Ensure volunteers have training in infection control and hygiene
- Put safeguards in place around financial management, child protection and protection of vulnerable people
- Ensure volunteers working with vulnerable people are garda vetted (or vetted by group if garda vetting system bottlenecks mean we do not have enough capacity)

4. Capacity building within our community and of other communities

We may need a lot of community capacity if the crisis becomes bad. We should be aiming to build up the number of people who can do different roles, increase the number of roles people can do, and ensure there is a good geographic spread of people who can support. Documentation and training materials will help this effort. If we do a good job, it will be important to spread our learnings and systems to other communities (and to learn from others).

5. We should work in a collaborative, apolitical way and be open to constructive feedback

This is far bigger than politics & egos, and we need to work that way. We should

work across political divides to work together. We also need to be open to constructive feedback (ideally following a feedback model: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/situation-behavior-impact-feedback.htm>) and accept that we will need to work well together.

HOW DO WE ORGANISE OURSELVES

This will need to evolve over time and as the activities and need for the organisation becomes clearer. For now, we propose to set up a minimal structure with two people in each role for redundancy / continuity.

Proposed initial roles and responsibilities are:

- **Convener** - chairing meetings, keeping track of actions, encouraging communication between different people, team building
- **Volunteer coordinator** - Building up volunteer numbers, maintaining contact with volunteers, providing training, and placing volunteers into role
- **Isolation support coordinator** - Overall responsible for managing the isolation support activity, designing how it will work in practice and getting the project up and running.
- **Group outreach** - People who are reaching out to community groups (residents associations, neighbourhood watch, etc.), charities and state bodies to offer support, understand needs for volunteer support, and to be a link for coordination
- **Technology** - Responsible for ensuring organisation and volunteer efforts are supported by appropriate technology (e.g., phonenumber, meeting software, comms, etc.)
- **Communications & documentation** - Responsible for communicating with other communities, press, social media. Also responsible for documentation of our activities.
- **New activities development** - Responsible for developing plans and trials of new activities

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

- Open this document to comment and feedback by members of the group
- Organise a video meeting to formally approve the document
- Appoint an interview panel to set out role descriptions, publish them for

application, and recommend candidates for selection (2 per role)

- In parallel, prepare isolation support activity:
 - Set up a phone line solution to allow us to have a hotline for requests
 - Design and print a leaflet (subject to advice on safety), press & social media campaign to make people aware that support is available
 - Continue discussions and collaboration with Volunteer Centre & others to understand need and how to support them