

**Press Release: For Immediate Release**

20<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Irish Rural Link Welcome the Launch of COVID-19 Government Action Plan to Support the Community Response**

Irish Rural Link (IRL) – the national network representing the interest of rural communities is today, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020, welcoming the launch by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Minister Michael Ring, of the COVID-19 Government Action Plan to Support Community Response.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis in Ireland, we have seen an overwhelming response by community and voluntary groups to help and support the elderly and other high risk groups who need to self-isolate and now been encourage to cocoon.

Also, Community services that work on a day-to-day basis with the elderly and other vulnerable people have seen an increase in demand for their services. Services such as Meals on Wheels, which IRL work with, have had to rearrange some of their day-care centres and lunch clubs and deliver meals now to the person in their own home. They face their own challenges with many of their volunteers having to self-isolate as they are in the high-risk category, being extra busy can be difficult for staff to keep social-distance and they are also running low in supplies of hand-santiser and food trays.

IRL are delighted to be involved in the Action Plan with our colleagues from other Community and Voluntary groups and will continue to support our members at this time

The Minister has launched a dedicated Helpdesk service to registered community organisations. If they have any concerns or difficulties delivering services they can email [c&vsupports@drcd.gov.ie](mailto:c&vsupports@drcd.gov.ie). Funding has been put in place for a dedicated support line for older people which will be managed by Alone and will now be open 7 days a week - 0818 222 024, and working with Volunteer Centres on where people can find out where they can volunteer.

-Ends-

For further information, please contact (anytime):  
Seamus Boland (Chief Executive) 086 2491153 or Louise Lennon (Policy and Communications Officer) 086 1069244

**About Irish Rural Link:**

Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of over 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level.