

Age Action's COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update

I hope you and your family are keeping well at this time and that you are getting all the support you need. If this is not the case, please phone Age Action on **01 475 6989** or **0818 911109**.

I am writing to update you on how Age Action's activities during COVID-19 to help support our members, partners and those who use our programmes. Our two main supports are outlined below:

Call Safe - 11,000 'check-in' calls being proactively made to Age Action's older people (members, U3A focal points, people previously or currently linked in through the Care & Repair/Getting Started programmes).

Information Service – our online support through info@ageaction.ie has been extended to 8am-8pm 7 days a week.

Home Safe - providing additional supports to older people, enabling them to transition quickly out of hospital into their own homes, ensuring that their home is safe while also supporting our hospitals to respond to the COVID-19 health crisis. We are also providing an emergency response for urgent repairs and other supports for older people in the community in order to ensure people can remain safely in their own homes.

This week, we were pleased to add a further service and launched a [Hardship Fund](#) in conjunction with the Irish Red Cross. This fund is to respond to the immediate needs of older people in vulnerable situations across Ireland who are experiencing additional hardship as a result of the COVID-10 health crisis. Once-off grants of up to €500 per person/household affected are available for any practical needs as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased social distancing restrictions of cocooning for over 70s. Application forms are available [here](#) or you can contact our offices at hardship2020@redcross.ie or by phone to Age Action at 01 475 6989 or the Irish Red Cross at 01 642 4600.

Age Action continues to be involved in weekly telephone calls with senior managers in

the HSE and to push Government to ease the impact of the crisis on older people. We were pleased to see the announcement by [Government](#) yesterday that the Fuel Allowance season would be extended in response to the COVID-19 crisis by four weeks from Friday, 10 April to Friday, 8 May.

Age Action welcomes the extension but notes that close to 70% of older people will not benefit from the announcement. We are calling on the Government to recognise the additional costs of cocooning and self-isolating specifically for people over 70, many of whom may be carers and persons with a disability. Rather than inching forward with piecemeal measures, we are calling on the Government to recognise that this crisis could stretch for an extended period of time and introduce a range of measures to give older people peace of mind. We have made representations to the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, her Departmental officials and members of the Opposition on the need for an [immediate financial buffer](#) to support older people to self-isolate in the form of:

- An emergency double State Pension payment (up to €237-€248.30 extra)
- To immediately double the Living Alone Increase (€14 per week) to reach €28 per week, until the end of June
- To extend the Fuel Allowance payment (€24.50 per week) to the end of June

We will continue to push for these supports on your behalf.

On 27 March the Government announced additional measures to protect citizens by delaying the spread of COVID-19, including a concept known as [cocooning](#): this means that those who are over 70 years or those extremely medically vulnerable should not leave their homes, and within their homes should minimise all non-essential contact with other members of their household. This is to protect those who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 from coming into contact with the virus. These measures are in place for 2 weeks from 27 March 2020.

The Department of Rural and Community Development announced on 20 March an [Action Plan](#) to support the community response to COVID-19. This Action Plan is to support older people [in vulnerable situations](#) and people who are self-isolating. Each local authority (council) has established a Community Response Forum to coordinate COVID-19 related community supports. As part of this, each local authority has established a [helpline](#) that vulnerable people can phone if they are looking for basic services such as delivery of food or meals, or transport for essential trips.

Some people may find staying at home difficult and so we have pulled together [a list of online resources](#) that may be helpful. We have collated some important information including numbers and a [list of suggested numbers](#) you should fill in and keep by the phone.

Age Action's team continues to work remotely and we are committed to supporting older people through this challenging time. Please stay in touch with us through email or phone. You can also complete [our survey](#); we want to hear your concerns so that we can bring them to Government.

Age Action sends you and your family best wishes during this period.