INFORMAL VOLUNTEERING IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 – KEEPING YOURSELF AND OTHERS SAFE

Wanting to help in a crisis is a natural reaction but here are some things to think about if you are doing this yourself and not part of an established group:

- Your safety is your number one priority. Do not put yourself (or others) at risk, follow all the guidelines for infection control around hand washing and social distancing. See https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus

- Your willingness to help is great however be clear about what is realistic for you to do under difficult circumstances.

- While you may just want to get out there and get volunteering, you may want to contact other already established groups operating in your area and volunteer through them as it makes overall coordination easier.

- Do not help others if you yourself are feeling unwell or are sick. See https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus

- Your wellbeing is important, be careful that you do not overstretch yourself, as this situation could go on for some time.

- You may need to access and wear protective clothing like gloves, carry water and handwash especially if you are handling shopping and money.

- Be aware that not everyone will want help and may be wary of people they do not know.

- Think carefully about the roles you carry out. Safeguarding people from abuse, harm and infection is paramount so you need to think about safe methods and systems that protect everyone. Avoid situations that involve gathering personal details of vulnerable people, exchanging money or entering their homes. Think creatively about how to for example get shopping lists over the phone, leave shopping at the door, only buying essentials so as they can be carried by the person from their doorstep into the house. In terms of handling money for items purchased, methods other than cash exchange are easier to trace and less vulnerable to abuse or infection e.g. taking pictures of receipts and sharing with a family member or nominated carer may work for some. See Good Practice Guidelines for Volunteers When Volunteering for a Covid-19 Opportunity as examples of guidelines for volunteers that may be helpful.

- Show ID with photograph and clearly presented name if interacting with vulnerable people.

- Be prepared to refer on any issues that you cannot deal with, report concerns to the relevant authorities such as police or the local Trust.

- Try to minimize your activity to e.g. doing shopping for others when you are doing your own and restrict to only essential items.

Disclaimer

Reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure information in this publication is accurate. However, it is not intended to be legally comprehensive; it is designed to provide guidance in good faith without accepting liability. If relevant, we therefore recommend you take appropriate professional advice before taking any action on the matters covered herein.

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