

Community Response to COVID-19

Do the right thing, safely!

Community Responses to COVID -19; Doing the Right Thing – Safely

This is some basic guidance for communities coming together to help each other out during the current crisis.

Across Ards and North Down, communities and neighbours are coming together to try to help in any way they can. We need to ensure that those who are volunteering their time are kept safe, and that those they are assisting are not placed at risk. So we've pulled together some guidance and information to help.

1. DON'T DUPLICATE EXISTING SERVICES

If there is already a community or voluntary organisation – and we include churches and housing associations – organising in your neighbourhood, please make contact with them and offer to work with them rather than setting up something new.

Established organisations will already have in place safeguarding and data protection policies and will have appropriate insurance.

2. GET INFORMATION

Over the next few days, Council will have in place a list of existing organisations and services in your area and how they can help you during this crisis. This information will be published on our website: <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/>

Make sure you follow us on Face Book and Instagram for the most up to date information on Twitter. Also use keyword searches on social media to find out if there is anything already organised in your neighbourhood.

3. THINK ABOUT SAFEGUARDING AND SAFETY

Informal neighbourhood initiatives providing support to neighbours are not registered charities and cannot be expected to have the same levels of protocols and policies. But following the basic principles of safeguarding and safety are vital to protect vulnerable people.

- Don't ask vulnerable, ill or isolated people to identify themselves via any kind of sign (such as a pillow case on the door or similar)
- The best thing to do is work in teams (not alone) and to go around knocking doors asking people if they need help. Ensure you adhere to the Public Health Agency advice on <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>

- Be very careful if you have information about a vulnerable, ill or isolated person, including their address and circumstances. This is personal and private information. Restrict who has access to any logs or lists.
- Never post any private information about an individual on an open forum such as Facebook or WhatsApp
- Don't stop using your everyday common sense and remember always to follow social distancing guidance.
- Avoid cash handling. Please ask people to pay for their deliveries either online or over the telephone in advance.
- Do not enter anyone's house – leave all deliveries on the doorstep.
- If you are feeling unwell please do not volunteer – follow government advice and self isolate.

4. WANT TO HELP IN OTHER WAYS?

- Register with Volunteer Now. They are pulling information together to build up a picture of what people and communities are doing. They can also advise on how you set up, how to stay safe, and how to ensure that those you want to assist are safe too.

5. FOLLOW NHS GUIDELINES

- **THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT.** You need to follow NHS guidance on isolation and on stopping the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Guidance is available at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus> if you are e.g. delivering shopping, picking up prescriptions etc.
- Speak to people through doors rather than directly or keep at least two metres away. Make sure you are all washing your hands frequently and wipe down anything you deliver e.g with antibacterial wipes.
- Stay safe and always consider others who may be at risk. And remember to look after yourself.