

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

As you are aware there is much concern about the rapidly changing situation in relation to the Coronavirus (Covid-19). Over the last few days Age Friendly Ireland are receiving queries for guidance in relation to meetings, group gatherings, events and initiatives and also in terms of contingency planning. A number of organisations are taking the proactive step to suspend non-essential services and gatherings in this containment phase. Whilst Ireland is in containment phase currently Age Friendly Ireland are keeping abreast of information being released by HSE and Department of Health's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Tony Holohan. All up to date information is on the HSE website at the following link <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>

The following is an extract from the HSE website (11th March 2020) and highlights the cohorts of people that are at higher risk of serious illness if they catch coronavirus.

"Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus. We are still learning how it works. There are some groups of people who may be more at risk of serious illness if they catch coronavirus. But we do not think these groups have a higher risk of catching coronavirus. This is similar to other infections such as flu. It is likely you are more at risk of serious illness if you catch coronavirus and you are one of the following:

- *60 years of age and over.*
- *Have a long-term medical condition – for example, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, cancer or high blood pressure.*

*If you are in an at-risk group take extra care to protect yourself from coronavirus. We expect there to be community spread of the virus soon. **Think about how you can avoid crowded spaces, especially indoors. Indoor spaces are less well ventilated.** The virus is more likely to spread in smaller and more crowded spaces. You may be caring for a person in an at-risk group. If you are, take extra care to protect yourself and the person you care for from coronavirus"*

As the situation is changing quickly, we anticipate we will have further updates and will keep you posted. In relation to non-essential gatherings, events, meetings and others we ask that you continue to use your discretion and keep abreast of the updated information on the HSE website particularly around guidance on good practice and preventative measures including regular hand washing and cough etiquette.

As you know there is a National Senior Helpline for older people who are giving specific information to older people on Coronavirus. This is very useful for older people who may not have internet access or wish to talk to a trained operator about their concerns. This confidential line is open 10am to 10pm seven days a week so it would be useful to signpost your networks to this helpline by sharing this information. **(Freefone number is 1800 804591)**