

## Media Release

March 28<sup>th</sup> 2020

### **Laois County Council takes the lead in joining together local organisations to assist citizens during Covid-19**

#### **Dedicated community support helpline to be available from Monday**

At the instigation of Minister Murphy a Covid-19 Community Response Forum will be put in place for each City/County and co-ordinated by the Local Authority in each case.

A dedicated community support helpline will be established in **Laois County Council** to assist at risk members of the public in accessing non-emergency and non-medical supports and advice during the current public health emergency. The confidential phonenumber service is being established by the new COVID-19 **Laois Community Response Forum**, which includes over a dozen agencies and organisations. The helpline is focused primarily on ensuring that vulnerable members of the community or those living alone can access deliveries of groceries, medicine and fuels. The role of the Forum is to ensure that there is a co-ordinated community response and to enable all voluntary statutory agencies to collaborate in support of our communities and particularly of our most vulnerable members.

Included in the COVID-19 **Laois** Community Response Forum are:

- **Laois County Council**
- Health Service Executive
- An Garda Síochána
- An Post
- GAA
- IFA
- Laois Partnership
- Tusla
- Laois PPN
- Laois Migrants
- Local Link
- Rural Link nominee – Mountmellick Development Association
- Citizens Information
- Civil Defence & Other community, voluntary and sports representatives

The new phonenumber is just one aspect of the Forum's work. Its core aim is contributing to the community-wide effort to limit the spread of COVID-19. **Laois County Council** through this group, will ensure that the wide variety of groups working across the county to assist those in need, will do so in an organised, collaborative and targeted way. The Council's COVID-19 Community Response Forum is there to ensure the very best use of the many resources assisting vulnerable persons with their daily needs at this unprecedented time, whether that is collecting medication, food shopping, social support and contact.

Chief Executive of **Laois County Council John Mulholland** explains *“There are a number of agencies currently doing excellent work in delivering care to older and vulnerable people in our communities. These groups are currently operating independently of each other and **Laois County Council’s** role is to provide a targeted, integrated and coordinated approach to the delivery of these much needed services to our more vulnerable citizens across the County during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Laois County Council** is ideally placed both statutorily and regionally to channel this great work and provide the governance structure in partnership with all stakeholders. This public health crisis has changed life for so many, and we are there to help with that change. Our own staff whose day-jobs have changed due to this crisis, will be a key resource in the management and operation of this community support programme along with our partner agencies/groups. **Laois County Council** will be providing a dedicated FREE contact number with the lines open from 9am to 8 PM seven days a week; this service will “kick in” once a new FreePHONE number becomes operational during Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March.*

Contact details of this new service will be promoted on **the Laois County Council website, the PPN website as well as on local media**. An information leaflet including the new freephone number and other information will be distributed around the county, particularly to vulnerable households, over the coming days.

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