

COVID-19 Community Response Groups

Guidance Notes

Step 1: Gather volunteers

Use local community WhatsApp groups or other forums to ask for volunteers. Also reach out directly to your friends and neighbours in the area to see if they are interested in helping out.

Ask them to send their FULL NAME, PHONE NUMBER and HOME STREET if they wish to volunteer.

Step 2: Define your coverage area

Depending on the number of responses you receive choose an area you think you can cover with reasonable density.

You can then mark this area on a map. You can Google Maps "My Places" which allows you to create your own layered map that can be shared. Alternatively this can be determined on a street-by-street basis.

Step 3: Assign

Depending on the number of volunteers assign eg. 3 people to each few streets or area. This will provide backup if people are away or fall ill themselves. Try and keep the group's areas close to their home to keep it as easy as possible for volunteers.

Step 4: Prepare

Prepare a letter (example in Appendix) for the area group with the contact details of the volunteers you have assigned.

Step 5: Communicate

Create one large WhatsApp group for all volunteers where new people can be added.

Create a separate WhatsApp group for each individual area group of c. 3 people.

In these smaller area groups send a screenshot of their area from your map or a list of the streets, and a copy of that area's letter which should be customised with the details of the volunteers of those who you have assigned to

the given area. Also include official guidelines: <https://www.publichealth.hsc-ni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>.

Step 6: Volunteer action

Ask each group to individually print the letter for the area they are responsible. Their assigned area should be clear from the map screenshot.

They can drop this letter in all homes on their street as most people who will need assistance will not be regular social media users.

Step 7: Reassign volunteers as people join

As more people hear about the initiative they will come forward. Collect each volunteer's FULL NAME, PHONE NUMBER and HOME STREET and assign them to groups that have larger number of houses or less than 3 volunteers.

Once each group has a full complement of volunteers add the new people to each small group's WhatsApp group so they are broadly balanced with volunteer capacity and can distribute work amongst themselves depending on demand from vulnerable people in their assigned area.

Step 8: Maintenance

Hopefully once all the groups are active they will become self-sustaining and your role will be to monitor the groups to ensure that each one has enough assigned volunteers from the total available.

Appendix
Example of communication letter

Inner East Belfast COVID-19 Community Response

Dear Neighbour,

As part of the response to the coronavirus some of your neighbours have volunteered to assist any people in vulnerable groups who are self-isolating over the next few weeks. They have agreed to help with tasks such as picking up shopping and collecting prescriptions.

Those considered at a higher risk by the Public Health Agency include those who are one of the following:

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

The neighbours who have volunteered in your area are:

Mary Murphy – 07772 234567

John Smith – 07812 234567

Joe Bloggs – 07931 34567

Please get in touch with them if you need help over the coming weeks.

Signed
(Your Community Group or Association)