

Age Action COVID-19 emergency response

Age Action is responding to the COVID-19 emergency by reallocating and scaling up resources to ensure that older people are informed, connected and supported during this difficult period in Ireland.

Getting Started KIT: Keeping in Touch and Connected

The Age Action Getting Started Keep In Touch (KIT) is a national learning initiative to help older people improve their digital literacy skills, so they are more connected, informed and supported particularly during periods of social distancing.

Call Safe and Information Support: Keeping Older People Informed

Call Safe has a team proactively making 11,000 'check-in' calls to Age Action's older people (members, U3A focal points, people previously or currently linked in through the Care & Repair/Getting Started programmes).

In addition, Age Action has extended the Information Service online support through info@ageaction.ie to 8am-8pm 7 days a week.

Practical Support in the Community: Keeping Older People Connected

Age Action is working with volunteers and partner groups to provide practical support to older people who need assistance with their shopping, collecting prescriptions and any other practical needs that arise. Age Action is also linking older people with volunteers who will do regular check-in calls if they wish to have ongoing contact and support.

Home Safe: Keeping Older People Safe

Age Action is providing additional supports to older people, enabling them to transition quickly out of hospital into their own homes, by ensuring that their home is safe for them while also supporting our hospitals to respond to the Covid-19 health crisis. Age Action is also providing an emergency response for urgent repairs and other supports for older people in the community in order to ensure people can remain safely in their own homes.

Hardship Fund: Supporting Older People

Age Action in partnership the Irish Red Cross launched the COVID-19 Hardship Fund on 31 March to support older people who were experiencing financial difficulty due to COVID-19 related costs. Due to the overwhelming demand for support, the Fund was closed to new applications on Friday 24 April. Funds continue to be been raised through corporate donors and public contributions in order to help us distribute small grants to older people who are struggling with the financial burden of self-isolating or cocooning.



Getting Started KIT: Supporting older people with small grants to meet immediate needs

What is it?

The Age Action **Getting Started Keep In Touch (KIT)** is a national learning initiative to help older people improve their digital literacy skills, so they are more connected, informed and supported particularly during periods of social distancing. The Getting Started KIT will also help people who have digital literacy skills to become Digital Champions – they can use the KIT to tutor someone who needs help.

What is the Problem?

Older people are medically vulnerable during the Covid-19 pandemic and with the HSE guidelines on social distancing and ‘cocooning’, more people are relying on social media as a way to keep in touch with family and friends.

The digital divide has been laid bare during Covid-19 for all age groups; many children and adults, particularly older adults cannot participate in digital learning or the digital economy either for the lack of skills or access.

Over half of Irish people aged between 65 and 74 have never used the internet, locking older people out of a huge range of benefits. It is not for lack of interest either: 30% of Irish households without internet access say the reason is a lack of skills to use it. It is estimated that only 3% of people over the age of 75 have the skills and access to the internet.

How does it Work?

During Covid-19 it is more important than ever to be able to keep in touch with loved ones so Age Action has created easy How To

guides and a video tutorial in order to support older people to learn, use, and be confident about smartphones, other devices and applications.

In the Age Action Getting Started KIT you will find

- How to... Set up an email account
- How to... Download applications
- How to... Make WhatsApp video calls
- How to... Navigate the internet
- How to... Use FaceTime
- How to... Use Zoom
- How to... Recognise mis-information

There are over 400,000 people over the age of 70 in Ireland who have been asked to ‘cocoon’ since 28 March and many were already self-isolating from the beginning of March; their connection to the outside world is through telephone, radio and TV.

We have produced a series of video tutorials, presented by Mary Kennedy, which will be hosted on Age Action’s website and will be broadcast on Today with Maura and Dáithí on RTÉ One to help as many older people as possible to participate.

Working with ChangeX through the Community Call we are mobilising Digital Champions - people who will connect with older people on a one-to-one basis to support them to improve their digital literacy skills using the Getting Started KIT materials.

For more information visit www.ageaction.ie or call 01 475 6989.

Home Safe *making home safer for older people after hospital stay*

Age Action's experienced Care & Repair Team is providing additional supports to older people who are able to transition quickly out of hospital, into their own homes, to ensure that their homes are safe and that they are in the optimum environment for their needs while also supporting our hospitals to respond to the Covid-19 health crisis. In emergency cases, Home Safe will also offer urgent repairs and other supports for older people in the community in order to keep people in their home safely.

What is it?

Home Safe aims to support the existing health and social care services. Understanding that many older people want to remain at home or return home after a hospital stay and that those who do not have complex needs may just need small adjustments to their home environment to accommodate them, Home Safe completes small jobs in the home of the older person to make the home safer for them. Home Safe is carried out by Age Action staff and volunteers who are observing strict HSE COVID-19 protocols.

Currently Home Safe is available in Dublin City, Cork City and Waterford City. Home Safe is free of charge with the service user paying for any materials that need to be purchased.

How does it help?

Home Safe makes the older person's home safer for them to live in or ready for their return on discharge from hospital.

Home Safe will

- Carry out minor repairs or installations
- Move furniture such as a bed to a sitting room or kitchen
- Declutter to deal with trip hazards
- Install grab rails
- Complete other small jobs as required

Home Safe is not in a position to complete tasks such as those below due to health and safety concerns:

- Major building work
- Complex plumbing or electrical work
- Tasks that require working at a height above 8ft

How does it work?

The individual, their representative or health care professional contacts Age Action's Home Safe requesting the service.

An Age Action representative will contact the individual or their representative to make arrangements to gain access to the home to carry out the requested job. In a hospital discharge case, once the job is complete, the patient or their representative is contacted to confirm that their home is ready for their return.

How do I get in touch?

Between 9am and 5pm Monday – Friday access to the service by calling 0818 911109 and selecting Home Safe.

Call Safe *Support Call Service for Age Action members and stakeholders during COVID-19*

Age Action has established a support call service to contact all members, clients and stakeholders through the Getting Started, U3A and Glór networks to inform and connect older people during the COVID-19 emergency.

Contact : It is difficult for people to isolate themselves from others particularly when they have led very independent lives prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. We understand that people's sense of independence can be undermined as well as the possibility of loneliness setting in. Age Action is contacting people to make sure that they understand their level of risk and to help them identify local services that can help them as they remain at home.

Connect: As people practice social distancing and limiting their social contacts it can be challenging to get the services they need. There is a nationwide mobilisation of services and

resources to support people who are staying at home to make sure that they are not left alone. Age Action is helping people identify who can support them meeting their needs whether that is deliveries to their home or getting in contact with local services.

Inform: There is a huge amount of information available about how to protect yourself from COVID-19 and how services are adapting including pension collection, prescription renewals, priority shopping for older and vulnerable people etc. and it can be difficult to keep up. 55% of people between 65 and 74 are not online so providing them with the official information about how to protect themselves, telephone numbers they can call and just talking through the situation can be helpful. Age Action is making sure that people have the information that they need.

How do I get in touch?

Between 9am and 5pm Monday – Friday access to the service by calling 0818 911109 and selecting Call Safe.

Hardship Fund: *Supporting older people with small grants to meet immediate needs*

Age Action in partnership with the Irish Red Cross launched the COVID-19 Hardship Fund to provide older people with financial support to meet their immediate needs through the COVID-19 Hardship Fund. Due to overwhelming demand, the Fund closed for new applications on Friday 24 April. Funds continue to be raised through corporate donors and public contributions which mean that small grants, to a maximum of €500 can be made to older people who are struggling with the financial burden of self-isolating or cocooning.

Why?

Official poverty statistics from the CSO indicate that 11.4% of people aged 65 years and over were 'at risk' of poverty in 2018 meaning they are not able to withstand the immediate economic impact of COVID-19. People over the age of 65 depend on social protection for more than three-quarters of their income, for many older people the State Pension is often their only source of income.

We understand that many people on the partial State Pension continue to work to meet their needs as the pension is not enough to meet their living costs. We also understand that many people have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 but people in receipt of the State Pension are not eligible for the pandemic emergency payment.



This scheme is designed to provide immediate practical relief to assist in alleviating the hardships they experience due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What was the Fund for?

Any practical needs that are adding to hardship experienced by older people in vulnerable situations as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased social distancing restrictions of cocooning for over 70s. This can include;

- Small household maintenance, repairs and safety improvements
- Food and basic provisions and associated delivery costs
- Upgraded or New Small Appliances (fridge, freezer, washing machine, TV, cooker, etc.)
- Providing Digital Technology Equipment, for example smart phones or tablets
- Contribution towards increased energy costs or telephone bills
- Contribution towards additional home or personal security costs
- Contribution towards additional travel costs for essential reasons (medical appointments, etc.).

How Do I Apply

The COVID-19 Hardship Fund closed to new applications on Friday 24 April. More information is available via Email: **Hardship2020@redcross.ie**