SOME GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS WHEN VOLUNTEERING FOR A COVID-19 OPPORTUNITY

If you are considering volunteering your time to support a volunteering opportunity in relation to COVID-19, you need to be mindful that safeguarding people from abuse, harm and infection is paramount – and that includes you! The organisation you are volunteering with should be communicating with you about safe methods and systems for doing things that protect everyone. Here are some things to think about:

- Your safety is your number one priority. Do not put yourself (or others) at risk, follow all the guidelines for infection control around handwashing and social distancing. See https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus

- Be clear about what activities you will be doing and the expectations and boundaries around the role.

- Your willingness to help is great, however be clear about what is realistic for you to do under difficult circumstances as your wellbeing is important. Be careful that you do not overstretch yourself as COVID-19 outbreak may go on for a long time.

- Make sure you have clear contact details of the main contact person for this opportunity, so you know who is coordinating the activity and who to contact if you have any questions or concerns.

- The organisation that is coordinating your activity may have to carry out certain checks before you start volunteering. Please be patient as this is for the safety of everyone including yourself.

- Do not volunteer if you yourself are feeling unwell or are sick. You must inform the person in charge immediately.

- You will need to wear protective clothing especially gloves, carry water and handwash when you are volunteering. Check with the organisation that you are volunteering for to see what can be made available for you.

- Avoid situations that involve gathering personal details of vulnerable people.

- Do not enter the homes of vulnerable people.

- Think creatively about the role e.g. how to get shopping lists over the phone, leave shopping at the door, only buying essentials so as they can be carried by the person from their doorstep into the house.

- Avoid handling and exchanging money. The organisation will have set up a system for this so make sure you are aware of it. For example, if doing shopping, methods other than cash exchange are easier to trace and less vulnerable to abuse or infection e.g. taking pictures of receipts and sharing with the organisation may work for some.

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- Keep your distance at all times - maintain the 2 metre distance rule.

- Do not share any information that you gain about vulnerable people in your community – confidentiality is of paramount importance.

- Report any concerns, incidents or disclosures to the organisation (the organisation must give you clear procedures for this).

- Show ID with photograph and clearly presented name if interacting with vulnerable people.

- Be prepared to refer on any issues that you cannot deal with, you must report concerns to the relevant authorities such as police or the local Trust.

- Try to minimize your activity to e.g. doing shopping for others when you are doing your own and restrict to only essential items.

- Share good news stories when you can through the #HelpEachOther hashtag to highlight the amazing volunteering contribution that is taking place right across Northern Ireland in the fight against COVID-19. These stories can inspire others to get involved and raise everyone's spirit during this uncertain time.