



LIMERICK COVID-19  
COMMUNITY RESPONSE  
PROTOCOL



## **Introduction**

Limerick City & County Council in partnership with the HSE, An Garda, GAA, IRFU, FAI, Livable Limerick, various religious orders, and multiple sporting and volunteer groups have commenced planning for a coordinated response to assist the vulnerable and elderly across Limerick City & County in this time of need. The various interested groups have met on two occasions to agree an outline for the implementation and ongoing management of this project.

**Name** Limerick Covid-19 Community Response

**Location** Munster GAA, Aras Mumhan, Newcastle, Castletroy, Limerick, V94 NW83

**Objective** To establish a centralised and coordinated location whereby the agency partners (Council & AGS) can maximize the existing framework of clubs and community groups in reaching out to our elderly and vulnerable to deal with their daily needs as they arise through required isolation.

**Structure** Limerick City and County Council has brought the interest groups together and has chaired the steering group meetings to date. The GAA through their senior administration has tasked the county's 6 Games Development Officers (GDO's) to establish liaisons for all 66 GAA clubs in the county and attain a list of volunteers in each area to assist with this initiative. The Munster GAA offices in Aras Mumhan, Newcastle, Castletroy, Limerick have been identified as the suitable location for a call centre which will cater for a number of volunteers. This centre will have multiple phone lines (1800 Number currently being attained) available and will receive calls from both Limerick City and County from persons seeking help and general advice. While the GAA through their significant position in the community areas are the primary resource there will be a large number of other sporting organisations and volunteers taking part. Liveable Limerick are also to partner to the initiative who have mapping capabilities and a pre-existing network of persons involved. The council are working on collating all the volunteers and creating a pool of resources per geographical area. It is hoped An Post will also be involved in the initiative. AGS is providing two full time Sergeants to the initiative working alternative tours. It is expected to operate from 8am-6pm each day. Transport etc is provided by volunteers and will be supplemented by AGS contingency vehicles and vehicles from the sporting organisations where necessary.

**Process-** The initiative hopes to work on the following premise- elderly/vulnerable person or relative of the latter calls the 1800 number seeking assistance with shopping/prescriptions/supplies or other suitable request. The call taker in the coordination centre logs the call and contacts the liaison person in the relevant area who in turn tasks a volunteer. Once the request is complete the coordination centre is contacted and the log is closed and recorded. In the event of a call received that isn't within the parameters of the initiative the on-site AGS Sergeant will either refer the details to the communications room in Henry Street Garda Station who will dispatch a unit to deal with the call or give the caller the appropriate advice and refer to the relevant agency i.e. HSE or Dept. Social welfare etc.

**Governance and Safeguards** – The steering committee will publish guidelines and regulations in respect of volunteer interactions which includes the non-carriage of persons in vehicles and social distancing measures. A log of all calls will be scanned electronically at the end of each day and retained. The Sergeant on duty supervises the operations on site and reports any issues to the liaison Inspectors who will feed into the Steering Group.

**Media Communication** – Limerick City and Country Council will have responsibility for the media and communication aspects of the initiative. AGS Regional Press Officer Brendan English will be informed of stats and stories that emerge from the initiative to help with exposure.

### **General:**

- The Support line will operate 7 days a week and will be based at GAA Headquarters, Aras na Mumhan, Castletroy.
- The support line will operate for the duration of the COVID – 19 pandemic.
- The main areas of response will be on signposting to relevant information/services, collecting medication, food and other essentials (fuel, newspapers, etc.) This list will develop over time in line with requests received and the ability of local groups to complete requests.
- A 1-800 number will be set up to deal with all incoming calls for assistance
- All calls are logged and the requests followed up and closed out.
- Weekly reports will be prepared and circulated to the Steering Group members covering areas such as location issues, gaps and blockages in the services will be reported to the Steering Group for action
- FAQ sheets will be prepared and supplied to all ops centre staff.
- All information regarding the operation of this project will be publicised broadly, including radio, newspapers, social media, leaflet drop to all homes across limerick city & county and emails to existing networks including Limerick PPN and others.
- Potocols are being prepared for those providing practical support that will keep the older people, agencies and volunteers safe. These protocols will ensure that best practice is adhered to at all times.
- To ensure that the phone line can maintain its capacity, initially, a team of 3 customer service agents and 3 recording team members will be required. It is expected that as the service expands, additional volunteers will be added to the operations centre team. Training will be provided and a briefing will be provided to operations centre staff on a daily basis. Issues that it is decided, require follow up will be referred to the Sergeant in charge for assessment and action.

### **Steering Group**

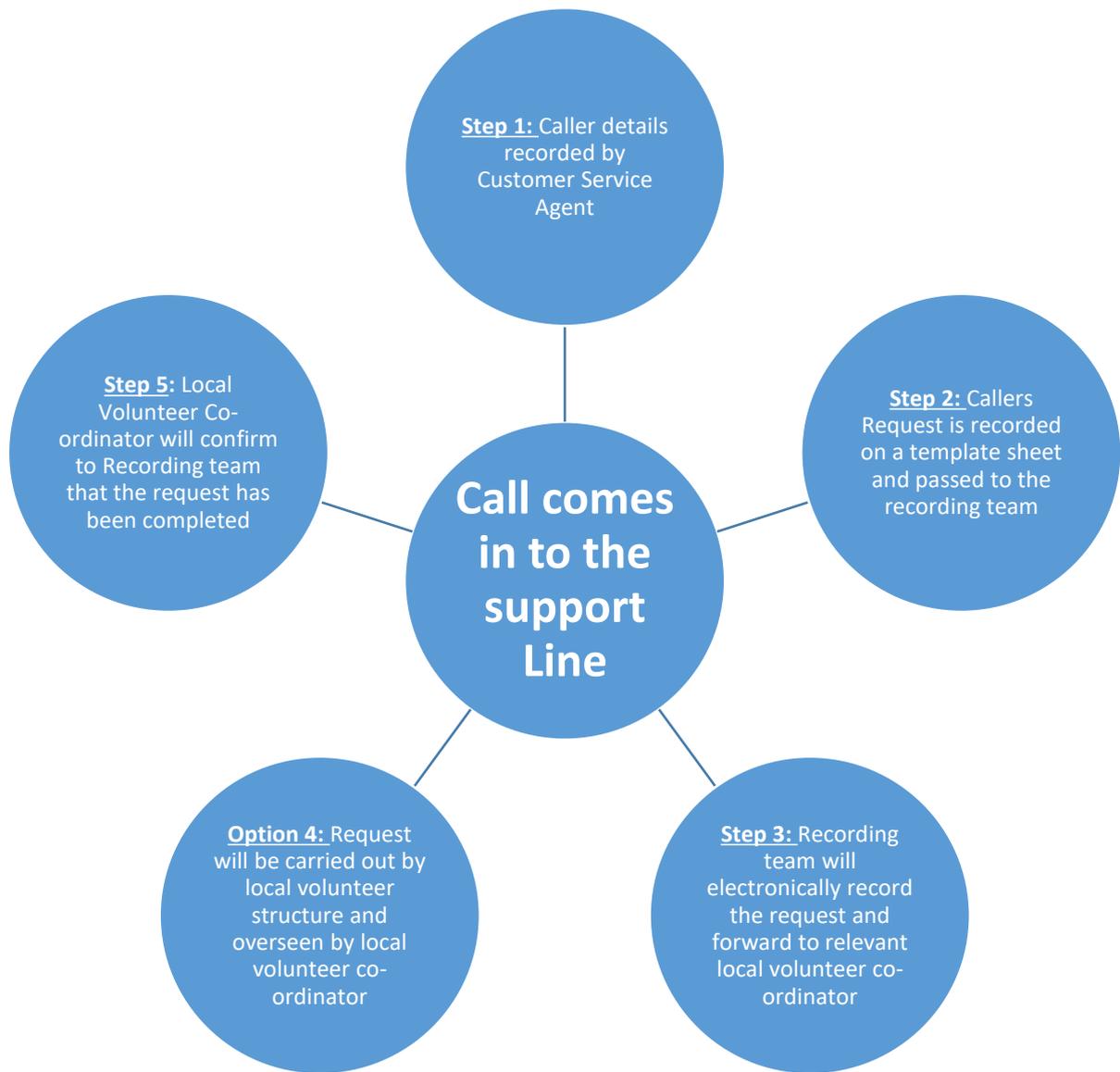
The Steering Group will ensure that best practice guidelines are identified, implemented and fully adhered to. The Steering Group will focus on developing long-term working relationships to ensure that the appropriate supports are kept in place for the duration of this pandemic.

Operational updates will be given to the Steering Group at regular intervals, by the Garda Sergeant in charge of the Operations Centre. Progress reports from the group will be provided as required to the partner agencies (An Garda, Limerick City & County Council, HSE Mid-West, GAA, FAI, IRFU, Liveable Limerick, RC Diocesan Office, COI Diocesan Office), and others as agreed by the Steering Group.



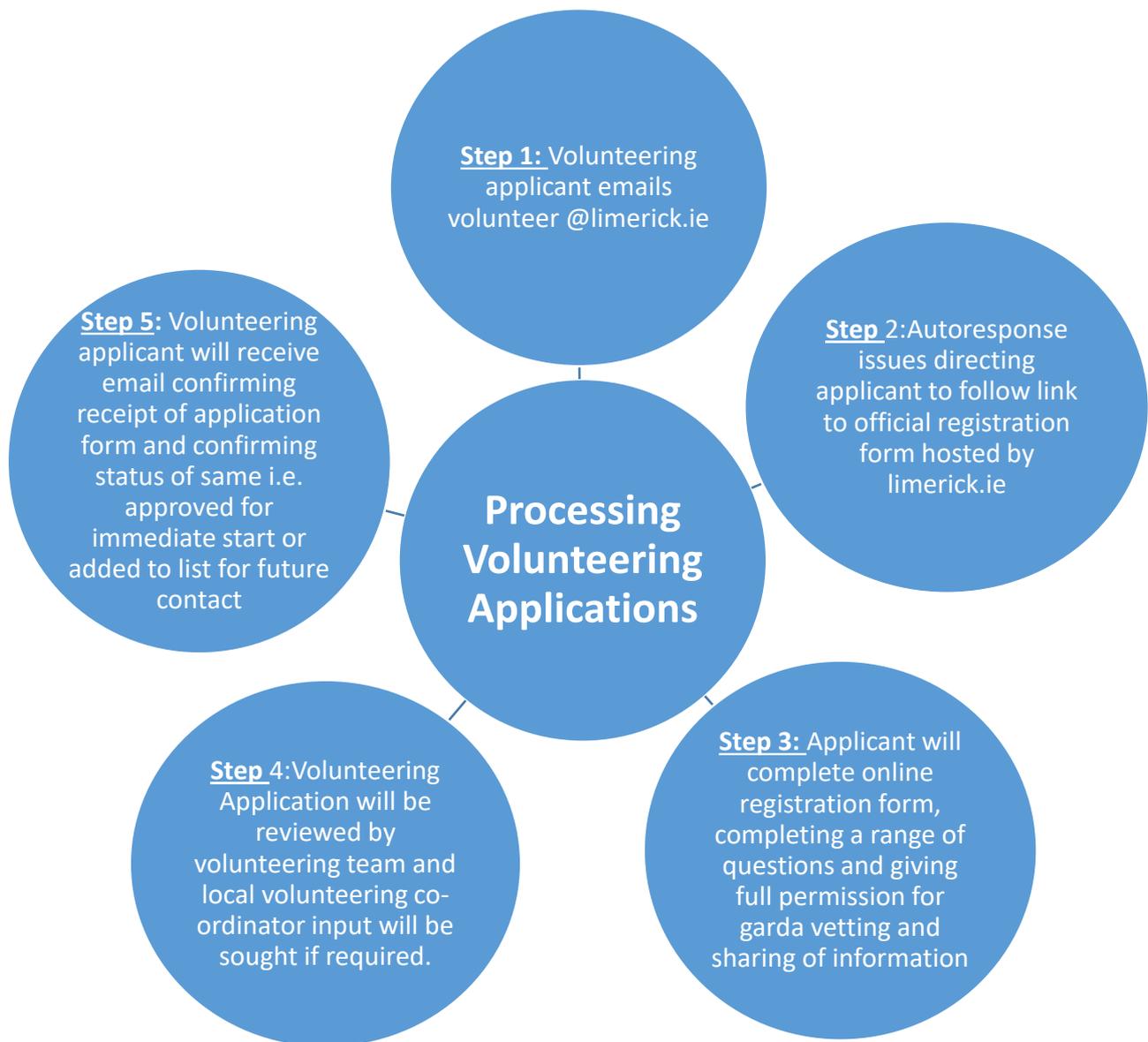
**Protocol for dealing with an incoming call**

A 1-800 phone number will be the only communication method for those wishing to contact the service to request assistance. This contact phone line will operate from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days per week. Callers to the service will be greeted by a customer service volunteer. The caller will be asked to provide their name, address and eircode. A record of their request will be taken. The caller will be asked for permission to record their details and to pass them on to the volunteer co-ordinator in their local area. The customer service volunteer will pass the completed assistance request form to the recording team, who will electronically record the details and forward to the local volunteer co-ordinator for completion. Once completed the local volunteer co-ordinator will confirm to the recording team lead at the operations centre that the assistance request has been successfully completed.



### **Protocol for dealing with a prospective volunteer**

An email address [volunteer@limerick.ie](mailto:volunteer@limerick.ie) has been set up. All offers of help from volunteers will be directed to use the email address. On receipt of an email to [volunteer@limerick.ie](mailto:volunteer@limerick.ie), an autoresponder will instruct the volunteering applicant to click on the link, in the email they receive. This link will take them to a registration page on the Limerick.ie website, where they will be required to provide details such as name, address, eircode, mobile phone number, email address and details of what level of service they can provide and when they would be available for duty. Other health and risk related questions may also be asked. The information provided in the registration form will be automatically transferred to a spreadsheet, which can be emailed on a daily basis to all 66 local volunteer co-ordinators.



### **Additional Supports**

The customer service agents at the Operations Centre will be the first point of contact for practical supports. In situations where callers are seeking information rather than practical assistance, customer service agents will have a signposting list for guidance purposes and in most instances, the customer service agent will be in a position to provide the caller with a contact name and phone number of a group or agency that can provide them with the assistance they require.

- LCCC, GAA and An Garda Siochana will work together to ensure an efficient and effective process for all new interested volunteers
- Volunteer applicants who already have garda clearance from their engagement with other organisations will be given priority when a vacancy needs to be filled.

### **What training is needed?**

- The Steering Group will put measures in place to ensure that volunteers are provided with appropriate training on how to answer and manage calls and use the template/s provided to record the calls accurately. The Operations Centre Manager will ensure that all requests for support are appropriately dealt with and that all lines of communication are followed appropriately. A debrief session will be put in place for volunteers so they can debrief each other, when coming off shift.
- LCCC will produce an information sheet highlighting the correct method for delivering packages and practical supports to callers. Copies will be circulated to all local volunteer co-ordinators.
- All people involved must sign a health protocol before they commit to this process.
- All people involved must complete the appropriate paperwork including a volunteer agreement form and GDPR forms if required.
- Paperwork if required will be sent to the National Vetting Bureau for immediate processing.

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

- Memorandum of understanding between Steering Group and local volunteer co-ordinators to ensure that requests for assistance will be directed through the Freephone number and tasks will be allocated as outlined in the above protocols.

### **Operations Centre Checks**

- Checks will be carried out to ensure that all calls received are passed successfully from customer service, to recording team and on to local volunteer co-ordinator and that information has been clearly recorded, and passed from one group/team to the next.