



Offers of Help - Keeping Yourself Safe (COVID-19)

If you are self-isolating and need others to help you with practical things such as shopping or collecting prescriptions, you may receive offers of help from people you do not know. Whilst many offers of help are genuine, unfortunately there are some which are not and it is important that you try to protect yourself from these. There are increased risks at this time and your normal safeguards should be strengthened.

Here are some things you need to consider:

- Avoid putting a 'need help' sign up at your door. Anything identifying the need for help can put you at risk. It's best for you, or someone you trust, to make the contact – phone /email local groups or organisations to see what help they can offer.
- Be clear about the help you need and do not need! Talk this over with family members, friends or your neighbour if you have to.
- It's best to access help from an established group or organisation, ideally one which you are already familiar with in your local area.
- There should be a nominated person in charge of coordinating help in your area and they should have a contact number.
- Established groups and organisations should have clear arrangements in place to help you. For example they should be able to
 - ✓ provide information about what they can do for you;
 - ✓ provide you with key contact numbers should you have any concerns;
 - ✓ tell you the name of the volunteer who will be helping you;
 - ✓ arrange suitable days and times for the volunteer to help;
 - ✓ follow up with you after the volunteer calls to check things are going well;
 - ✓ give you clear arrangements to avoid handling cash;
 - ✓ show you official ID cards with their name, the organisation's name and contact details on them.



- Be wary of people calling unexpectedly at your door with offers of help. Remember the person/people might not be who they say they are. Don't feel pressurised into opening the door. Remember, your safety is your number one priority (especially if you are self-isolating). See <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>
- Don't let them into your house or give them access to other parts of your property that they don't need.
- If you are caught off guard, look through the window or spy-hole to see who's there and put the door chain on if you have one (but remember to take it off again or people such as carers won't be able to get in). Ask the caller to show you some identification. If they are genuine you should be able to verify this. Keep key contact numbers so you can check them out. Don't worry about leaving someone waiting – if they're who they say they are, they won't mind. But remember you have the right to ask them to go away and not return.
- Be wary of unexpected offers of help by post, over the phone or online. If you receive a letter which you think is a scam, ignore it and destroy it. If you've been contacted by phone you can end the conversation and if online, you don't have to reply to or even open the email/text. It's best not to open emails or attachments from someone you don't know.
- Be mindful of the advice around scams
 - Seems too good to be true
 - Contacted out of the blue
 - Asked for personal details
 - Money is requestedThese types of situations are always suspicious.
- Don't give out personal information like your full name, address, date of birth, bank details. This can be used to steal your identity and access accounts.
- If you have any suspicions or are worried you have been scammed it is essential that you talk to someone about this – a family member, friend or neighbour. You should also report it to the appropriate authority.



Contact numbers

PSNI - 101 for non-emergency, **999** in an emergency.

Action Fraud - 0300 123 2040 or <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> to report a scam, fraud or cybercrime.

Hourglass helpline - 0808 808 8141 or <https://wearehourglass.org/contact-us> for information and guidance.