



COVID-19 INFORMATION PACK

EVERYTHING YOU NEED
TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-
19, KEEPING POSITIVE
MENTAL WELLBEING
DURING THE PANDEMIC,
MYTH BUSTING AND THE
VACCINE



COMMUNITY
FUND

Housing
Executive

A message from Lilian Seenoi Barr
Director of Programmes, NWMF

Thank you for taking the time to read this information pack on the Covid-19 vaccine.

This past year has seen the world enter into such unprecedented times and yet the fact still remains that this pandemic has and continues to disproportionately affect people from ethnic minority communities. For me, it has been a heartening sight to see so many scientists and governments from across the world come together to produce vaccinations that are safe and effective at this crucial time, an indication of how serious this situation is.

As a black woman myself, I am more than aware of the many worries and misplaced myths surrounding the vaccine that are circulating around the minority ethnic communities of Northern Ireland and it is my hope that by reading this pack, you will not just learn more about the vaccine but you will learn the true benefits it offers to Northern Ireland and the world as a whole.

We must all engage and encourage one another to do the right thing. The message is simple: take the vaccine, save lives.



What is covid-19 : The basics

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus that quickly spread around the world throughout 2020. The virus affects your upper respiratory system which includes the airways between your nose to just above your vocal cords.

How is the virus spread?

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly through close contact from person to person, including between people who are physically near each other (within about 6 feet).

COVID-19 spreads easily from person to person. How easily a virus spreads from person to person can vary. The virus that causes COVID-19 appears to spread more efficiently than influenza but not as efficiently as measles, which is among the most contagious viruses known to affect people.

What are some of the ways I can protect myself from the virus?

Some useful tips for protecting yourself from catching Covid-19 include wash your hands regularly and properly, ensure you wear a mask when you inside a public place such as a supermarket, follow all government guidelines regarding mixing with other households and those outside of your bubble, and keeping a 6-foot distance from other people when you are out in public.

What are some of the symptoms of Covid-19?

Some of the most common symptoms to look out for are developing a fever, developing a dry cough, and losing your sense of taste and smell. The virus can also be in someone's body for up to 14 days before they get symptoms, and some people will have such a mild case of COVID-19 that they might not notice that anything is wrong. That's why it's important that everyone follows government advice to stop the spread of the virus, even if they feel healthy.

Current government Covid-19 guidelines in Northern Ireland:

- From April 1, 2021 the regulations are:
- Permit 10 people from two households to undertake outdoor sporting activities as defined in the regulations. This allows sports such as golf and tennis to resume from this date in small groups of individuals from two households, however, clubhouses and sport facilities including changing rooms, showers, kitchens, meeting rooms must remain closed apart from essential toilet facilities.
- Up to six people (including children) from two households may meet outdoors in a garden, and
- Garden centres and plant nurseries can operate a contactless click and collect service.

- From April 21, 2021 increasing the numbers who can meet outdoors in a garden from six to 10 (including children) from two households;
- Allowing contactless click and collect service for all non-essential retail;
- Allowing for sports training to resume by sports clubs affiliated with recognised Governing Bodies, in small groups of up to 15 people but with all indoor spaces closed except for essential toilet facilities; and
- Removal of the 'stay at home' provision in the legislation; stronger promotion of the stay local and work from home messages.

School update:

- All primary school-aged children returned to in classroom learning from March 22nd 2021 and all post-primary children will return to in classroom learning from April 15th 2021.

Keeping positive mental health during Covid-19 pandemic

Living through an Infectious disease outbreak like the current coronavirus (COVID-19), can be scary and can affect our mental health. While it is important to stay informed, there are also many things we can do to support and manage our wellbeing during such times. Here are some tips we hope will help you, your friends and your family to look after your mental health at a time when there is much discussion of potential threats to our physical health.

Looking after your mental health while you have to stay at home

- More of us will be spending a lot of time at home and many of our regular social activities will no longer be available to us. It will help to try and see it as a different period in your life, and not necessarily a bad one, even if you didn't choose it.
- It will mean a different rhythm of life, a chance to be in touch with others in different ways than usual. Be in touch with other people regularly on social media, e-mail or on the phone, as they are still good ways of being close to the people who matter to you.
- Create a new daily routine that prioritises looking after yourself. You could try reading more or watching movies, having an exercise routine, trying new relaxation techniques, or finding new knowledge on the internet.
- Try and rest and view this as a new if unusual experience, that might have its benefits.
- Make sure your wider health needs are being looked after such as having enough prescription medicines available to you.

Try to avoid speculation and look up reputable sources on the outbreak

- Rumour and speculation can fuel anxiety. Having access to good quality information about the virus can help you feel more in control.
- Follow hygiene advice such as washing your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds with soap and hot water (sing 'happy birthday' to yourself twice to make sure you do this for 20 seconds). You should do this whenever you get home or into work, blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food. If you can't wash your hands straightaway, use hand sanitiser and then wash them at the next opportunity.
- You should also use tissues if you sneeze and make sure you dispose of them quickly, and stay at home if you are feeling unwell.

Make a personal financial plan

If the pandemic has stretched your expenses, reduced your income or left you unsure about your job prospects, this uncertainty can take a toll on your mental health.

Plan your finances, including making sure you are getting any benefits you are entitled to and getting help with any debt concerns you may have.

With different restrictions in place, using a budget tool to redo your household budget for being at home could be useful. Remember that you may be saving money by not spending on things like transport and socialising. Factor that in when looking at your budget. Trying to stay in a stable financial or debt position is incredibly protective to our wellbeing. Help and advice is available.

Try to stay connected

- The way we are able to connect with people has naturally changed a lot since the beginning of Covid.
- Often in times of stress, we work better in company and with support. Try and keep in touch with your friends and family, by telephone, email or social media, or contact a helpline for emotional support.
- Also remember that while social media can be good for some things, we must also remember to regularly assess our social media activity. Tune in with yourself and ask if they need to be adjusted. Are there particular accounts or people that are increasing your worry or anxiety? Consider muting or unfollowing accounts or hashtags that cause you to feel anxious.

Try not to make assumptions

- Don't judge people and avoid jumping to conclusions about who is responsible for the spread of the disease. The coronavirus can affect anyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity or age.

Try to manage how you follow the outbreak in the media

- There is extensive news coverage about the outbreak. If you find that the news is causing you huge stress, it's important to find a balance.
- It's best that you don't avoid all news and that you keep informing and educating yourself, but limit your news intake if it is bothering you.

Looking after your mental health as lockdown eases

- Across the UK, lockdown is easing in different ways and at different times. As we begin to come out of lockdown many of us are faced with both challenges and opportunities.
- Within social distancing guidelines, we may be able to see friends and family in person, play sport or return to work. However, many of us may find even these longed-for changes difficult for our mental health. The idea of coming out of lockdown when the scientific debate is ongoing may also be worrying for those of us who are more at risk from the virus or living with mental health problems.
- If this is something you are struggling with, here are a few tips to dealing with fear and anxiety as lockdown eases:
 - **Control what can be controlled:** there will be a lot you can't control so create an action plan for yourself and focus on what you can control.
 - **Build up a tolerance:** do something every day that challenges you. Don't beat yourself up when things don't go to plan and just keep trying.
 - **Vary your routines:** see different people and encounter different situations every day.
 - **Focus on the present:** don't focus on the future that can often feel uncertain. Bring things that are certain into focus
 - **Talk to people you trust:** accept support and help from those around that you trust.

Things you need to know about vaccines

Vaccines: Do

- Protect you, your children and others from your community from many serious and potentially deadly diseases
- Undergo rigorous safety testing before being introduced – they're also constantly monitored for side effects after being introduced
- Reduce or even get rid of some diseases – if enough people are vaccinated

Vaccines: Don't

- Do not cause autism – studies have found no evidence of a link between the MMR vaccine and autism
- Do not overload or weaken the immune system
- Do not cause allergies or any other conditions – all the current evidence tells us that vaccinating is safer than not vaccinating
- Do not contain mercury (thiomersal)
- Do not contain any ingredients that cause harm in such small amounts

Why vaccines are important

Vaccination is the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and our children against ill health. They prevent up to 3 million deaths worldwide every year.

Since vaccines were introduced in the UK, diseases like smallpox, polio and tetanus that used to kill or disable millions of people are either gone or seen very rarely.

Other diseases like measles and diphtheria have been reduced by up to 99.9% since their vaccines were introduced. However, if people stop having vaccines, it's possible for infectious diseases to quickly spread again.

Information:

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently listed vaccine hesitancy as one of their top 10 biggest threats to global health.

What vaccine is being used?

Three vaccines have been approved for use in the UK:

- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine
- The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine
- The Moderna vaccine

The first two are already in use in Northern Ireland, but supplies of the Moderna vaccine are not expected to arrive in the UK until the spring. Each of the approved vaccines is given to patients in two doses, a number of weeks apart.

When will I be vaccinated?

- Patients are being offered vaccines in order of priority, based on age and clinical vulnerability, as Covid-19 poses most danger to people who are elderly or who have underlying health problems.
- On 12 January, Northern Ireland's Department of Health published a detailed timetable for delivering vaccinations to prioritised groups:

Northern Ireland vaccine programme

Indicative timing and details of phases

Phase 1 (Priority groups 1 and 2) December 2020

Care home residents	12,000
Care home staff	20,000
Health and Social Care staff	70,000 +
Over 80 year-olds	72,000

Phase 2 (Priority groups 3 to 6) February 2021

Over 75 year-olds to 65 year-olds	233,000
<i>Clinically vulnerable under 65 year-old</i>	
Extremely vulnerable	95,000
Moderately vulnerable	135,000

Phase 3 (Priority groups 7 to 9) Spring 2021

Over 60 year-olds	106,000
Over 55 year-olds	125,000
Over 50 year-olds	135,000

Phase 4 (Mass vaccination programme) Summer 2021

General population not already vaccinated

Phase 5 (Mass vaccination programme) 2022 onwards

Routine vaccination programme

Will everyone be vaccinated?

- The aim is that as many people as possible over the age of 18 receive a Covid-19 vaccine.
- It won't be compulsory, though - no other vaccines in the UK are - as experts say this wouldn't help create confidence in the vaccine.
- The government has so far ordered seven different types of vaccine with enough doses ordered for every adult in the UK.

What about people with allergies?

- Patients are being offered vaccines in order of priority, based on age and clinical vulnerability, as Covid-19 poses the most danger to people who are elderly or who have underlying health problems.
- A severe allergic reaction - known as anaphylaxis - is a very rare side-effect with any vaccine, but it can happen in those at risk. Most people, however, will not be affected in any way.
- The medical regulator, the MHRA, says anyone due to receive their vaccine should discuss any medical history of serious allergies with their healthcare professional beforehand.

I'm pregnant- will this affect my vaccine?

- Vaccination with either vaccine should only be considered for pregnant women when the potential benefits outweigh any potential risks - for instance where the risk of exposure to coronavirus is high and cannot be avoided, or where the woman has underlying health conditions that put her at high risk of complications of Covid-19.
- Women should discuss the benefits and risks of having the vaccine with their doctor and reach a joint decision based on individual circumstances.
- Women who are breastfeeding can be given the vaccine

How vaccines work

- Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases. It's much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the diseases and treating them.
- Once your immune system knows how to fight a disease, it can often protect you for many years.

Herd immunity

- Having a vaccine also benefits your whole community through "herd immunity". If enough people are vaccinated, it's harder for the disease to spread to those people who cannot have vaccines. For example, people who are ill or have a weakened immune system.

Why vaccines are safe

- All vaccines are thoroughly tested to make sure they will not harm you or your child.
- Once a vaccine is being used in the UK it's also monitored for any rare side effects by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).
- Anyone can report a suspected side effect of vaccination to the MHRA through the Yellow Card Scheme.

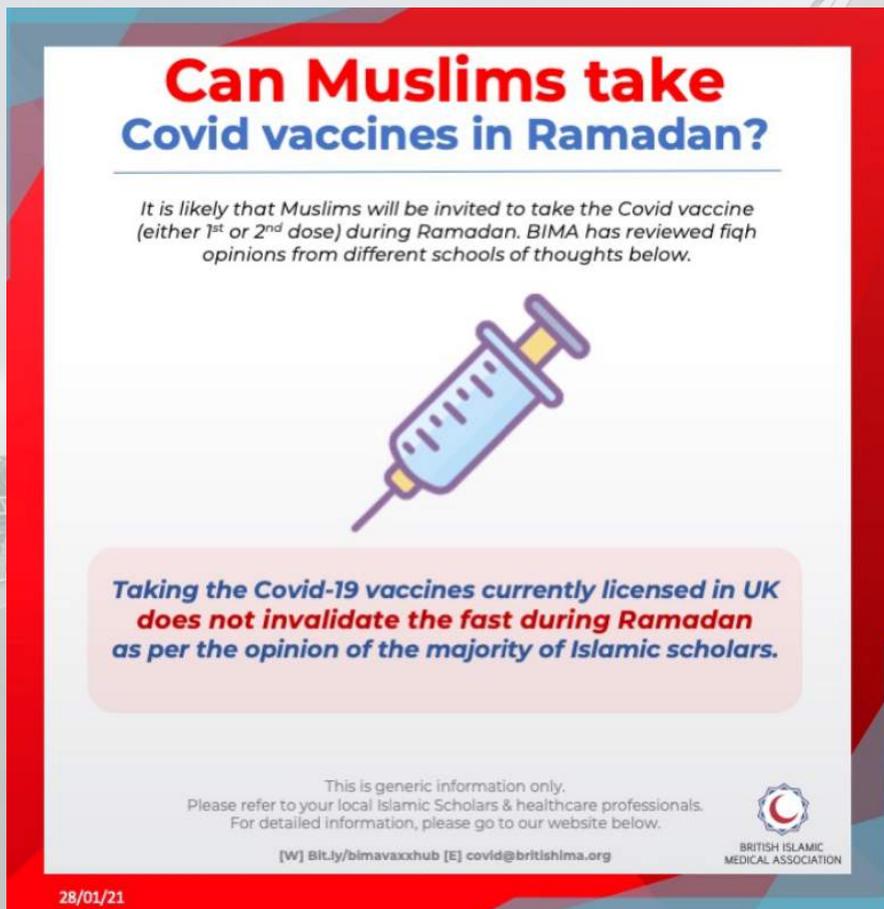
Side effects of vaccination

- Most of the side effects of vaccination are mild and do not last long. The most common side effects of vaccination include the area where the needle goes in looking red, swollen and feeling a bit sore for 2 to 3 days.
- Babies or young children feeling a bit unwell or developing a high temperature for 1 or 2 days. Some children might also cry and be upset immediately after the injection. This is normal and they should feel better after a cuddle.

Advice for Muslims

The Covid-19 vaccine, fasting and Ramadan:

As vaccines are being rolled out in phases, it is likely that vaccination will coincide with Ramadan. Please see the guidance below from the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) on whether Muslims are allowed to take vaccines while fasting:



Can Muslims take Covid vaccines in Ramadan?

It is likely that Muslims will be invited to take the Covid vaccine (either 1st or 2nd dose) during Ramadan. BIMA has reviewed fiqh opinions from different schools of thoughts below.



Taking the Covid-19 vaccines currently licensed in UK does not invalidate the fast during Ramadan as per the opinion of the majority of Islamic scholars.

This is generic information only.
Please refer to your local Islamic Scholars & healthcare professionals.
For detailed information, please go to our website below.

[W] [Bit.ly/bimavaxxhub](https://bit.ly/bimavaxxhub) [E] covid@britishima.org

BRITISH ISLAMIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

28/01/21

Ramadan 2021 will be a very different experience for the entire Muslim community. BIMA has worked hard to produce guidance on #SafeRamadan for mosque leaders and organisers of taraweeh, i'tikaf and other Ramadan activities to ensure that everyone is kept as safe as possible. For you, as a mosque attendee it is important that you remember to wear your mask, keep your distance from other people, and reduce your time spent there when visit the mosque.

Advice for those from black and Caribbean backgrounds

More than 15 million people have now received their first coronavirus jab - however recent studies show that there has been a considerably low uptake among some ethnic minority groups in the UK and around the world.

False conspiracy theories surrounding the vaccine are reported to have spread among some in those communities and according to the Royal College of GPs, white people in the UK are more than twice as likely to have been vaccinated as people from black backgrounds, and three times as likely as people from mixed ethnic backgrounds.

Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, Dr Micheal McBride, recently spoke about his concerns on this topic, "There have been many misplaced concerns surrounding the Covid 19 vaccine placed in the minds of people from the BAME communities across Northern Ireland and we are working hard to address these. We are also working hard with trusted sources to get the correct information out there and further to this, we are keen that we approach this topic with the correct cultural frames and use culturally sensitive language."

If you are worried about taking the vaccine and are concerned about any of the information you have been hearing or reading about. Give your local GP a call, they would be happy to talk you through the different worries that you have.

Overleaf we have outlined a number of myths and truths surrounding the Covid-19 vaccine that we hope will help to dispel any of your worries.

Myth-busting

Myth: The vaccine may modify your DNA

Truth: There is no way that RNA can change the DNA of anyone. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID vaccine uses mRNA technology. The mRNA vaccine teaches our cells to make a protein that triggers a protective immune response. mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, where our DNA is kept.

Myth: Those from BAME communities were underrepresented at the Covid-19 vaccine trials and therefore we don't know how it will affect us

Truth: Covid-19 vaccine was developed using the most robust methods. Volunteers involved in their development include representation of ethnic minority people. There is absolutely no evidence to believe that the vaccine performs differently for different ethnic groups.

Pfizer trial volunteers included: 9.6% black/african, 26.1% hispanic/latino and 3.4% Asian

Oxford trial volunteers included: 10.1% and 3.5 Asian

Myth: There's no point in getting vaccinated due to new COVID strains

Truth: There is currently no evidence to suggest that the vaccines will not protect against the new strains. It is normal for viruses such as the flu virus to go through genetic changes. Scientists are looking at the characteristics of the new strains. Small variations do not often affect the effectiveness of a vaccine.

Myth: Vaccines contain alcohol & therefore are impermissible

Truth: The Oxford AZ Vaccine contains ethanol at an amount that is less than what is found in natural foods or bread. Many scholars have deemed the Oxford AZ Vaccine to be permissible as the amount of ethanol is negligible. The religious permissibility of any product is for scholars to decide, so please refer to those you trust.

Myth: People are dying from the COVID-19 vaccines

Truth: Some people will die after having a COVID vaccine. This does not mean it was the vaccine that caused the death. If 10 million people are vaccinated and the vaccine has no side effects whatsoever, 14,000 can still be expected to die from entirely unrelated causes. The only way to determine if vaccines have serious side effects is by looking at the data from many vaccinated people and comparing them to what can normally be expected from people of that age group.

Myth: The vaccines aren't safe because they were developed quickly.

Truth: The COVID-19 vaccines themselves were developed quickly, but the clinical trials, which examine safety and efficacy, weren't rushed at all," says Dr. Cunningham. "Safety was not compromised in any way. What happened quickly was finding the vaccine to test. In the 1980s, it took scientists so long to do this, but thanks to scientific advances we've made over the years, we can find viruses so quickly." Also, he adds, COVID-19 is similar to other coronaviruses we've seen in humans, like MERS and SARS, so there was previous research that could be used to speed up the process.

Myth: Vaccines contain pork or other animal derivatives

Truth: There are no pork or other animal ingredients in the current available vaccines. Even in circumstances when there are impermissible ingredients in a vaccine, many renowned scholars have concluded that they are permissible if there are no alternative options and the data suggests that the vaccine is of benefit.

Myth: The COVID vaccines can give you COVID

Truth: No. You cannot get COVID from the vaccine. The COVID vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognise and fight the virus that causes COVID. This process can cause side effects which are usually mild. The current vaccines cannot make you sick with COVID.

Myth: Catching COVID after having the vaccine is proof they don't work

Truth: The immune system can take a number of days or weeks to generate an immune response before protection from the virus begins. The COVID vaccine will reduce the chances of suffering from serious complications of COVID. No vaccine is 100% effective, so everyone should continue to take the recommended precautions to avoid infection

Myth: Only the really sick & elderly are dying from COVID

Truth: This is untrue and unethical. The average age in intensive care units is just over 60 years old. Pre-existing conditions that make one high risk can be as simple as asthma, diabetes or being overweight. All life is precious regardless of age or past medical history. To suggest otherwise is troubling and unislamic.

Myth: You don't need vaccination if you already had COVID

Truth: We do not know how long protection remains after COVID infection, therefore having the vaccine is advised. People infected with COVID are likely to be protected for some months but further research is required. These individuals could still transmit the virus to others. The current advice is to wait 4 weeks after having COVID before having the vaccine.

Myth: If I decide not to take the vaccine, it does not affect others

Truth: Your decisions don't just impact you but affect everyone, especially the most vulnerable and sick. You are more likely to suffer with long COVID and severe complications if you do not have the vaccine. This will add pressure to the health service and have an effect on people who are suffering from other illnesses. It will also impact on your close ones who have to care for you during this period.

Myth: I'm young & low risk so the COVID vaccine isn't for me

Truth: In the last few weeks, adults aged 18 - 64 have accounted for 40% of daily COVID admissions to hospital. Although the risk is higher with age and comorbidities, COVID can affect people of any age. COVID can cause long term complications and death. The vaccine is designed to reduce the risk of these disastrous consequences.

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If you find yourself in any difficulty during this time, as well as knowing you can contact NWMF, below is also some information and contact details of local advice centres, food banks and the Housing Executive.

Housing information: Applying for a house

Did you know that you have the right to apply for a house? If you wish to do so, you can either call into your local Housing Executive office (see contact details for all offices in the Derry/Londonderry area below), you can call them on 03448920900 or you can apply online. One single application form with the Housing Executive will allow you to be considered by all social landlords who have housing in the area you'd like to live. If you need help with language or translation, this can be provided by the Housing Executive when you go to complete your form.

You can apply online by using the following link:

<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Apply-for-a-home>

Housing information: Applying for a house

Did you know that you also have the right to emergency accommodation? The Housing Executive also has a legal responsibility to help people who are homeless in Northern Ireland. It's important to note that homelessness does not just mean someone who is sleeping on the streets, it can happen to anyone for any number of reasons. If you find yourself in the position where you either have no home or you are about to become homeless, please contact the Housing Executive. They will be able to assess you and your situation and will let you know what type of support you are entitled to.

For more information on this, the Housing Executive has also published a booklet on homelessness. You can access this at the following link:

<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Homelessness/Are-you-homeless>

Anti-social behaviour and hate crimes

If you or someone you know has been the victim of anti-social behavior or a hate crime, you must first report this to the police. Also, if you are living in a Housing Executive house when this happens, you can also let the Housing Executive know about it so they can investigate the complaint themselves.

Local office info:

Waterside office: 2 Glendermott Road, Waterside

Covers: Altnagelvin, Ard Na Brocky, Ardmore, Caw, Claudy, Clooney, Currynierin, Fountain Hill, Drumahoe, Eglinton, Gobnascale, Hollymount Park, Irish Street (Lisnagelvin), Kilfennan, Knockdara, Lettershandoney, Maydown, Melvin Court, New Buildings Park, Rosstowney, Strathfoyle, Tullyalley, and the Waterside Triangle.

Contact info: 03448920900 / waterside@nihe.gov.uk

Waterloo office: Ulster Bank Building, Waterloo Place

Covers: Academy Road, Bishop Street, Brandywell, Cloughglass, Creggan, Elmwood, Fountain, Foyle Road, Ivy Terrace, Lower Creggan, Maureen Avenue, Meenan Park, Nixon's Corner, Northland Road, Orchard Row, Rosemount and Rossville.

Contact info: 03448920900 / waterlooplace@nihe.gov.uk

Collon Terrace office: 14 Collon Terrance, Derry

Covers: Ballymagroarty, Ballynagard, Belmont, Bloomfield, Bradley Park, Bracken Park, Brookdale, Capal Court, Cashelhill Park, Carnhill, Culmore Road, Coshquin, Earhart Park, Ederowen Park, Elaghmore Park, Fergleen Park, Fern Park, Galliagh Park, Glencaw, Knockalla Park, Hazelbank, Slievemore Park, Leafair, Moss Park, Shantallow and Woodlands.

Contact info: 03448920900 / collonterrace@nihe.gov.uk

Strabane office: 40-46 Railway Street, Strabane

Covers: Alexander Place Lower, Ardmore, Ardstraw, Artigarvan, Ballycolman (old and new), Ballymagorry, Burdennett, Carlton Drive, Castlederg, Castletown, Churchtown, Clady, Cullion, Donemana, Douglas Bridge, Dublin Road, Erganagh, Fountain, Glebe, Killen, Killeter, Lisnafin Park, Magheramason, Main Street, Melmount Road, Millbrook Gardens, Newtown Place, Newtownkennedy, Newtownstewart, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Spamount, Springhill Park and Urney Road.

Contact info: 03448920900 / strabane@nihe.gov.uk

Advice North West (formally Citizens Advice Bearu): 03003033650

The Resource Centre Derry: 028 71352832

Dove House Community Resource Centre: 028 71269327

Derry Well Women: 028 71360777

The Law Centre: 028 71262433

Sinn Fein Advice Centre: 028 71359747

DUP Advice Centre: 028 71346271

Foyle Foodbank: 028 71263699 (foylefoodbank@gmail.com)

The Hope Centre: (Foodbank, clothing bank and debt counselling)

028 71349339 (office@cornerstonecity.church)

Churches Trust Foodbank: 028 71311322

(fionafagan@thechurchestrust.org.uk)

Please note, this pack is also available in Arabic, to request a hard copy of this, please email info@nwmf.org.uk after April 7th 2021