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Meals on wheels

The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on vulnerable populations, particularly the elderly & those with underlying health conditions who were at higher risk from the virus. As the pandemic spread and lockdown measures were brought in, there was an increased need to support these populations, many of whom were in isolated regions at home and unable to access food and essential supplies. Many of these individuals relied on community services for meals, which became more challenging due to lockdowns and social distancing measures.

In response, the Muintearas Meals on Wheels began during the first Covid Lockdown to provide a service to the older community or those unable to leave their homes to do the essentials like shopping or collecting medicines. A community service providing healthy cooked meals to people who are unable to prepare meals for themselves due to age, disability, or other reasons, in this isolated region of the Connemara Gaeltacht. This service provided (and still provides) much more than just a meal; it offers companionship, a safety net, and peace of mind for both the people receiving help and their families. A valuable service that helps vulnerable individuals maintain their independence & opportunity for social interaction. The staff often checks in on customers, providing not only a meal but a friendly visit, which can combat feelings of isolation and loneliness.

After Covid the shopping part ended as people once again could leave their homes but the meals on wheels became a legacy of this time due how important this service became to the local community.

How it works:

The menu is posted on Facebook every morning but those who don't have access to broadband or wifi are called by Dara every morning to be told what's on the menu, who then returns to the kitchen with that day's orders. Orders are accepted between 9.30am and 12.00pm and delivered between the hours of 12-2pm. Staff deliver the meals directly to the person's homes, covering a radius of approximately 30km each day. There is a variety of meal options to cater to different needs or preferences.

The Meals on Wheels service was originally part-funded by local grants, which ended after the pandemic and is now fully funded by Muintearas alone. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the crucial role that Meals on Wheels programs play in supporting vulnerable populations, and it led to the growth and adaptation of these programs to meet the increased demand for meal delivery services.

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