



**Waterford
Volunteer Centre**
Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Port Lairge

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted to the Department of Rural &
Community Development
July 2024



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Waterford Volunteer Centre CLG
4C Manor House, Manor Village,
Cork Road, Waterford,
X91 HH9P

Registered Charity Number
(RCN): 20205996
Charity Number (CHY): 22885
Companies Registration Number
(CRO): 676571

CONTENTS

01.

Background

- 1.1 Company Details
- 1.2 Mission, Vision
- 1.3 Core Objectives
- 1.4 Our Team
- 1.5 Our Numbers
- 1.6 Our Thanks

02.

Chairpersons Message

03.

Progress: Objectives, Achievements & Performance

- 3.1 Core Objective 1
- 3.2 Core Objective 2
- 3.3 Core Objective 3
- 3.4 Core Objective 4

04.

Our Challenges

05.

Future Plans

Company Details

Name of Charity:

Waterford Volunteer Centre CLG

CHY Number:

22885

Registered Charity Number:

20205996

Company Registration Number:

676571

Registered Office:

4C Manor House,
Manor Village, Cork Road,
Waterford, X91 HH9P

Website:

www.volunteerwaterford.ie

Directors 2024

Catherine Power
Deirdre Power
Pat Power
May Doyle
John Hawkes
Karen McGrath (r. June 2024)
John Power
Donna Ferris
Anne O'Brien
Conor Mc Guinness

Auditors

Park Chambers Chartered
Accountants & Registered Auditors,
96 Lower Yellow Road,
Waterford, X91HH27.

Bank

AIB The Quay, Waterford

Structure, Governance & Management

Waterford Volunteer Centre (WVC) is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Our governing document is our Constitution. The company was incorporated on August 27th, 2020.

WVC is an affiliate of Volunteer Ireland, the national support structure for volunteering. It is part of the national network of 29 volunteer centres.

We have a voluntary board of directors made up of 9 members who guide Waterford Volunteer Centre in our objectives. The board of directors place an emphasis on ensuring that we are open, transparent and follow the highest standards of governance. Our aim for 2024 was to recruit a suitable person as manager. The new manager was tasked with developing her team and leading the team to perform to their best ability in delivery of the annual plan for Waterford Volunteer Centre.

The Board of Waterford Volunteer Centre met 6 times, including the AGM, in 2024. In addition to the board, there are also a number of committees to support and report back to the board:

- Finance Committee
- HR Committee
- Marketing Committee
- Governance Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee

Funders

Department of Rural & Community
Development

Our Mission & Vision

To actively promote and provide opportunities which engage people in volunteering, and to support voluntary organisations with a quality-based service that is person-centered, for the benefit of Waterford City and County Communities.

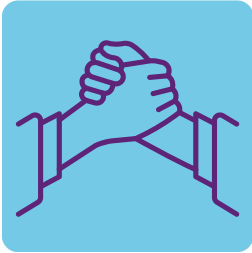


Volunteering opportunities in Waterford are fulfilling, engaging and contribute to the development of our community with volunteers respected for their individual contributions and voluntary organisations providing robust, appropriate opportunities.



Main objective of Waterford Volunteer Centre

To strengthen and support volunteering in Waterford City & County.



Objective 1

Increase the quality of volunteering



Objective 2

Increase access to volunteering by offering a support service to the public and to Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIO's).



Objective 3

Increase awareness of volunteering by marketing and promoting volunteering.



Objective 4

Ensure the organisation is sustainable through good governance and management.

Réka Széplaki- Centre Manager

Réka joined Waterford Volunteer Centre as Centre Manager in March 2024. She brings over 20 years of experience in community development and volunteer engagement. Her background includes coordinating Erasmus+ volunteering programmes for more than 15 years and serving as the Volunteer Coordinator for the European Capital of Culture programme in Hungary. As Centre Manager, Réka is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Waterford Volunteer Centre, managing its staff and resources. She works closely with the Board of Trustees and sub-committees to deliver the annual work plan and supports Waterford Volunteer Centre's compliance with the Charities Regulator Governance Code. Réka also acts as Garda Vetting Liaison Officer, delivers training and information sessions and represents Waterford Volunteer Centre on local and national networks.

Paul Deegan – Placement & Development Officer

Paul has been WVC Placement & Development Officer since January 18th, 2021. His role involves volunteer referral and organisational development support. Paul meets with volunteers and organisation representatives to discuss all aspects of volunteer recruitment and development. He acts as the broker between the individual wanting to volunteer and the organisation that engages the volunteers. Paul also acts as a Garda Vetting Liaison Officer for Waterford Volunteer Centre. As well as supporting volunteers and organisations, Paul also maintains our website .

Vicky Wall- Support Coordinator

Vicky joined Waterford Volunteer Centre in July 2023. She provides administrative support to the Manager & Placement Officer as required. She also helps to organise our networking events and coordinate the Welcome Ambassadors Programme.

Anna Kachanivska – Migrant Volunteer Outreach Worker

Anna joined the Waterford Volunteer Centre team in March 2023. In 2024, her role has grown under the New Communities funding stream, and she now works closely with refugees, International Protection Applicants, and new communities in Waterford. Anna supports the development of tailored programmes that promote integration through volunteering, empowering individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to get involved in their communities, build new skills, and feel a sense of belonging. She continues to promote inclusive volunteering through initiatives such as Art&Craft workshops and the Star Weaving Project, and plays a vital role in supporting volunteers from multicultural backgrounds on their journey into active citizenship.

Volunteer Registrations



Target 350 – Actual 475 (136%)

VIO Registrations



Target 50 – Actual 53 (106%)

New Opportunities



Target 120 – Actual 116 (89%)

Registered Volunteers



Target 300 – Actual 337 (112%)

Repeat Callers



Target 150 – Actual 177 (118%)

Volunteer Hours



Target 10.000 – Actual 15.306 (153%)

In 2024, we were delighted to see strong results across most of our key targets. Volunteer registrations, ongoing engagement, support requests, and repeat volunteer hours all surpassed expectations, showing a high level of interest and commitment across the community. Registrations from volunteer-involving organisations were slightly above target.

While we welcomed this growth, it has become clear that we cannot plan for such numbers in the coming years if we are to continue providing quality support to the organisations already registered with us.

We also note that almost half of the volunteers who registered this year are members of new communities. This is an encouraging sign of diversity and inclusion, but it also brings new responsibilities. If we are to match these volunteers with suitable roles, we need to place more emphasis on supporting organisations to create opportunities that require only basic English. Without this, there is a risk that many volunteers may remain unmatched over the long term, and their enthusiasm could be lost.

First and foremost, we would like to thank the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) for their continued commitment to funding Waterford Volunteer Centre. This vital support allows us to strengthen, support, and promote volunteering across the county.

A special word of thanks goes to Deirdre Power, our Company Secretary, for her dedication and invaluable support during the three-month period without a manager and throughout the induction of our new manager. Her contribution ensured continuity and stability at a crucial time for the Centre.

We are also deeply grateful to our staff team, who worked with great professionalism and care to maintain high-quality services during this transitional period. Their commitment ensured that volunteers and organisations across Waterford continued to receive support without disruption.

We would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of Volunteer Ireland and the network of Volunteer Centres around the country. The sharing of ideas, resources, and expertise helps to reinforce and enhance the work we do locally, increasing our ability to connect with and support more people and organisations.

Locally, we've been fortunate to receive strong backing from a range of community organisations and the media, whose support has helped us to raise awareness of the Centre's work and promote volunteering across Waterford.

We would especially like to thank:

Waterford City & County Council
Waterford PPN
Waterford Area Partnership
Waterford Sports Partnership
WLR FM

Beat 102 103 FM
Waterford News & Star
Waterford Today
Dungarvan Observer
Dungarvan Leader

Finally, and most importantly, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the members of the public who volunteered in their community in 2024, and to the many non-profit organisations who continue to do incredible work every day. Your commitment, energy, and kindness are what make Waterford such a vibrant and caring place to live.

Chairpersons Message



As a novice Chairperson I would like to record my thanks and appreciation to the Board members and the wider WVC team for their help and support over the the last (and my first) 12 months. I would particularly like to thank Catherine Power – my predecessor as Chair – for her sterling work in setting up the WVC.

2024 has been a significant year for WVC: we have a new Manager – Réka Széplaki – who has settled in really well.

One of her first tasks has been to supervise our move into larger premises (we must record our gratitude to the Department for their support in facilitating the move). At the same time we have continued (indeed expanded) our support to volunteers and volunteer organisations. We have also increased our engagement with the national and regional networks.

- Our continued work with, and support for, the displaced Ukrainian community; this has been well received;
- Our increasing engagement with the Welcome Ambassador programme; the programme has been expanding throughout the County and the WVC role in coordinating this has been very successful;
- The Star Weaving programme has been very successful – and our contribution to the National Star Weaving programme has been well received;
- Our continued commitment to good governance and compliance with the Charities Governance Code;
- The support and funding from the Department has been well received and their support much appreciated;
- The expansion of our services throughout the County has helped raise awareness of the WVC and the coordination and cooperation with local authorities and other partner agencies has continued to grow – the WVC sponsorship of an award for the Annual PPN Awards event is a case in point;

Please enjoy our Annual Report – we would welcome your feedback and comments.

Happy Volunteering!

John Hawkes – July 2025

Our Progress: Objectives, Achievements & Performance

Core Objective 1

Ensure organisational development and sustainability through good governance and effective and efficient management

In 2024, Waterford Volunteer Centre (WVC) focused on strengthening internal governance, building leadership capacity, and planning for long-term sustainability. The organisation took significant steps in shaping its future direction while maintaining sound operational and financial oversight.

Board Governance and Oversight

The Board remained active and engaged throughout 2024, holding six formal meetings and one Annual General Meeting (AGM). At each meeting, the Manager provided detailed operational reports, ensuring the Board had a clear picture of progress and challenges across all aspects of the Centre's work. This allowed the Board to provide timely advice and make informed decisions to advance the Centre's goals.

The annual workplan was reviewed regularly by the Manager and the Board, ensuring that progress remained on track and that the Centre stayed responsive to emerging needs or opportunities.

A Board Skills Audit was carried out during the year, offering valuable insights into the current composition of expertise. The findings revealed a strong range of skills, including marketing, PR, and social media—areas of great benefit to WVC's outreach and engagement. However, the audit also identified a gap in legal expertise, which will inform future recruitment. Encouragingly, several Board members expressed interest in upskilling in strategic areas, and mentoring was identified as an untapped but available resource within the group. This audit will support more effective succession planning and governance development moving forward.

Any organisation's sustainability, especially Charities, depends on good governance and management. The Board of Waterford Volunteer Centre are actively involved in ensuring all Companies Registration Office and Charities Regulator guidelines are followed. WVC board members along with the Human Resources subcommittee spent many hours working with an expert HR in 2024 on an updated version of the Staff Handbook. The Board also engaged an outside expert as a supporting mentor for the new manager for 6 months.

The board had one resignation in 2024 due to work commitments.

Attendance at Board meetings throughout the year was excellent and is evidence of the trustees commitment to Waterford Volunteer Centre. One of our trustees was engaging as a candidate for the local council in 2024.

Meeting Dates 2024	22/ 02	22/ 04	18/ 06	10/ 09	14/ 10	03/ 12	%
Catherine Power	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Deirdre Power	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Pat Power	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	66%
May Doyle	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	83%
John Hawkes	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	83%
Karen McGrath	N	Y					
John Power	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	83%
Donna Ferris	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	66%
Anne O'Brien	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	66%
Conor mc Guinness	N	N	N	N	Y	N	16%

Strategic Planning for 2024–2027

A key strategic decision made by the Board in 2024 was to relocate the Volunteer Centre to a more visible and accessible location in Waterford city centre. This move is intended to enhance the Centre's presence in the community and create greater opportunities for engagement with volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs). Suitable premises were identified and preparations for the move began, with relocation scheduled for early 2025.

The new location will provides improved space for meetings, training, and community activities, supporting more inclusive and diverse volunteering. A Strategic Planning Committee was established to guide this and other developments, and a revised Strategic Plan will be finalised in 2025.

Leadership Transition

In early 2024, WVC carried out a successful recruitment process for the position of Manager following the departure of the previous postholder at the end of 2023. The role was publicly advertised, and interviews and background checks were conducted in Q1. A new Manager, with over 15 years of experience in volunteering and community development at international level, commenced in post on 25 March 2024. The transition was managed smoothly and the new Manager has already contributed significantly to the advancement of the Strategic Plan and overall operations.

Policy Review and Regulatory Compliance

WVC remains compliant with all requirements of the Companies Registration Office (CRO) and Charities Regulator Authority (CRA). The Board Secretary ensured that all required filings and procedures were completed in a timely and transparent manner. A system is in place to ensure regular review and updating of internal policies. The Secretary and Manager work jointly to monitor this system, and updates are brought to Board meetings as needed. In 2024, the Employee Handbook was reviewed and updated to reflect current practices.

Connect people with volunteering opportunities, increasing participation and diversity

Volunteer Contact (QSF 5.2, 5.4):

All new volunteers who registered their interest were contacted within three working days. We offered support and the option for face-to-face meetings. Feedback from volunteers indicated that they felt welcomed and that their time was valued. We maintained regular communication and actively sought feedback to improve their experience.

Volunteer Support (QSF 5.6):

A total of 475 individuals expressed interest in volunteering through I-VOL, with 337 new volunteers registering in 2024. We also had 177 repeat callers—highlighting that many people returned to volunteer again after their initial experience. Volunteer support was provided through drop-ins, phone calls, and in-person conversations, always with a person-centred approach. We also gathered testimonials and feedback to help us enhance our support and services.

Volunteer Communications (QSF 8.6):

All time-limited and once-off volunteering opportunities were shared by email with volunteers who had provided a valid address.

Volunteer Opportunities:

We registered 116 new volunteering roles in 2024.

Drop-in Days (QSF 5.4):

Regular drop-in sessions were held every Tuesday and Thursday, with extra appointments available on request.

Volunteering for Over 55s (NVS 3):

We continued to encourage older adults to engage in volunteering. Activities included participation in Age Friendly Week, the Age Friendly Expo, and ongoing support for older volunteers involved in initiatives like the Waterford Welcome Ambassador programme.

We also hosted the Volunteer Awards in collaboration with Waterford PPN, featuring a dedicated Age-Friendly Volunteer of the Year category, which attracted a strong field of nominees.

Volunteer-Involving Organisations (VIOs):

We registered 50 new organisations on I-VOL in 2024. These organisations received one-to-one support, including consultations and follow-up engagement, to ensure they were equipped to offer meaningful volunteer opportunities.

Outreach events:

We made strong efforts to reach rural communities by participating in the Connecting Communities Roadshow and collaborating with Waterford Area Partnership (WAP). Pop-up information stands were held in Dungarvan and Tramore, among other locations.

Some of our outreach events included:

- Feb 7: Lismore Heritage Centre
- Feb 21: The Park Hotel, Dungarvan
- Mar 6: Rainbow Hall, Kilmacthomas
- Mar 20: Community Hall, Ballymacarbry
- Apr 3: The Haven Hotel, Dunmore East
- Apr 17: Cill Barra Sports Hall, Ballybeg
- May 8: Tramore GAA Community Hall
- Sept 6: Slice of Culture, Harvest Festival, Waterford
- Sept 12: Playful Streets, Walton Park, Dungarvan
- Sept 17: Playful Streets, Ballybricken Green, Waterford
- Sept 18: Older People's Council AGM, Waterford
- Sept 20: Vitamin Sea Festival, Tramore
- Sept 23: Lismore & Mount Melleray Info + Star Weaving event
- Sept 28: Dungarvan Info + Star Weaving event
- Sept 28: Community Climate Action Programme Launch, Mount Congreve
- Oct 1: Age Well Expo, Dungarvan

Website and Social Media (QSF 9.1, 9.3, 9.4):

Our website was regularly updated throughout the year. Social media reach improved, supported by a content calendar that helped us maintain consistent branding and increase engagement.



55.8K Facebook reach

25.7%

3.9 K content interactions

99%

19h 47m Watch time

682.3%



7.3K Instagram reach

31.3%

1172 Visits

79.88%

Top FB content by views:

We had an amazing time at the Volunteer...

17 October 07:35

4.5K 52
2 8



🌟 The Rewarding Role of a Board Member in...

14 November 02:32

3.1K 52
4 2



🌟 What Does It Mean to Serve on a Board?...

13 November 02:04

1.9K 156
29 5



A big THANK YOU for the shared testimoni...

17 November 02:00

1.5K 39
0 2

Build the capacity of Volunteer-Involving Organisations (VIOs) to engage volunteers and enhance the quality of the volunteering experience

Understanding VIO Needs (QSF 8.1):

We asked for feedback from VIOs to better understand their needs and priorities. The feedback highlighted a strong need for board development and support with both volunteer and board recruitment. In response, we ran a dedicated campaign during Trustees' Week to promote training opportunities and encourage wider participation on boards. Based on this input, we have begun developing a Training Links Network, with an application planned for 2025.

Garda Vetting Support and Training (NVS 20):

Garda Vetting training was delivered throughout the year, and our website was updated to reflect current guidance. A new Garda Vetting Liaison Officer was trained, enhancing our capacity to deliver this vital service.

In 2024, six new organisations joined as Garda Vetting Affiliates, with three more in the process of joining. This reflects the significant behind-the-scenes work required to provide a compliant and responsive vetting service. We also supported existing affiliates in reviewing and updating their vetting policies, and all new affiliates received tailored Garda Vetting training.

Networking for Volunteer Leaders and Managers:

We hosted several Coffee & Chat networking events for Volunteer Leaders and Managers, linked to National Volunteering Week, International Volunteer Day, and International Volunteer Managers Day. While uptake was low, we recognise the need to review and re-energise our approach to these events for the future.

One-to-One Support and Role Development (NVS 51 & 53):

We continued to offer individualised support to VIOs in developing role descriptions and advertising opportunities. In 2024, we helped create and promote 116 volunteer role descriptions, offering feedback and ensuring best practice standards were maintained.

Training for Volunteer Managers (NVS 20, 51):

Due to staffing changes, we had limited capacity to deliver in-house training for volunteer managers. However, we actively promoted training opportunities offered by Volunteer Ireland and the Charities Regulator, and we continued to deliver Garda Vetting training.

Increase understanding and awareness of volunteering by recognising, celebrating, and communicating its benefits, value, and impact.

National Volunteering Week 2024 (QSF 10.2 / NVS 9)

National Volunteering Week (20–26 May) celebrated the diversity and uniqueness of volunteers under the theme “Uniquely Us”, highlighting how people’s backgrounds, skills, and experiences shape their contributions to volunteering.

Waterford Volunteer Centre marked the week with a range of initiatives:

- **Social Media Campaign:** A daily series of posts and videos included:
 - Volunteer interviews
 - A “One Word About Volunteering” video
 - Behind-the-scenes footage (e.g., Liberty Volunteers with Anna)
 - Volunteer spotlights and updates
- **Coffee Mornings:** Held in Waterford and Dungarvan to bring together Volunteer Leaders and Volunteer-Involving Organisations (VIOs). While numbers were low, the sessions offered valuable exchanges and highlighted the need to adapt how we engage with VIOs.
- **Garda Vetting Webinar:** A free online session on Garda Vetting, now available to rewatch on our website.
- **Informal Networking Session:** A casual drop-in event to connect with volunteers and organisations in a relaxed setting.
- **Pop-Up Info Stand:** Located in Dungarvan Shopping Centre, the stand raised awareness and recruited new volunteers. The format was successful and will be repeated in future outreach.
- **Star Weaving Workshop:** Hosted at Waterford Gallery of Art, this creative and inclusive event brought together volunteers and community members as part of the One Million Stars project.

Run a 'Tell a Friend about Volunteering' campaign during NVW (QSF 10.2) (NVS 9)

We developed and implemented a Marketing Plan and Content Calendar for 2024 to guide consistent communications across all platforms.

To increase reach, we launched a "Tell a Friend About Volunteering" campaign during NVW encouraging volunteers to share their stories and invite others to get involved. The "One Word About Volunteering" video captured the personal impact and emotional value of volunteering.

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/326134380372960>

In November, we ran a testimonial-based campaign with board members from diverse backgrounds. Contributors included:

John Power
Waterford Volunteer Centre

Csilla Czelvikker
Waterford New Communities Network

Jaimie Dower
Spraoi

Mark Fenton
Children's Group Link

James Corcoran
St. Saviour's National School



Community & Voluntary Awards 2024 (QSF 10.1 / NVS 32)

The 2024 Waterford Community and Volunteer Awards honoured the remarkable contributions of volunteers across the city and county. We sponsored and coordinated the volunteering categories for the 2024 Community & Voluntary Awards, which were officially launched in August at the Park Hotel in Dungarvan in partnership with Waterford PPN.

Nominations received:

Junior (U18) Volunteer of the Year: 5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ofDTiHiv-k>

**Age-Friendly Volunteer of the Year: 26**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJD8dWh_tqo

**Board/Committee Member of the Year: 29**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sBUKHsl1XE>



We were grateful to have Volunteer Centre Managers from Wexford, Cork, and Tipperary involved in the judging process. Their external perspective helped ensure fairness and impartiality, and we extend a heartfelt thank you for their time and support.

The award ceremony took place in November in Dungarvan, bringing together nominees, families, and community members in a joyful and heartwarming celebration. Shortlisted nominees received certificates, and winners were presented with specially designed trophies. Short videos were also produced to celebrate each winner's story, highlighting why volunteering matters and inspiring others across Waterford.

The 2024 winners were:

Age-Friendly Volunteer: Richie Purcell – Irish Red Cross

Junior Volunteer: Eilish Norris – Clonea Camogie Club

Board/Committee Member: Billy Harty – Ardmore Tidy Towns

Each winner stood out for their dedication and the positive impact they've made. Their stories showcase the diversity and heart of volunteering in Waterford.

To mark International Volunteer Day on December 5th, personalised thank-you cards were sent to all nominees, recognising their ongoing service.

The 2024 Volunteer Awards reminded us of the strength of Waterford's community spirit. We look forward to building on this success in 2025.



2024 Roadshow with Healthy Waterford & Partners:**Connecting Communities Roadshow**

In collaboration with Healthy Waterford, we joined the Connecting Communities Pilot to promote civic engagement and connect people with local services. Between February and May, we attended 7 outreach events across the county (including Lismore, Dungarvan, Tramore, Ballybeg, and Dunmore East).

It was a collaborative, cross-organisational roadshow aiming to showcase the best Waterford has to offer in Community Services, including over 30 agencies, visiting 7 rural & urban locations, with 900+ attendees over the course of the project.

Playful Streets Collaboration:

We also participated in the Playful Streets initiative to raise awareness of volunteering through community events and creative play. Worked with Healthy Waterford to bring volunteering opportunities closer to local communities at Ballybricken and Dungarvan, Walton Park.

Volunteer Reward Card Initiative (QSF 10.3, 10.4)

We continued to expand our Volunteer Reward Card programme:

- 35 local businesses now offer verified volunteers discounts of 5% to 10%.
- Notably, Expressway joined, providing travel discounts.
- 118 volunteers hold a reward card in 2024, with ongoing interest from new registrants.

To mark International Volunteer Day, participating businesses provided extra discounts and displayed our promotional posters as part of a local thank-you campaign.

All-Staff Meetings and Representation

- Paul Deegan – Development Officer chaired the Placement and Outreach Forum (POF) and led the organisation of the first national in-person staff meeting post-pandemic, held in June.
- We had a representative in the I-VOL Regional Representative Committee, the Flexible Volunteering Steering Group, at the Volunteer Centre Managers Network Meetings, in the Munster regional Managers Meetings, in the LAIT working group and on WAP networking events for service providers.
- In November, Waterford Volunteer Centre hosted the Munster Regional All-Staff Meeting in Dungarvan, attended by staff from across the province. The meeting focused on shared learning and planning for 2025.

Community Volunteers Programme (QSF 11.1, 11.2 / NVS 1, 2, 56)

We decided to wait for the report of the pilot phase of this national programme before committing to full participation.

National Volunteer Network Conference (QSF 11.3)

Although the in-person conference did not proceed, we participated in planning sessions and restructuring discussions within the Managers' Network and on the National Volunteer Managers Conference.

International Volunteer Day

We received €2,000 in DRCD funding for local volunteer recognition. This supported:

- Promotion and appreciation events around International Volunteer Day
- The 2024 Community & Voluntary Awards

Volunteer highlights from international Volunteer Day:

We're delighted to share a heartfelt testimonial from one of our dedicated Welcome Ambassadors, Desta Z. Fitiwi.



"I enjoyed seeing smiles on the faces of visitors whom my fellow Welcome Ambassadors and I interacted with.

Sometimes, even simple phrases such as 'hello there' and 'good morning' were enough. I also enjoyed meeting and talking with my good friends. The essence of life, as Aristotle put it, is 'to serve others and to do good.' I always strive to do the same, whether as a paid employee or as a volunteer. As a Tigrayan, it gives me immense pleasure to serve Ireland in any capacity, including in my profession as an energy economist and researcher.

Because of these reasons, I decided to join the Welcome Ambassadors' family, and I'm glad I made that decision. I met great people, both Welcome Ambassadors and visitors."

Billy Carbally and Joan Reade also shared their incredible volunteering stories with us. Their dedication to the Waterford Suir Valley Railway is a great example of the positive impact volunteering has on both the individuals and the communities they serve.

Billy Carbally: "I've been volunteering with the Suir Valley Railway for the past 3 years. I decided to volunteer after the loss of my wife, to get out and about. I wanted to meet new people and make friends. I look forward to volunteering each week—it really gives me an energy boost."

Joan Reade: "I started volunteering in 2020 during Covid. My sister-in-law works for the Railway, so it was nice to come to a place of familiarity. I volunteer every Tuesday, and my volunteer buddy is Billy.

I really love volunteering at the train station, and I enjoy my time here. I am retired, so I was looking for something new to do with my time, rather than being stuck at home. The scenery is beautiful and lifts you up on a down day.

Billy and I are called the 'Dream Team' by the staff, and that gives us a good laugh and lift."



Volunteer Recruitment Fair – SETU (QSF 12.1)

Held in October at the SETU Cork Road Campus, the fair featured 20 organisations and introduced dozens of students to local volunteering opportunities. New collaborations were formed, and media content from the event will be used throughout 2025.

We're working closely with SETU's Careers Centre to repeat the fair next year.



One Million Stars Project(QSF 6.6 / NVS 2, 19)

Over 500 workshops were held, and an estimated 35,000 stars were created in the project.

Highlights included:

- LOVE Installation at SETU: Volunteers contributed live during the installation.
- EPIC Museum in Dublin: Volunteers were invited to the national exhibition.
- A travelling exhibition was developed with the help of local artists. The Exhibitions were scheduled for Q1 2025.



Welcome Ambassador Programme

In 2024, the Waterford Welcome Ambassadors programme continued to provide a warm, personal welcome to visitors and locals throughout the summer season. This year, the initiative included 40 trained volunteers spread across Waterford City, Tramore, and Lismore, each playing a valuable role in promoting the best of what our communities have to offer.

- 16 active volunteers supported the programme in Waterford City
- 20 volunteers participated in Tramore
- 4 volunteers took part in Lismore

The programme ran throughout the summer, with training delivered both before and during the season to ensure volunteers were well-prepared to assist the public and share local insights. Volunteers provided directions, offered recommendations, and shared stories about the area, adding a warm, human touch to the visitor experience.

At the end-of-season feedback, volunteers highlighted the enjoyment they got from meeting people and representing their communities. Many also expressed an interest in returning for the 2025 season, a testament to the strength and spirit of the programme.

To recognise their contribution, a Thank You Event was held at the Theatre Royal Waterford, where volunteers enjoyed a guided tour of the historic venue followed by a group feedback session. It was a lovely opportunity to reflect on the season and acknowledge the important work the Ambassadors have done.

The Welcome Ambassadors remain a vital part of the city and county's summer atmosphere. Their work exemplifies the impact of community-driven volunteering, offering genuine connection, local pride, and a warm welcome that leaves a lasting impression on all who visit Waterford.



This year presented several significant challenges for the Volunteer Centre, which required resilience and teamwork from all involved.

At the start of the year, the Centre faced a difficult transition period as there was no manager in place during the first three months. This created an intense and demanding environment for both staff and the board. Everyone stepped up, taking on additional responsibilities to maintain the quality of service and keep the Centre fully operational.

Recruitment of volunteers for board roles remained a challenge throughout the year, with a limited number of volunteers willing or able to take on governance positions. This has highlighted the need to find new ways to engage and encourage volunteers to participate in leadership capacities.

Our premises also posed ongoing difficulties. Frequent leaks in the roof made it clear that a change of location was necessary. During 2024, we took the initial steps towards securing a new office space that will better support our work and volunteers in the future.

Volunteering patterns are also changing. While many organisations continue to look for volunteers who can commit long-term, volunteers increasingly prefer short-term, flexible roles. Event volunteering and 'taster' opportunities have grown in popularity. This shift requires a more flexible approach to role design, and we continue to work with volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) to support this change.

We are also proud to support a wonderfully diverse volunteer community, with individuals from over 45 different nationalities giving their time through the Centre. At the same time, this diversity presents challenges in developing accessible volunteering opportunities for those with limited English. We provided additional support to VIOs in 2024 to help bridge this gap and plan to continue strengthening this work in the year ahead.

Another area of increasing demand has been Garda Vetting. While it is encouraging to see that organisations value and seek our support with this important process, the growing number of requests has placed a significant workload on staff. Balancing this administrative demand with other priorities remains a key challenge.

In 2025, Waterford Volunteer Centre will continue to promote volunteering and raise awareness of its many benefits for individuals, communities, and organisations. Building on our commitment to inclusion, we will maintain a focus on reaching people in rural and isolated areas, ensuring that volunteering remains accessible and meaningful for all.

We will move to the city centre, which will mark an important step in our development. As part of this move, we will create a welcoming space where volunteers and organisations can connect, access resources, and take part in training or collaboration opportunities.

We will also initiate a project to support and enable volunteer-led boards, recognising the crucial role they play in community life. Strengthening our training and development offering will help increase our support capacity and better meet the needs of both volunteers and organisations.

Supporting age-friendly volunteering will remain a priority, as will our work in promoting integration through volunteering. In partnership with other Volunteer Centres, we will look to share resources, ideas, and good practices that benefit the wider volunteering ecosystem.

We will work closely with the Department of Rural and Community Development to support the consultation process for the new National Volunteering Strategy.

We will continue to explore the development of the Community Volunteers Programme in Waterford.

We will develop our own Strategic Plan, which will help set direction for the coming years and ensure our services are responsive and sustainable.

Strengthening our collaboration with SETU will be another key focus as we look to engage more young people in volunteering and give greater visibility to volunteer stories and opportunities through events, campaigns, and outreach.

We look forward to 2025 with ambition and care, knowing that the collective power of volunteers is essential to a more connected, compassionate, and resilient Waterford.



Waterford Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Port Lairge