

About Volunteer Ireland

Volunteer Ireland is the national volunteer development agency and a support body for all local Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services in Ireland. Volunteer Ireland works in partnership with the Network of Volunteer Centres to strengthen volunteering and citizen engagement. Our vision is of every person feeling connected to, and participating in, their communities to build a better Irish society. We strive to achieve this through increasing awareness of, access to and quality in volunteering. We also manage the national database of volunteering opportunities, I-Vol. Volunteer Ireland is a registered charity.

About Volunteer Centres

The 21 Volunteer Centres provide a placement service between individuals and groups who want to undertake voluntary activity and organisations that are seeking to involve volunteers. Volunteer Centres are the local leaders in community engagement, supporting and promoting volunteering. They offer advice and support to volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations through a range of services that include information provision, consultation, training and Garda Vetting. Volunteer Centres work with a range of Government Departments and other agencies to enhance volunteering and ensure its contribution to both people and society.

About Volunteering Information Services

The aims of the 5 Volunteering Information Services in Ireland are the same as Volunteer Centres. However, Volunteering Information Services are at the first stage of development of a Volunteer Centre. As such they provide a basic service, hosting a website and providing access to the I-Vol database.

Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services



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Volunteer Ireland and Volunteer Centres

General Election Manifesto 2016



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obair dheonach éireann



In a country of competing social and economic priorities, Volunteer Ireland and the network of Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services have the potential to be part of the solution to what you and a new Government wants to achieve. Our services enable and enhance volunteering, which makes for stronger, healthier and integrated active citizens and communities. Over 1 million people volunteer in Ireland annually.

To ensure that local and national volunteering grows, that citizens become active locally and that our communities are safe, healthy and inclusive, Government must commit to recognising the value of volunteering and to growing a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure in Ireland. There are 5 key areas where you and a new Government can make a lasting contribution to volunteering locally and nationally.

We Ask Candidates to Commit to:

1. Develop and implement a Government strategy on volunteering

Ask: Government must show its commitment to volunteering by developing a clear strategy on volunteering.

Rationale: Volunteers across the country support Government work and local communities in a variety of ways. The value of volunteering to the economy is over €5 billion each year. In addition, volunteering brings benefits to health, wellbeing, employability, social integration and active citizenship, to name just a few examples. Government must recognize the importance of volunteering to Irish society by implementing a proper infrastructure with clear objectives for volunteering, which will allow it to thrive.

2. Restore funding to Volunteer Ireland and the network of Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services

Ask: Restore funding to Volunteer Ireland and the network of Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services by a 12% overall increase; about €320,000.

Rationale: Volunteer Ireland and the network of Volunteer Centres have experienced cuts in funding of 20-40% between 2009 and 2014. These cuts had a significant impact on our capacity to promote volunteering, for example restricting the amount of outreach we can deliver and the amount of time we can spend with potential volunteers. The volunteering infrastructure provides excellent value for money: an investment of €2.6 million in 2015 facilitated volunteers contributing €5 billion in terms of hours worked, in addition to the social and economic benefits outlined above. Increased funding would allow us to deliver more marketing to increase the number of people that register to volunteer; training to improve the quality of volunteering; and targeting of key audiences such as under-25s, over 55s, the unemployed and recent arrivals to the country. It is vital that funding is increased to allow us to continue to promote and facilitate volunteering, deliver against Government objectives, and maximise our impact.

3. Ensure those in receipt of social benefits are aware that they can volunteer

Ask: The Department of Social Protection needs to inform and encourage anyone in receipt of social benefits to volunteer.

Rationale: There is currently a lack of awareness, and in some cases misinformation, regarding volunteering and those receiving social benefits. This is creating a real barrier to volunteering for

those in receipt of social benefits. It is important that staff in the Department of Social Protection inform people that they can volunteer and encourage them to do so; and reassure people that volunteering will not lead to loss of social benefit payments. Volunteering has huge benefits in terms of increased employability, confidence and positive mental health. Volunteering in meaningful roles allows jobseekers to gain new skills and confidence, and improve their overall employability.

4. Conduct research on volunteering in Ireland on a regular basis

Ask: Questions on volunteering should be included in the Census and Quarterly National Household Survey to monitor the habits of Irish society in terms of giving and time donated.

Rationale: Volunteering plays an important role in Irish society and in a lot of cases can complement and add value to the work of the Government. Keeping track of current volunteering trends will allow the Government, the volunteer infrastructure bodies and those that rely on volunteers to plan accordingly for the future. With a proper picture of volunteering in Ireland, we can set appropriate targets; identify and address trends and gaps; and better understand the impact of volunteering.

5. Commence the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012 with immediate effect

Ask: Commence the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012, which formalises current vetting procedures, without delay.

Rationale: This act strengthens current vetting procedures, which protects both vulnerable service users and volunteers alike. The act was enacted in December 2012 but has yet to commence. The protection of children and the most vulnerable should be a top priority for Government.