

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER STRATEGY REPORT 2025



www.volunteerfingal.ie



Company Number: 434396



Registered Charity Number: 20066574

Introduction

In 2025, the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG) provided funding of € 25,000 to support the delivery of actions under the National Volunteering Strategy (NVS) 2021–2025. This funding was specifically intended to pilot and develop initiatives that advance the objectives of the Strategy and strengthen volunteering at a local level.

We used this funding to deliver a range of programmes aimed at increasing awareness of volunteering, engaging new volunteer groups, and enhancing opportunities for participation.

The key initiatives, outlined in this report, included

- The introduction of Fingal Volunteer Centre Pop-Ups in Libraries. They are information stands in local libraries aimed at increasing public awareness about the Volunteer Centre and make volunteering more accessible.
- The establishment of a weekly volunteer-led IT support initiative in the Blanchardstown library to give participants confidence to apply for IT-based roles.
- A targeted engagement with people aged 55 and over through participation in the Fingal County Council over 55s Expo and a collaboration with the Age Friendly Programme.
- The organisation of a large Fingal-wide and 2 local Volunteer Expos, aiming at offering existing/future volunteers a chance to meet multiple organisations under the same roof.

These initiatives have enabled Fingal Volunteer Centre to test new approaches to volunteer engagement, strengthen community connections, and build a foundation for the continued delivery of National Volunteering Strategy actions beyond 2025.



Volunteer Centre Pop-Ups in Libraries

Expanding Our Reach and Visibility Across Communities

NVS Actions Supported

NVS Action 2 - Provide public information and more awareness programmes to enable people to volunteer:

- from marginalised communities
- from ethnic minorities
- with disabilities

NVS Action 19 - Develop programmes aimed at increasing the numbers of volunteers from under-represented groups

Constraints

Fingal has a mix of urban/rural population, with an urban population relying on public transport that offers limited intra-county connections and a rural population that spreads across a wide area. Our office is located in Dublin 15 and is not easily accessible.

We have online services but the lack of in-person opportunities to meet with members of the public does impact under-represented groups the most.

This programme is about making ourselves more visible and accessible to all in-person, regardless of where people live.

Our Programme

First we had to identify locations where to run this programme from. We identified libraries are ideal community spaces because they are accessible to everybody and well distributed across Fingal.



We aim to deliver monthly volunteer outreach sessions across all Fingal libraries, bringing volunteering opportunities directly into local communities.

These pop-up sessions provide a welcoming and accessible space where potential volunteers can receive face-to-face support and guidance from our team.

During each session, people can “pop” to our desk to explore their interests and availability in order to identify the volunteering opportunities that are suitable for them. We also assist visitors with registering on I-VOL, Ireland's national volunteering database.

We target this programme to reach as many cohorts as possible. We advertise to people who

- already know about us, via our website, new volunteer registration emails, monthly volunteer newsletters...
- visit the libraries, via monthly posters distributed to libraries, library digital screens, information provided by library staff
- are from specific cohorts, via partner's newsletters (LAIT, Age friendly..)
- are from the general public, via local radio stations and word-of-mouth recommendations...

Outcomes & Next steps

This outreach programme now plays a key role in increasing our visibility and accessibility. By meeting people where they are, we remove barriers to engagement.

These sessions increased awareness about volunteering opportunities throughout Fingal and enabled many people to take their first steps into community involvement. We are meeting people who did not even know we existed and therefore would have never looked for us. *See Success story page 12 about the Donabate Historical Society.*

In 2025, the programme achieved a significant impact. With 112 pop-up sessions across 10 libraries, we engaged with 237 individuals, including 225 potential volunteers and the representatives from 12 volunteer-involving organisations. To deliver this programme, we utilised the equivalent of 56 working days and traveled 2055 km across Fingal.

The staff across the libraries are now very engaged with the programme supporting the promotion of our upcoming sessions.

We aim to continue this programme in coming years, contemplating extending to other venues to reach more people (community centres...).



IT Support Volunteers

Build volunteers' confidence for computer based roles

NVS Actions Supported

NVS Action 12 - Undertake a pilot project for professional mentoring as a support to volunteers and smaller Volunteer Involving Organisations

NVS Action 15 - Support the ongoing development of the national volunteering database, I-VOL (website and app) where individuals can easily find volunteering opportunities

Constraints & Initial ideas

In Dublin 15, we had a local IPAS centre with many willing volunteers that would have liked to assist with computer based opportunities but did not have access to computer and/or the confidence for those roles.

We partnered with the Blanchardstown library to use their IT room 2 hours per week to give volunteers an access to computers and a quiet environment while being supported (initially by the team until we identify leads within the group).

Unfortunately, shortly after we got the agreement to use the room, the residents of the IPAS centre received notification that the centre was closing down.

This could have been the end of the programme but we decided to keep going, extending the opportunity to local groups and the general public, hoping to attract individuals that were not currently engaged in active employment.

Our Programme - various phases

Initially, the main goal was to recruit a small group of volunteers and support them in computer-based opportunities.

We created an volunteer opportunity to support the delivery of our services as the first roles those volunteers would undertook, allowing them to built confidence and competence.

Next phase was to encourage the volunteers to register for computer based opportunities with other organisations, knowing they can have access to computers and support during those weekly sessions. We would not only support volunteers but also benefit organisations at the same time by helping filling specific roles.



How it really went

Prior to this programme, we had a small group of volunteers helping us with processing new volunteers registrations and applications to volunteering opportunities. As we needed to recruit new volunteers for this support, we transitioned this role from remote to in-person in the Library. This change was introduced to create a more engaging volunteering experience and to strengthen opportunities for collaborative working.

To fit the variety of profiles, we extended the tasks to support others aspects of our work, from creating communication material to supporting the revamping of our website.

Outcomes & Next steps

The programme created opportunities for skilled volunteers to share their expertise and provide practical support within the community, while also exploring new approaches to skills-based volunteering and mentoring.

The initiative demonstrated how volunteers with specialist knowledge can enhance and strengthen the services provided by the Volunteer Centre, bringing additional expertise and improving service delivery.

The programme takes place during “classic working hours”, encouraging people currently unemployed to participate. For some, it is an opportunity to use or improve their skills and confidence before moving (back) to the workplace. For others, it gives a social outing where they can use their computer knowledge. Because of these differences in profiles, we have volunteers who stay with us a long time and others who are moving-on quicker. All volunteers involved in the programme gain a better understanding of the scope of volunteering opportunities that exist and are naturally becoming some of our more fervent ambassadors.

We received very positive feedback from the volunteers and we will continue to develop and deliver this programme as part of Fingal Volunteer Centre's National Volunteering Strategy actions in 2026.



Increasing volunteer engagement from those over 55

Recognising lifetime experience as a valuable skill

NVS Actions Supported

NVS Action 3 - Deliver engagement programme aimed specifically at potential volunteers reaching retirement and those over 55.

Constraints

With the core of our activities taking place online, we are mindful that we are not reaching some cohorts. While the Volunteer Centre Pop-Ups in Libraries starts to address this constraint, we selected this action to be able to supplement our offers to the older public in recognition of the valuable skills, experience and community knowledge this cohort can bring to volunteering,

Our Programme

This programme is a collection of once-off activities specifically targeting over 55's.

We met with the Community Officer from Fingal County Council - Age Friendly Programme. We discussed the possibility for them to advertise our services through the established Age Friendly networks. This partnership enabled the Volunteer Centre to reach a wider audience of older adults and encourage greater participation in volunteering.

We participated in the over 55s Expos in Skerries and Swords Pavillons to promote local volunteering opportunities and raise awareness of the benefits of volunteering in later life. Those expo were supported by Fingal County Council Age Friendly Programme.



Outcomes & Next steps

We are at the early days of this programme. This first year was mostly about making contacts and building relationships with various stakeholders supporting this cohort.

Also supported by our Volunteer Centre Pop-Ups in local libraries, we saw an increase of registrations from volunteers aged over 50 of an impressive 21% increase between the years 2024 and 2025 (+51% when looking at over 65 only).

Building on these activities, we will continue to explore additional opportunities to engage and support older people to engage in volunteering.



Volunteer Expos

Connecting Communities Across Fingal

NVS Actions Supported

NVS Action 10 - Promote/Fund a volunteer recruitment awareness campaign using existing structures and networks – National and Local campaigns

Constraints

People looking to volunteer report that a remote recruitment process does not really give them an opportunity to get a feel for an organisation until they are onboarded, making them hesitate longer before signing registration papers. This also drives more people towards organisations they know of, or know something within. The idea behind the Expos is to allow for this in-person connection, while also promoting less-known organisations. Leaders in organisations also report the lack of opportunity to network with other organisations.

Our Programme

The Volunteer Expos bring together local organisations and prospective volunteers under one roof, giving Fingal's community and voluntary groups a direct, face-to-face opportunity to connect with people looking to gift their time to the community.

Rather than relying solely on online recruitment, the Volunteer Expos create real moments of connection where organisations get to introduce themselves, explain what they do, and speak to interested people in person.

Since 2022, we have organised at least 2 local Volunteer Expo every year, in areas chosen because of the number of volunteers or roles available to the public and/or to showcase local organisations.

In 2025, we launched a Fingal-wide Expo to allow us to assemble a bigger number of organisations in order to give visitors a better understanding of the wide scope of causes supported and roles / tasks available to volunteers.

The Fingal Volunteer Expo 2025 took place during National Volunteering Week and therefore was co-funded by a small grant to support activities happening that week.



The Volunteer Expos are specifically designed to promote volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) that have active recruitment needs. They support large-scale, county-wide recruitment drives for organisations who need numerous volunteers as well as giving smaller, less-known, local organisations a chance they might not otherwise have to meet with all the visitors.

The Expos are also a space for organisations working in the same area and/or the same causes to network with each other, share ideas and build local partnerships.

Outcomes & Next steps

For the visitors, the Volunteer Expos offer a special opportunity to meet multiple organisations face to face under the same roof. This in-person interaction often makes the difference between “I am thinking of volunteering” and “I will volunteer with XXX”.

For the organisations, the Volunteer Expos are an opportunity to get direct access to a pool of local and motivated people actively looking to get involved. On top of that, it is also a chance to speak with members of the public about their mission and advertise the services they provide. Finally the Expos are also a networking event allowing organisations to build stronger connections with other organisations working in similar spaces, supporting future collaboration.

Our Expos were attended by 50+ organisations and 200+ visitors, reflecting strong engagement from both the community and voluntary sector across Fingal.

Building on this success, we plan to:

- Continue organising two local Expos each year, hoping to grow attendance numbers year on year.
- Test the Fingal-wide expo concept in a different location / day.
- Widen outreach to smaller and lesser-known organisations that could benefit most from increased exposure.
- Strengthen the support for organisations after each Expo, helping them turn visitors' interest into actual volunteer sign-ups.





Programme Impact Stories

Volunteer Centre Pop-Ups in Libraries

Donabate Historical Society

In October, Michael, the founder of the Donabate Historical Society, was visiting his local library in Donabate. That day, the Volunteer Centre was having a Pop-up event in the library.

Michael never heard about the Volunteer Centre and got curious.

His group has been struggling to recruit volunteers for its museum in Newbridge Estate. Because of that, they were forced to reduce the opening hours for visitors. He shared his misfortune with us and as soon as the following week, we visited him.

During the visit, Micheal told us more about the organisation, the ageing volunteers and difficulty to plan for succession. Soon, a volunteer role as written down, promoted on I-Vol and in our monthly newsletter.

Before Christmas, three new volunteers were recruited and trained, ready to support the museum's re extension of hours.







Testimony

“

I started volunteering with Fingal Volunteer Centre in 2024, working remotely during my initial and training days. While volunteering from home was productive, moving to in-person sessions at Blanchardstown Library transformed our team dynamics. Working side-by-side, we can quickly brainstorm solutions and ideas, eliminating the delays of remote communication.

Working together in person at the library made a significant difference. We communicate better and truly collaborate as a team, rather than working in silos. On a personal level, I gained a much better understanding of the Centre's full scope of work, which allowed me to jump into new initiatives.

I would like to conclude by saying it is very nice to be at a location like Blanchardstown Library that is easy to commute and connect personally with the team & utilise the time wisely.

Swetha Miryala, IT Support Volunteer

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Expenditures



Project management costs

€23,079.47



Transport for Staff

€1,451



Other (material for Pop-ups...)

€514

Note - Taking place during National Volunteer Week, most of the costs related to the Fingal-Wide Volunteer Expo (room hire - material) were covered by another specific funding from DRCDG of 1300€.

The 2 local Volunteer Expos did not have room hire costs thanks to our partners.

Total spent: € 25,044.47

Incomes: € 25,000.00

Overspent: (€ 44.47)

*Amounts presented here are based on 2025 accounts before audit.





Fingal Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Fhine Ghall



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