



Kildare Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Cill Dara

17th Annual Report 2022

*Supporting our
Communities
Through
Volunteering*



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Chairperson's Introduction

Globally, 2022 was a year unlike any other for most organisations. Locally, Kildare Volunteer Centre was no exception. The post COVID *"return to work"* was not so much a return as a time of re-set and re-invention. We began Q1 with our first recruitment drive in sixteen years in search of a new manager to lead and inspire the future of Kildare Volunteer Centre. In April 2022 we were delighted to welcome David Hand on board. David's vision for Kildare Volunteer Centre as the *"Heartbeat of Volunteering in Co. Kildare"* has motivated us all to move forward with confidence.

Shortly afterwards, we developed a new role for a Community Volunteer Coordinator, and we were fortunate to be joined by John Murray. John's record in voluntary work at the PuncHESTOWN test centre during Covid 19 has been nationally recognised. The summer months were a busy time with the volunteer effort supporting displaced Ukrainians in Co. Kildare. Later in December, we welcomed Ivanna labkovska, Ukrainian Support Officer to the team. During all this change, our Participation/Development Officer, Michelle Casey continued without fail to be the loyal and enthusiastic advocate for volunteering through all the changes. We also celebrated with our remarkable volunteer Victor Purcell on his 10th year anniversary of part of the KVC team.

The move to Kildare Local Community Development Centre in December 2022 was also symbolic of this new chapter. Having an accessible premises in a community setting is in line with our organisational values and priorities and something we are proud to have achieved. Throughout all of this, we ran a recruitment drive to refresh board membership, advertising skills-based roles and through Boardmatch speed dating. In early December we had the pleasure of meeting and greeting prospective board members in person. The service and commitment of the board members is appreciated. Board recruitment, induction and a full governance review are works in progress that we are committed to continue.

Finally, our sincere thanks to our funders the Department of Community and Rural Development and Kildare County Council for their continued support. We look forward to collaborating with you and reporting further developments in 2023 as we continue this new chapter.

Helen Mulhall
Chairperson



VISION

Our Vision is of a society where volunteering is promoted, valued, facilitated and supported so that people can contribute to developing and maintaining vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities

MISSION

To promote the value of volunteering and increase the range and quality of volunteering in Kildare

OBJECTIVES

Increase the visibility of volunteering and ensure recognition for all those involved in creating cohesive and vibrant local communities

Increase opportunities and engagement in volunteering

Continue to build effective support structures for VIOs in order to deliver on the national volunteering strategy and our local strategy

Support the continual development of good governance



1.0 Company Details

Legal Status

Kildare Volunteer Centre is incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Directors

Helen Mulhall	Chairperson
Anne Crowe	Secretary
John Masterson	Treasurer
Tanya Brennan	Director
Syl Merrins	Director
Ian Russell	Director
Martha Whyte ¹	Director
Luiz Pinto ²	Director

The Board met eight times during the year. Board meetings returned to in person meetings with the occasional hybrid meeting also occurring.

Auditors: McMahon and Co, 9 Academy Street, Kildare Town, Kildare

CHY: 22760

RCN: 20200083

Charities Governance Code submitted October 2022

¹ Appointed March 2023

² Appointed March 2023



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Tel: 045-449156

Website: www.volunteerkildare.ie e-mail: info@volunteerkildare.ie

Staff

There were two fulltime staff during the year, a Manager and Participation Officer/Development officer. The Centre also employed two part-time staff, a Community Volunteer Coordinator, and a Ukrainian Support worker. We are also supported by our long-time placement volunteer Victor Purcell.

Area Served

The Centre serves all of Co. Kildare with an area of 1,693km² and a population of 246,977 (CSO 2022)



2.0 Expanding our Services.

2022 was a year of significant expansion in the services that Kildare Volunteer Centre offers to our communities. With the support of the Department of Rural and Community Development and Kildare County Council, Kildare Volunteer Centre became a fully signed up member of the Community Volunteer programme.

By embracing this programme, it has enabled the centre to expand its services to include more front-line volunteering work. It allows us the opportunity to work more closely with our colleagues in Kildare County Council who can rely on a quality, managed volunteer service provided by Kildare Volunteer Centre for county wide events or emergency situations as they emerge. It also provides volunteers with the much sought after opportunity to volunteer at once off local events as they occur.

Late in 2022 with the support of the Department of Rural and Community Development the centre was also able to hire a Ukrainian Support Worker to provide us with resources to embrace and integrate Ukrainians into their new communities in Kildare through volunteering. This is a further example of more front line work the centre was able to take on this year, in our communities.

It is important to recognise that the experience and determination of staff, in particular the Participation Officer who has been with KVC for 16 years and ensured that this additional front-line work could occur, without the centre's traditional core work of providing a quality service to both VIO's and Volunteers being affected in the slightest.





Kildare Volunteer Centre

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2022 in Numbers

379 New Registered Volunteers

132 Repeat Callers (Already registered and applied for another opportunity)

25 New Organisations registered with KVC

83 Active Vacancies

60 New Vacancies

13,120 Volunteer Hours Recorded

Figure 1 Key Performance Indicators



3.0 Our Volunteers

In 2022 the percentage of volunteers who identified as female dropped 9% to 66%, when compared with the previous year. The number of different nationalities registered with Kildare Volunteer Centre jumped to 58 reflecting the increase in people seeking international protection in the country.

Significantly, most volunteers who registered were in the 22–49 age bracket. In identifying this trend in the 3rd quarter of 2022 Kildare Volunteer Centre attempted to address this by providing information sessions to active retirement groups in Newbridge and Rathangan. The Centre also began to work alongside Older Voices Kildare to provide information sessions to their groups. This work is ongoing. A volunteering information session was delivered to second year Social Science Students in their Civic Engagement class in Maynooth University to reach the 18–22 age group.

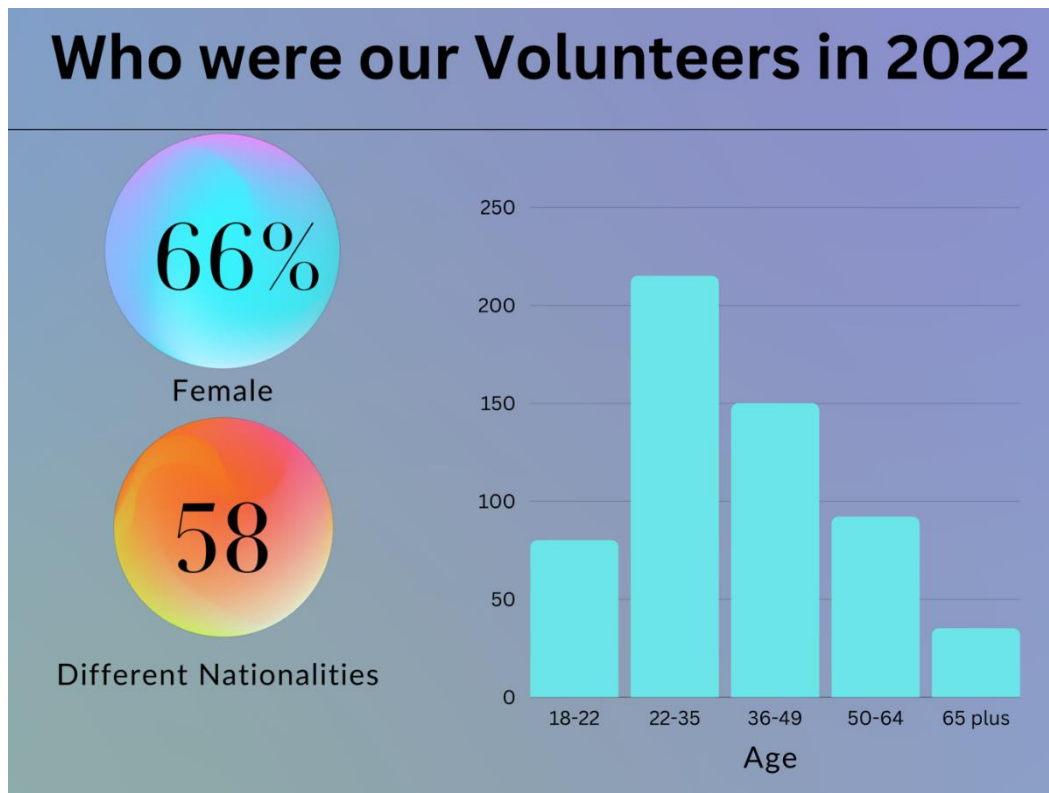


Figure 2 Volunteer Profile

3.1 Community Volunteers in their first Year

The Community Volunteer Programme began in Kildare in mid-April 2022 with the support of the Department of Rural and Community Development and Kildare County Council. By June the programme has a core group of 25 people who were key in being able to meet the needs of Ukrainians arriving at Maynooth University. They perfectly demonstrated the value of the programme to the county.

Throughout the year the community volunteers also helped to support local events such as the June Fest in Newbridge, the Naas Colour Run and even facilitated the arrival of Santa Claus into Kildare Town for Sensational Kids.



Figure 3: Community Volunteers and Staff welcoming Santa to Kildare Town

By the end of 2022 there were 63 Community Volunteers fully signed up to the programme and growth was showing no signs of slowing down.

This was an excellent response to a programme that was only 8 months old. Kildare Volunteer Centre recorded 700 hours of volunteering in Kildare by the Community Volunteers for this 8-month period.



3.2 Beyond the Numbers

The Key Statistics remained very much on a par with the previous year, which was an achievement considering the amount of change within the organisation. The number of newly registered volunteers (volunteers who have registered and applied for an opportunity) was slightly up on 2022's figure of 368. Repeat callers (volunteers who applied previously through KVC) were down to 132 from 2021's figure of 206. This may be attributable to volunteers having previously not been able to volunteer any more in previous placements due to Covid in 2020 and 2021 and hence applied for alternative new volunteering opportunities, i.e., becoming a repeat caller. With the effects of Covid wearing off volunteers should be finding some more stability in volunteering roles, reducing the need to apply for multiple roles.

The number of new organisations remained static to 2021 with twenty-five new organisations registered in both years. The challenge here is one faced by many of the long-standing Volunteer Centres throughout the country. While a volunteer centre may see large numbers of new organisations sign up for the first few years after start-up, this number eventually levels off as original connections have already been made. The challenge for Kildare Volunteer Centre is to remain in contact with 422 already registered organisations. There have been large fluctuations in volunteer management staff throughout the county post covid and a large body of work is now involved in Kildare Volunteer Centre re-introducing itself and its services to new staff in existing organisations.

Kildare Volunteer Centre registered 13,120 volunteer hours in total for 2022. To take the living wage in Ireland currently at €13.85 p/hour the monetary value alone of these 13,120 hours would be €181,712 excluding employers PRSI.



4.0 Operations

4.1 Relocation

In December 2022 Kildare Volunteer Centre relocated from Eyre Street in Newbridge to Kildare Local Community Development Centre in Kildare town. The primary advantage of the new premises is that it is fully accessible for people with disabilities.

4.2 Website

Kildare Volunteer Centre was delighted to be able to launch a completely redesigned website at the end of quarter 3. The new website puts user friendliness mobile access and accessibility at the forefront of its design. The website also updates in line with all the new brand guidelines for volunteer centres. The site is now designed on WordPress to easily allow flexibility and changes in the future.

4.3 Staff Handbook

In the final quarter of 2022, the Board of Kildare Volunteer Centre signed off on a complete update of the Staff Handbook. The Staff handbook was reviewed by the manager and a subgroup of the board in consultation with David Wright of Wright Consultancy Ltd.



4.4 Funding

Core funding was received through the Department of Rural and Community Development. There was additional funding received through the department allocated to support specific projects relating to the Ukrainian Crisis and a once off payment to alleviate the pressure of rising inflation and energy costs. Kildare County Council also supplied financial support. Income was also generated by the centre through Garda Vetting.

4.5 Garda Vetting

Kildare Volunteer Centre continued to function as a liaison office for any not-for-profit groups in Kildare that require Garda Vetting. 343 (294 in 2021) volunteers were Garda vetted through Kildare Volunteer Centre for 41 (34 in 2021) separate organisations. Three Online training courses were also delivered for new vetting officers in not for profits in Kildare in 2022.

4.6 Collaboration

Kildare Volunteer Centre is represented on the following local, regional, and national working groups:

- Volunteer Centre's Manager Network
- South Leinster Regional Volunteer Centre network
- Kildare Community Response Forum
- Maynooth University Ukrainian Response Forum
- Kildare Integration Strategy
- Kildare Social Inclusion Network



5.0 Responding to the Ukrainian Crisis.

5.1 Case Study 1. Maynooth University

Early in 2022 the war in Ukraine led to large amounts of displaced Ukrainians arriving in Ireland and being moved throughout the country. There was a nationwide scramble to meet the needs of these people as they arrived in local communities.

Kildare Volunteer Centre was a part of the initial Kildare Ukrainian Response Forum alongside Kildare County Council, Local Councillors, the HSE, The Irish Red Cross, CKLP, Tusla, Local Gardai, Citizens Information Centre, Civil Defence, PPN, Kildare Social Integration Network, and the Peter McVerry Trust. Kildare Volunteer Centre was represented at all the meetings and ready to help where required.



Figure 4 Volunteers at Ukrainian Independence Day Community Event

While the initial influx of displaced Ukrainians into Kildare was slow this changed towards the end of June when Maynooth University began accepting Ukrainians into student accommodation for the summer period. Kildare Volunteer Centre became a core member of the Maynooth Response forum organised by Maynooth University.



The initial focus was not on integration as accommodation was only temporary but on meeting the basic and emergency needs of the Ukrainians as they arrived and for the duration of their stay. This was challenging at times as there would be very little notice of when people would be arriving and when to be on site. However, it is in this difficulty that the community volunteer programme, still in its infancy at two months old really began to shine through.

During the Summer, our community volunteers and staff put in almost 400 hours helping Ukrainians in Maynooth University.



Figure 5 Community Volunteers organising a day trip to Bray for Ukrainian families.

The core group of community volunteers already in place perfectly demonstrated the benefits of this programme. They were experienced people able to respond to a local crisis often at very short notice. Their activities ranged from welcoming arrivals, issuing food vouchers, packing bags, carrying luggage, guiding to rooms and facilities, facilitating special events and activities. facilitating day trips and helping on departures. Our volunteers played a key role in the success of this stay in Maynooth.



Figure 6 Community Volunteers with their Irish Red Cross counterparts



5.2 Future Response

Kildare Volunteer Centre continued to engage with helping Ukrainians arriving in Kildare throughout the remainder of the year. While the scale of Maynooth University has not been repeated in Kildare, our community volunteers and staff have still been involved on a smaller scale in locations such as Bert house and Liffey Lodge. The Centre also hired a Ukrainian Support Worker in December 2022, and it is envisaged that with Ukrainians now settling in Kildare the centres focus will shift from an emergency response to promoting volunteering as a conduit to social integration into local communities.



6.0 Community Integration

6.1 Case Study 2 Mohamed

An often-overlooked benefit of volunteering is the role which it can play in helping new arrivals into a community feel a part of and connected to that community. In July 2021 Kildare Volunteer Centre was informed through one of our interagency meetings that a group of Somalian nationals seeking international protection were housed in Newbridge Kildare without adequate support structures in place. Kildare Volunteer Centre was asked to meet these men in the Parish Centre. Our staff responded and spent an afternoon with them to talk to them about volunteering and help them apply for some roles in the local community. While all the participants begun volunteering to some extent, Mohamed really embraced the concept of volunteering, and his story below is a perfect example of how Kildare Volunteer Centre can contribute to integration through volunteering.

Mohamed had been an orphan from a young age and arrived alone, in Ireland, in June 2022. He was fleeing from war in his home country in South Somalia. Mohamed arrived in Ireland with minimum possessions and found himself in Newbridge, Co Kildare.



Figure 7 Celebrating Social Inclusion Week in Newbridge, September 2022

We asked Mohamed how he felt in those early days in Newbridge, was he worried, scared or anxious but Mohamed said he just felt extremely grateful. He felt safe and welcome. Over time Mohamed explained how he developed a deep urge to give something back to the Newbridge Community who had welcomed him.



While Mohamed was very keen to get involved, contribute, and really feel a part of his local community he was unsure how to go about this until he met our own staff from Kildare Volunteer Centre at some outreach in Newbridge Parish Hall. From there we were able to link Mohamed in with some great local volunteer groups to make local connections with. Mohamed has since volunteered with Newbridge Tidy Towns, has become an active volunteer in the cultural exchange group in Newbridge Family Resource Centre and been a steward at local 5k runs. Mohamed has also become a member of our own Community Volunteer programme. He explains that he loves volunteering as it allows him to meet lots of different cultures, make new friends and share his own culture. He mentions how it helps him improve his English and really makes him feel part of his local community.

Mohamed now works full time and still finds time to maintain all his volunteer roles. When we ask Mohamed if it is tough to keep volunteering in all his roles while working full time, he says not at all. He said he feels it is important for him to keep giving back to the community that helped him so much when he needed it the most.

Kildare Volunteer Centre posted Mohamed's story on facebook, which went viral in Kildare. The post had a seven thousand reach and was widely re-shared throughout Kildare community groups. Mohamed's story received hundreds of likes and comments, all positive and thanking him for what he is contributing to his new community.



7.0 Looking Ahead

2022 was a year of change for Kildare Volunteer Centre but throughout all the internal change the demand for our services remained constant. The number of people looking to volunteer throughout Kildare is remaining constant. While identifying new opportunities, new organisations and indeed new contacts in existing organisations remains a challenge it is one which is being tackled head on and not a unique challenge to Kildare.

Being able to move on from the challenges presented by the Pandemic in 2022 was welcome. However, the next challenge for ourselves and our communities quickly presented itself with displaced Ukrainians quickly arriving and requiring support. Kildare Volunteer Centre responded quickly in 2022 to this situation as it emerged. With the recruitment of a Ukrainian Support Worker, we are well placed to respond in 2023.

Kildare Volunteer Centre now offering a full Community Volunteer service is a welcome development and shows a glimpse of what the future of volunteering could look like. Besides responding to emerging local crisis situations, it also offers the once off, sporadic event-based volunteering that research shows is becoming increasingly in demand. The programme got off to an excellent start in 2022 and looks set to continue to grow and play an increased role of local Kildare events in 2023 and beyond.

While financially 2022 was a challenging year for the organisation the prudence of previous board policies in ensuring reserves were in place allowed the centre to absorb additional costs this year. This expenditure is attributable to the handover period from the retiring founding manager to the centre's new manager. As such they are costs which will not be encountered again. However, considering the size and population of County Kildare, additional funding is necessary to adequately enable Kildare Volunteer Centre to deliver the volunteer service that Kildare deserves.