
Kildare Volunteer Centre **Strategic Plan** **2026-2031**



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Kildare Volunteer Centre: Strategic Plan 2026-2031

Kildare Volunteer Centre CLG

**Thacaigh maoiniú ón gClár LEADER 2023 - 2027 le hionad d'Oibrithe
Deonacha Chill Dara an plean straitéiseach cúig bliana seo a choimisiúnú.**

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Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Reference
Co.	County
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CVP	Community Volunteer Programme
DRCDG	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
GIS	Graphical Information System
HQ	Headquarters
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Service
IT	Information Technology
IVOL	National Volunteering Database
KSP	Kildare Sports Partnership
KVC	Kildare Volunteer Centre
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
NVB	National Vetting Bureau
SA	Strategic Action
SP	Strategic Priority
SWOC	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges
VIO	Volunteer Involving Organisation

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Acknowledgements

All mapping has been produced using open-source GIS software (QGIS) and contains Irish Public Sector Data (data.gov.ie) licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CCBY 4.0) licence. Data Source: OpenStreetMap, CSO Census 2022

Unless otherwise stated, all statistical data is based on the CSO Census of Population 2022. Deprivation Index information and mapping are based on the 2022 Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

Selective information reference: Kildare County Council Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

Foreword

It is with great pride that we present the Kildare Volunteer Centre Strategic Plan 2026–2031.

This plan has been developed through the voices and contributions of volunteers, community organisations, partners, and stakeholders across our county. It reflects both the resilience and diversity of volunteering in County Kildare, while acknowledging the realities of a county that continues to grow and change at a pace. According to the 2022 Census, County Kildare's population now stands at over 247,000, an increase of almost 11% since 2016, making it one of the fastest-growing counties in Ireland. With growth comes opportunity, but it also places significant pressure on services, infrastructure, and resources, including the support required to sustain a thriving culture of volunteering.

Over the past few years, the essential role volunteers play in building strong, connected communities has been highlighted more than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the power of volunteering to respond swiftly and compassionately in times of crisis. At the same time, the arrival of people displaced by the war in Ukraine showed how volunteering can provide welcome, inclusion, and integration. These experiences underline the need for a robust, adaptable, and well-supported volunteer infrastructure in County Kildare.

This plan builds on the progress achieved in recent years, thanks to the commitment of our staff, volunteers, and Board. It sets a clear direction for the next five years, grounded in our values of inclusivity, accessibility, and innovation. At its core is the belief that everyone in County Kildare should have the opportunity to contribute their time and skills, thereby strengthening both themselves and the communities in which they live.

Our strategic priorities focus on enriching the volunteer experience, supporting organisations that depend on volunteers, fostering a deeper sense of belonging across all communities, raising

awareness of the impact of volunteering, and maintaining the highest standards in governance and team development.

We also outline our ambition to grow Kildare Volunteer Centre, expanding our reach, strengthening our team, and securing sustainable resources to meet the needs of a dynamic and diverse county. This plan aims to grow the charity's staff team and finances over its lifespan.

We are particularly grateful to all those who engaged with us during the consultation process for this plan. Your feedback was invaluable, and we have listened carefully. The requests for more accessible training opportunities and the strong appreciation expressed for the Community Volunteers Programme are both reflected in the objectives and actions outlined in this document. This plan is a testament to the collective wisdom and shared vision of the community it serves.

We extend our sincere thanks to those who made the development of this plan possible. We gratefully acknowledge the support of LEADER in funding this planning process. We also appreciate our core funders, the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG), and Kildare County Council, whose ongoing commitment enables us to carry out our mission.

We also wish to thank Exodea Consulting, Bill, and Donagh for their guidance and expertise in facilitating the consultation process and shaping this plan.

Finally, we thank every volunteer, organisation, and partner who contributed their time, ideas, and expertise to shaping this plan. It belongs to all of you. Together, we will ensure that volunteering continues to flourish in County Kildare - an essential cornerstone of vibrant, resilient, and connected communities.

Luiz Pinto,

Chairperson, Kildare Volunteer Centre.

December 2025.

Strategic Priorities and Activities

Our four strategic priorities for 2026-2031 are: -



Enriching the volunteer experience in County Kildare.



Promoting and supporting excellence in the Volunteer Involving Organisations.



Fostering belonging and involvement through volunteering.



Improving visibility, engagement and strategic influence by enhancing the profile of volunteering.

We will deliver on these four priorities by implementing a suite of sixteen activities over the period.



Vision, Mission and Core Values



Vision

Our vision is of a county where volunteering is at the heart of building vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable communities, rooted in belonging, resilience, and positive change.



Mission

To promote a vibrant and inclusive County, where people are connected, valued and supported in community participation, through meaningful volunteering.

Our values matter to us across the whole organisation. They guide our work and help us be our best.



Core Values

- **Collaboration:** *We value collaboration and the unity it brings, working with our community to achieve the best outcomes.*
 - **Community:** *We are rooted in the belief that strong, connected communities are built through active participation.*
 - **Equity:** *We provide individuals and organisations with tailored support to achieve fair outcomes, acknowledging that differing levels of assistance may be required.*
 - **Transparency:** *We are a reliable, open, and accountable organisation that upholds high standards of governance and management.*
 - **Inclusion:** *We embrace diversity, recognising its value in enriching our community and broader society.*
 - **Innovation:** *We explore diverse approaches and solutions, encourage fresh thinking, and respond creatively to change.*
 - **People-Centred:** *We recognise that our staff and volunteers are our most valuable assets. We are committed to fostering a supportive, inclusive and rewarding workplace where everybody feels valued, motivated and empowered to contribute their best*
 - **Respect:** *We engage with all our stakeholders in a respectful, dignified, equitable, and professional manner.*
-

1 Kildare Volunteer Centre

Volunteering is a cornerstone of community life in County Kildare. It underpins essential services, fosters inclusion, and strengthens civic engagement. Across the county, volunteers contribute to a wide range of initiatives that support individuals, organisations, and wider society.

Volunteering contributes by: -

- **Supporting Local Services:** Many community services, charities, and sports clubs depend on the commitment of volunteers to deliver essential support.
- **Enhancing Wellbeing:** Volunteering is strongly linked to improved mental and physical health, personal fulfilment, and resilience.
- **Developing Skills:** Volunteers acquire transferable skills, confidence, and experience that enhances their employability and fosters lifelong learning.
- **Fostering Connection:** Volunteering builds meaningful social networks and a sense of belonging, especially for those at risk of isolation.
- **Promoting Active Citizenship:** Volunteering nurtures a more inclusive, engaged, and compassionate society.

Volunteering is essential to building a healthy, empowered, and connected Kildare.

1.1 Our Role – Kildare Volunteer Centre

Kildare Volunteer Centre (KVC) plays a strategic role in enabling and supporting volunteering across the county. We aim to connect people who want to volunteer with organisations that need support, and to strengthen the volunteering infrastructure across the county.

We: -

- Provide accessible information, advice, and guidance to individuals exploring volunteering opportunities.
- Support local community groups, charities, and clubs in recruiting, managing, and valuing volunteers.
- Promote best practice in volunteer engagement and recognition.
- Champion the value of volunteering through strategic partnerships, outreach, and advocacy.

KVC is committed to creating an environment where volunteering is visible, valued, and supported as a driver of positive change.

To fulfil our mission and strengthen the culture of volunteering across the county, Kildare Volunteer Centre focuses on four key strategic areas: -



**Connecting People
to Volunteering**

We make volunteering accessible, inclusive, and flexible, ensuring that everyone in County Kildare has the opportunity to engage meaningfully.

- **Accessible Opportunities for All:** We are committed to reducing barriers to volunteering and supporting individuals of all backgrounds, abilities, and ages to get involved.
- **Online Access to Roles:** Our free database (IVOL) allows people to search for volunteering opportunities by location, interest, and cause.
- **Personalised Support:** For those needing extra assistance, we provide one-to-one guidance to help identify suitable opportunities.
- **Flexible Volunteering – Community Volunteers:** We support one-off and short-term volunteering options for individuals unable to commit to long-term roles.



Supporting VIOs

We strengthen the capacity of local organisations to involve and support volunteers effectively.

- **Tailored Advice and Support:** We guide community groups, clubs, and charities through all stages of volunteer programme development.
- **Volunteer Recruitment Support:** We help VIOs promote their opportunities and connect with suitable volunteers through our platforms and outreach.
- **Training and Development:** We offer workshops and training sessions to support best practice in volunteer management.
- **Garda Vetting Services:** We facilitate Garda vetting for organisations working with children and vulnerable adults, ensuring safety and compliance.



Raising Awareness

We promote the value and impact of volunteering across County Kildare.

- **Events and Outreach:** We organise and participate in local events to promote volunteering and encourage wider community engagement.
- **Information Resources:** We produce clear, accessible guides that help individuals get started with volunteering and understand what to expect.



**Strengthening
Partnerships and
Collaboration**

We work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to embed volunteering in community development, inclusion, and wellbeing initiatives.

- **Community and Statutory Collaboration:** We partner with local authorities, public services, and community networks to align volunteering with broader social and economic goals.
- **Inclusive Engagement:** We establish connections with colleges, disability services, and minority communities to broaden participation and ensure that volunteering reflects the diversity of County Kildare.
- **Advocacy and Representation:** We act as a voice for volunteering in strategic forums, advocating for policies that value and support volunteerism at all levels.

1.2 Who We Are

“KVC is the heartbeat of volunteering in Co. Kildare.”

Helen Mulhall, Chairperson 2022-2025

KVC is a non-profit charity that supports volunteering across County Kildare. We’re part of a national network and work closely with Volunteer Ireland. Our goal is to help build a more inclusive and connected community through volunteering.

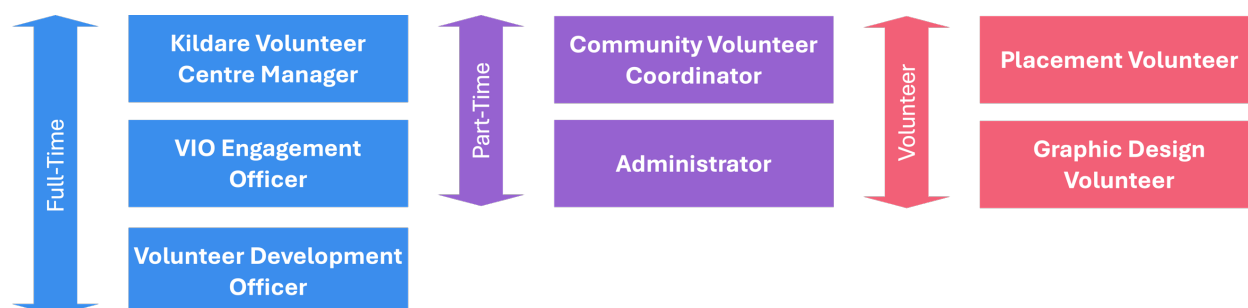
1.2.1 Board Members

Board Members (August 2025)

Luiz Pinto	Chairperson
Helen Mulhall	Company Secretary
Ronan Kierans	Company Treasurer
Ian Russell	Director / Trustee
Sarah Owen	Director / Trustee
Morgan Flanagan Creagh	Director / Trustee
Daniel Sogaolu	Director / Trustee

1.2.2 Staff

Staffing (December 2025)



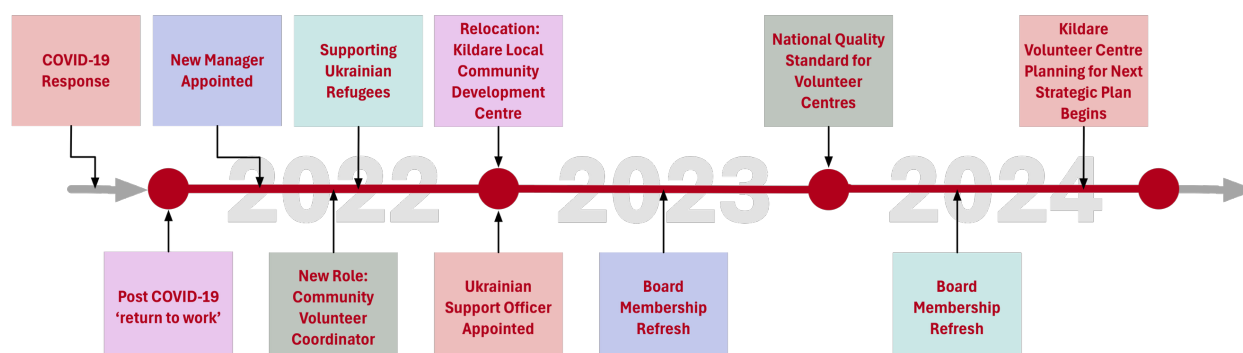
1.3 Key Achievements 2022-2024

Between 2022 and 2024, Kildare Volunteer Centre achieved the following: -

- **National Quality Standard Award 2024:** KVC has earned the National Quality Standard for Volunteer Centres, demonstrating strong leadership, effective volunteer support, and adherence to good practice.
- **Annual Volunteer Recognition:** KVC continued to expand its annual awards to celebrate the outstanding work of volunteers and groups, fostering a lasting sense of community spirit.
- **Community Integration and Support:** KVC provided support to people in IPAS centres and other newcomers settling in, offering tailored programmes, volunteering opportunities, and ways to connect with the community.
- **Community Volunteer Service:** KVC supported local events with a managed volunteer service, helping organisations and building stronger community ties.

Kildare Volunteer Centre: Strategic Plan 2026-2031

Key Achievements 2022-2024



1.3.1 KVC Performance 2023 and 2024

The KVC Annual Reports indicate the organisation's increased performance over the period, reflecting the increased demands on its services.

County Population	In 2022, the census recorded the population of Co. Kildare as 247,774. In 2024, the population of Co. Kildare was estimated at 258,900.
New registered volunteers	Over the period 2023 and 2024, KVC recorded 1,409 new registered volunteers.
Repeat callers (already registered)	Over the period 2023 and 2024, KVC recorded 313 repeat callers.
Active vacancies/opportunities	Over the period 2023 and 2024, KVC recorded 171 active vacancies and opportunities.
New VIOs	Over the period 2023 and 2024, KVC recorded 61 new VIOs.
Volunteer hours recorded	Over the period 2023 and 2024, KVC recorded 28,451 volunteer hours.

1.4 Core Capabilities and Culture

Kildare Volunteer Centre is a central hub for volunteering activities in Co. Kildare. Our capabilities include: -

- **Linking People to Meaningful Volunteering**

Volunteering plays a key role in building strong, connected communities. We help individuals find volunteering opportunities that match their interests, skills, and availability. Whether it's ongoing support or a one-off event, such as a local festival or cultural celebration, we make it easy for people to get involved in ways that suit them. These opportunities not only benefit the individual but also strengthen community bonds.

- **Supporting Local Groups and Organisations**

Community development relies on strong local organisations, and many of them need volunteers to deliver their services. We work closely with these groups to help recruit the right volunteers to meet their specific needs. We also facilitate Garda vetting to ensure safe and appropriate volunteering. In addition, training and guidance are provided to support good volunteer management, helping community organisations to grow and thrive.

- **Raising the Profile of Volunteering**

To promote active citizenship, we run campaigns to raise public awareness about the importance of volunteering. These efforts aim to demonstrate how dedicating time and skills can bring about meaningful change at a local level. Volunteers' contributions are also recognised and celebrated through events like the Kildare Volunteer Awards, which help build pride and encourage even greater community participation.

- **Planning and Building for the Future**

Long-term community development needs strategic thinking. Our activities align with national volunteering strategies to strengthen local support systems for volunteers. By working closely with local partners and community stakeholders, we help create new initiatives that encourage civic engagement and empower people to take an active role in shaping their communities.

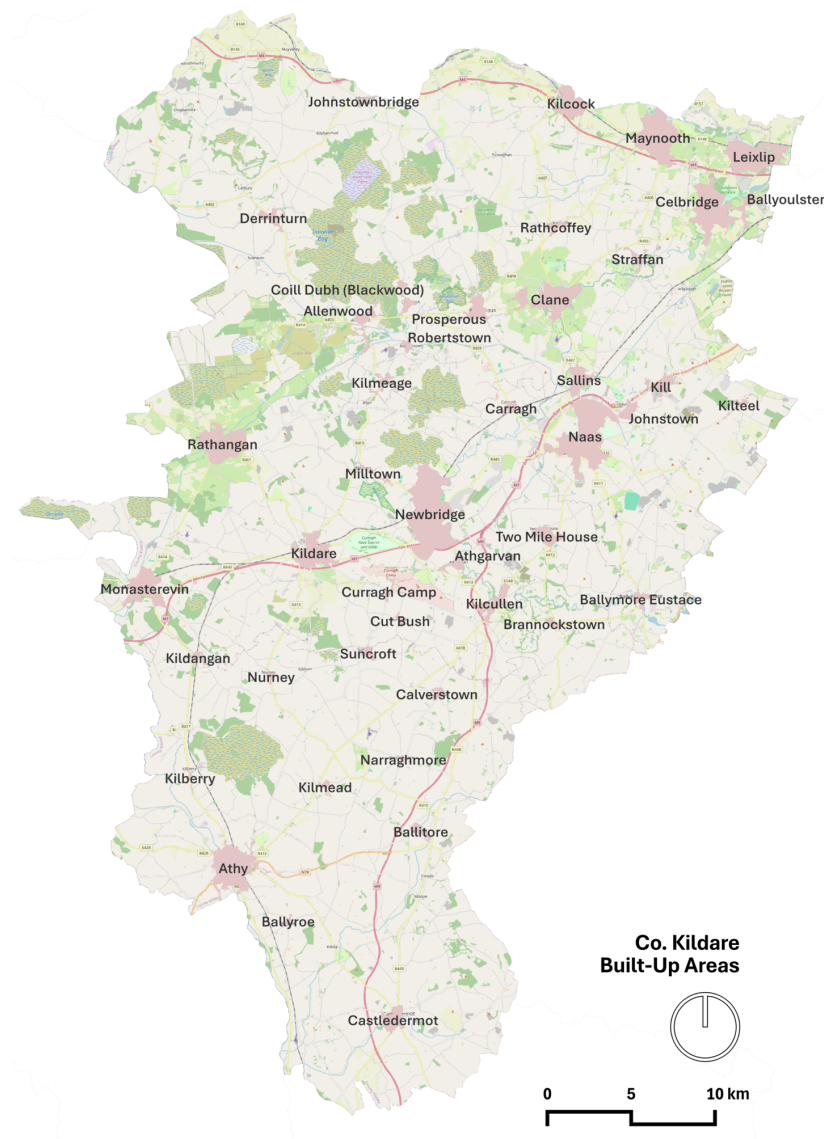
2 Context

Co. Kildare is a growing, youthful, and diverse county, combining economic strength and education with urban growth and pockets of disadvantage in some rural and outer-urban areas.

As an expanding commuter hub within the Greater Dublin Area, Co. Kildare requires ongoing investment in infrastructure and public services to meet changing demographic needs.

2.1 Socio-Demographic Snapshot

KVC Operational Area



Co. Kildare population in
2022

247,774

The population has increased by **11%** since 2016, highlighting its appeal as a residential and commuter hub in the Greater Dublin Area.

Approximately **70%** live in the urban centres of Naas, Newbridge, Celbridge, and Maynooth, with the remainder residing in rural areas.



Co. Kildare had a young population with an average age of

36.9 years

In 2022, the national average age was 38.8.

In Co. Kildare, **34.8%** were under 25.

'Adult families' were on the rise, reflecting demographic shifts and a longer lifespan.



In 2022, Co. Kildare had a non-Irish national population of

11.4%

Non-Irish nationals included Polish, UK, Romanian, and Indian groups.

A rise in dual Irish citizens highlights growing diversity.

The Irish Traveller population also grew from 739 in 2016 to 929 in 2022.



In 2022, Co. Kildare had

114,000

employed

Kildare's workforce grew by **20%** between 2016 and 2022.

About **36.5%** commute, mainly to Dublin, while 14,000 work from home.

Despite high incomes in many areas, **8.5%** of the population lives in disadvantaged communities.



Home ownership in Co. Kildare was high in 2022 at

71%

24% were renting.

Rents in the county remain among the highest in Ireland.

Rapid population growth, especially in northeast commuter towns, drives urban density and strains infrastructure and services.



In 2022, Co. Kildare had positive health outcomes with

86%

reporting good or very good health.

Co. Kildare boasts high educational attainment, supported by Maynooth University and strong secondary schools, which, in turn, boost its skilled workforce.

Population growth was putting increasing pressure on health services.

2.1.1 Volunteering

Percentage of Population Volunteering



Co. Kildare's percentage of volunteers

16.96%

In 2022, 16.96% of residents in Co. Kildare aged 15 or older volunteered.

State's percentage of volunteers

17.2%

In 2022, 17.2% of the State's residents aged 15 or older volunteered.

3 Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process took six months and followed a robust, collaborative approach, combining external expertise with internal insights. Board members, staff, volunteers, and volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) were involved, ensuring a balance of outside perspectives and organisational understanding.

The process commenced with a thorough review of key documents, including the National Volunteering Strategy 2021–2025. This review informed a series of strategic workshops and meetings to explore best practices, identify challenges, and set clear goals.

Overall, this integrated approach, combining extensive research, multi-level consultations, and diverse stakeholder engagement, ensured that the resulting strategy is well-informed and highly representative of the community’s needs and aspirations.

3.1 Consultation Outcomes

Engagement with the Board and staff fostered idea-sharing and aligned the vision with national and community priorities. Concurrently, targeted consultations with key partners ensured diverse input. Focus groups with VIOs added firsthand insights, grounding the strategy in stakeholder experience.

The community consultation used three main ways to gather feedback: -

1. An online survey for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations, promoted by Kildare Volunteer Centre and shared online and in the media.
2. Interviews with key support agencies and local authorities.
3. A focus group was held at the Kildare Volunteer Centre with key volunteer organisations.

The process was informal and open, encouraging the sharing of ideas and a sense of ownership over the results.

3.1.1 Engagement

People engaged well with the consultation process and felt comfortable sharing positive views about the organisation and its strategy.

Respondents 154 Volunteers 81 VIOs	Although there were no set targets for survey responses, the number and quality of replies met or exceeded typical expectations. Stakeholders and community groups responded positively to both the process and the strategy. Clear messages emerged about what is working, what needs to improve, future opportunities, and the challenges faced in volunteering.
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3.1.2 Online Survey Outcomes

The online consultation process included two web-based surveys: one for volunteers and the other for VIOs.

KVC Registration 154 Volunteers	66% of volunteer respondents were registered with KVC, and 70% were actively volunteering. Among non-registered volunteers, 60% were actively volunteering.
KVC Registration 81 VIOs	80% of VIOs were registered with KVC, but over 60% had not recruited volunteers through the organisation. Just over 20% get up to one-third of their volunteers from KVC, and 10% get more than two-thirds.
Activity 154 Volunteers	Nearly 66% of registered volunteers have been active for less than two years. Across all respondents, almost 66% have been volunteering for more than six years.
Age 81 VIOs	Around 60% of VIO volunteers were over 46 years old. 25% of VIO volunteers were over the age of 65.

Services

Roles 154 Volunteers	90% of volunteers were looking for opportunities, of which 30% of volunteers were aiming for community volunteer roles.
Sourcing Volunteers 81 VIOs	Just over 40% of VIOs said they find volunteers through KVC 5% use community volunteers. Nearly 30% use the Garda vetting service.
Service Quality 154 Volunteers 81 VIOs	Over 90% of volunteers and VIOs rated KVC's services as good or excellent.

Motivation and Barriers

Motivation 154 Volunteers	Approximately 63% of people in County Kildare volunteer to give back to the community. 54% of volunteers noted that volunteering provided an opportunity to meet people. 20% of respondents stated that they volunteered to gain work experience.
Barriers 154 Volunteers	40% of volunteers mentioned a lack of time as a barrier. 20% cited other volunteering roles as a barrier. Non-volunteers mostly cited health or personal reasons as a barrier.

Profile and Access

KVC Contact 154 Volunteers 81 VIOs	Both surveys confirmed that 80% of volunteers favour in-person contact for personal interaction.
Communication 81 VIOs	70% of VIOs first heard about KVC through word of mouth 11% of VIOs first heard about KVC through events. 70% of VIOs use email to communicate, 17% use phone contact.
Communication 154 Volunteers	Just over 50% of volunteers first learned about KVC through online channels, with 10% learning about it via social media. However, 20% still heard about it through word of mouth.
Staying In Touch 154 Volunteers	55% of volunteers favour email for personal contact. 18% of volunteers favour phones for personal contact. 10% of volunteers favour social media for personal contact.

Training

Support Mode 81 VIOs	Most VIOs preferred in-person support, with over 80% choosing network meetings, training, or drop-ins.
Training Focus 81 VIOs	66% of VIOs want training focused on volunteers. Topics noted include induction, engagement (including with young people), recognition, and building a positive culture. 33% of VIOs prefer policy training on topics such as policy understanding, evaluation, and diversity.

3.1.3 Stakeholder and Focus Group Feedback

The feedback received from all stakeholders was overwhelmingly positive, with specific reference to recent internal progress. It was noticeable that stakeholders were willing to engage and dedicate their time to the Strategic Planning process.



Feedback from interviews and focus groups with stakeholders, including State bodies, support agencies, and volunteer groups, is shown below as a SWOC analysis. Input from the Board, Management, and Staff is also included.

The strengths and weaknesses refer to internal factors, while the opportunities and challenges relate to the environment in which Kildare Volunteer Centre operates.

	Theme	Feedback
Strengths	Leadership and Team Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very professional and friendly leadership and staff; <i>“a joy to work with.”</i> • Very helpful in providing volunteers for events.
	Community Engagement and Volunteerism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community volunteers are noted as reliable and steady resources. • <i>“Awards Night is a highlight.”</i>
	Adaptability and Forward Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambition to address changing needs, including support for people with additional needs.
	Integration and Local Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-integrated within the agency infrastructure in Co. Kildare.
	Excellence in Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public service recognises the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian refugee crisis as excellent.
Weaknesses	Resource and Funding Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited financial resources restrict the expansion and enhancement of services. • Ongoing funding challenges affect programme growth and operational capacity.
	Volunteer Engagement and Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The faster pace of the economy and post-pandemic shifts have changed volunteer profiles and engagement levels. • Increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining volunteers due to reduced availability and commitment.
	Communication and Public Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need to <i>“press the reset button”</i> on communication and visibility following the COVID-19 pandemic. • Focus on internal restructuring and improved outreach to rebuild public awareness and engagement.
	Outreach and Countywide Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The absence of roadshows limits opportunities to connect and engage across the county. • Reduced visibility and collaboration have weakened community-level participation.

	Theme	Feedback
Opportunities	Volunteer Development and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the pool of community volunteers. Consider whether all volunteers should receive standardised training.
	Broadening Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage younger volunteers through emerging causes (e.g., green movement, climate change, festivals). Link with new groups, such as recent retirees and participants in the Activator Programme (KSP), involving 600 adults.
	Inclusion and Employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote volunteerism as a pathway for people with additional needs to build work routines and demonstrate employability.
	Governance and Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce quality standards for VIOs to ensure consistency and accountability. Simplify and clarify governance requirements for volunteers and community groups.
	Expanding Volunteer Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deploy volunteers to support education, health, social, and cultural services. Engage volunteer services in Social Prescribing initiatives to enhance wellbeing.
	Sustainable Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore diverse funding sources to support volunteer initiatives.
Challenges	Volunteer Recruitment and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Difficulty attracting volunteers to serve on community and voluntary boards. The changing profile of volunteering is impacting participation levels. The older age profile of long-term, local volunteers raises concerns about sustainability.
	Visibility and Public Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited IVOL capacity to engage volunteers in opportunities and initiatives. A need for stronger public relations to promote volunteering and highlight its impact.
	Inclusivity and Resource Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource challenges limit the organisation's ability to extend services to all and maintain inclusivity.
	Sustaining Volunteer Infrastructure and Synergies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a risk that the volunteer infrastructure, proven valuable in the public response to COVID-19, could be lost without continued support and coordination. There is potential to build further synergies between volunteering and preventive or mental health and wellbeing measures.

4 Direction 2026-2031

Our Strategic Plan is founded on the policy environment in which we operate, the outcomes of our consultation process, and our organisation's capacity to deliver.

4.1 Key Document Review

The key document review concludes that all Volunteer Centres, including Kildare Volunteer Centre, connect people who want to volunteer with organisations that need support. They provide advice, training, Garda vetting, and promote good practice in the management of volunteers.

Government policy remains focused on maintaining and increasing voluntary effort to support the community and voluntary sector into the future, as evidenced by the commitment to publish a new National Volunteering Strategy noted in the Programme for Government 2025 – *Securing Ireland's Future*.

Support is based on key principles: volunteering must be a free choice, unpaid, and open to everyone. Volunteers should be treated with respect, and both volunteers and organisations should benefit from the experience.

The National Volunteering Strategy 2021–2025 identifies the main goals as increasing participation, improving conditions for volunteering, recognising volunteers' contributions, promoting ethical volunteering, and ensuring consistent government policy. These are reflected in Kildare Volunteer Centre's objectives to support inclusive, well-managed, and valued volunteering across Co. Kildare.



4.2 Consultation Results

The consultation results indicate that KVC is well-regarded across the county. The organisation is perceived as professional, and the Centre's work is highly respected, especially given the limited resources available compared to the growing demand for its services.

Feedback from stakeholders identifies core challenges that should be addressed in the future, including: -

1. Improved Service Offering

- There is an opportunity to grow and strengthen the service offering by providing more meaningful and rewarding ways for people to get involved. This will help volunteers develop new skills, build confidence, and feel more connected to their communities.
- There is an opportunity to enhance support for VIOs by improving training and sharing best practice. Helping VIOs to engage and retain volunteers more effectively, while understanding the broader policy context, will strengthen volunteering across the county.

2. Community Engagement

- By 2030, Co. Kildare's population is projected to be 260,000–280,000 (5–13% growth), increasing demand for KVC services and the need for stronger community connections across the county.

- In 2022, 16.96% of people over 15 volunteered, which is slightly below the State rate of 17.2%, indicating a potential for around 600 more volunteers. However, 40% cite a lack of time, likely due to a distance-commuting lifestyle, which effectively limits growth.
- By further encouraging inclusion and participation, KVC can ensure that newcomers and underrepresented groups feel welcomed, valued, and part of community life.
- It was reported that some residents and local organisations were unaware of KVC or volunteering opportunities. Strengthening KVC's visibility as the county's primary volunteering contact through libraries, parishes, newsletters, local events, and media would raise awareness of the value of volunteering and celebrate it.
- There is an opportunity for KVC to examine ways to use its resources efficiently and effectively. While there is evidence that the organisation is achieving considerable outcomes from its staffing and volunteer complement, as reflected in the number of new volunteers recorded in 2023 and 2024, the anticipated population growth will pose increasing challenges.

3. Strategic Influence

- An opportunity has been identified for KVC to raise its profile and increase public awareness of volunteering. Continuing to strengthen relationships with partners and improving access to opportunities across the county will help KVC play a more influential and strategic role in shaping the future of volunteering locally.
- It has been noted that KVC's existing office location is generally considered suboptimal, with limited public accessibility and visibility, which constrains the potential for service growth.

4.3 Technical Capacity

KVC is well-positioned to enhance volunteer engagement by leveraging the opportunities identified above. Implementing key aspects of these opportunities is likely to: -

- Improve volunteer–organisation matching.
- Increase efficiency and visibility.
- Reduce barriers to participation.
- Strengthen community networks.
- Promote sustainable volunteering across Co. Kildare.


However, the full potential of the opportunities is unlikely to be realised without proportionally increasing the level of human resources and technical capacity at both Board and Executive levels. The county's ongoing population growth further compounds this requirement.

5 Strategic Priorities 2026-2031


We aim to enrich the volunteer experience by strengthening the Community Volunteer programme. By offering accessible in-person events, we create meaningful opportunities for engagement, learning, and community building. Over the coming period, we are focusing on enhancing our services and community engagement. The strategic priorities for the period 2026-2031 include the following: -

- **Enriching Volunteer Experience:** Develop and grow the Community Volunteer Programme.
- **Promoting and Supporting VIO Excellence:** Enhance VIOs' skills and standards to engage more effectively and retain volunteers while understanding the broader policy landscape.
- **Foster Belonging and Involvement:** Enhance connections across all communities in Co. Kildare, ensuring that new members of our community feel welcome and included.
- **Enhance Visibility, Engagement, and Strategic Influence:** Increase public awareness, stakeholder engagement, and geographic accessibility for volunteering.


SP1 Enriching Volunteer Experience

Strategic Priority	Scope	Goals and Action Framework
SP 1 	Enrich the Volunteer Experience Expand the Community Volunteer Programme to better involve diverse groups, including migrants, youth, older people, and those from disadvantaged areas, through inclusive events, support, and clear next steps.	Strengthen Volunteer Matching through Technology and Outreach We are prioritising the Community Volunteer Programme and actively seeking funding to expand it to a full-time role, increasing its capacity to support community events and enabling more volunteers, including underrepresented groups, to participate. This will also lead by example in making volunteering more accessible for everyone.


SP2 Promote and Support Excellence in VIOs

Strategic Priority	Scope	Goals and Action Framework
SP 2 	Promote and Support Excellence in VIOs. Support VIOs with practical training that highlights clear policies and quality checks to enhance their skills and standards. Expand training to help them better engage and keep volunteers and understand the broader policy landscape.	Support VIOs through Training Deliver focused training and tools to help VIOs manage better and follow best practice. Provide simple tools to demystify compliance and enhance inclusion.

SP3 Foster Belonging and Involvement

Strategic Priority	Scope	Goals and Action Framework
SP 3 	Foster Belonging and Involvement through Volunteering Build a welcoming and inclusive culture of volunteering that engages people from all backgrounds, especially those new to County Kildare or from traditionally underrepresented groups.	Address Social Isolation Foster a sense of belonging and promote positive relationships while addressing social isolation and promoting a sense of community. Connecting Volunteers Connect volunteers with causes that address community concerns and promote wellbeing.

SP4 Visibility, Engagement, and Strategic Influence

Strategic Priority	Scope	Goals and Action Framework
<div>SP</div> <div>4</div> <div>  </div>	Visibility, Engagement, and Strategic Influence	<p>Promote the Value of Volunteering Promote volunteering as a key component of community life through campaigns, events, and outreach, particularly to new residents and marginalised groups.</p> <p>Strengthen KVC's Presence and Access across the County Make KVC services easy to find and use across County Kildare with a visible central office, pop-ups, shared spaces, and local partnerships. Collaborate with public and community groups to integrate KVC into local life.</p> <p>Protect the Volunteering Infrastructure Deepen engagement with public agencies, local government, and the voluntary sector to embed KVC in broader community development, health, and integration strategies.</p>
	<p>Enhance the profile of volunteering and KVC as a central resource by increasing public awareness, fostering stakeholder engagement, and expanding geographic accessibility.</p>	

6 Implementation

To put our strategic plan into action, all aspects of our work must align with its goals and vision. All planning, reporting, and progress tracking should help us achieve the aims set out in the plan. That's why the plan will be a live document, used in all areas of work at Kildare Volunteer Centre.

We will align our yearly work plans with the strategic plan to ensure we're working towards our primary goals.

We will set clear measures (Key Performance Indicators) to track progress.

Staff and Board reports will be based on the plan's goals. We will also develop additional strategies, including funding and communications, to help us achieve our objectives.

6.1 Activities Plan

Sixteen activities will be implemented over the period from 2026 to 2031.

Strategic Priority		Activity
SP1	Enrich the Volunteer Experience	Strengthen the Community Volunteer Programme
		Provide Multi-lingual Information Packs
		Roll-out Countywide Volunteer Recruitment Fairs
SP2	Promote and Support Excellence in VIOs	Volunteer Recruitment and Management Training
		Volunteer Friendly Award Programme
		Policy Toolkit for VIOs
		Garda Vetting Service
SP3	Foster Belonging and Involvement	Connect Volunteers with Causes
		Review Placement Process
		Facilitate Volunteer Participation, enabling new communities to contribute through crafted opportunities
		Host Annual Volunteer Awards
SP4	Visibility, Engagement and Strategic Influence	Annual Comms Plan including digital engagement
		Pop-Up Information Events
		Advocacy and representation
		Governance and quality standards
		Secure a Suitable Facility for KVC HQ

SP1 Enrich the Volunteer Experience

Inputs	Activities	Assumptions	Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Resources. Translation Services. Publication Costs. Venue Hire. Advertising. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the Community Volunteer Programme. Provide Multi-lingual Information Packs. Roll-Out Countywide Volunteer Recruitment Fairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding to maintain or extend the community volunteer programme. Volunteering opportunities will be available to non-English speakers. Attendance at information fairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New registrations. Events supported. Languages included. Packs distributed. Locations reached. 	<p>Meaningful volunteer experiences are accessible to diverse and underrepresented groups throughout the County.</p>

SP2 Promote and Support Excellence in VIOs

Inputs	Activities	Assumptions	Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training Facility. Training Materials. Staff Resources (Trainer, Comms and Administration support). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer Recruitment and Management Training. Volunteer Friendly Award Programme. Develop a Policy Toolkit for VIOs. Garda Vetting Service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Training Facility. Trainee availability and attendance. NVB continue to require affiliate organisations. Funding to advance the Volunteer Friendly programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training programmes delivered. People/organisations trained. 	<p>VIOs are equipped with the skills to engage, retain and manage volunteers successfully and are recognised and rewarded for operating in line with best practice.</p>

SP3 Foster Belonging and Involvement

Inputs	Activities	Assumptions	Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Resources. • Advertising Budget. • Investment in Website. • Social Media Channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect Volunteers with Causes. • Review placement process. • Facilitating Volunteer Participation, enabling new communities to contribute through crafted opportunities. • Host Annual Volunteer Awards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for improvement in matching skills-based roles. • Funding continues for volunteer development services and awards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer placements. • Opportunities advertised. • Volunteers engaged. • Awards events hosted. 	<p>A welcoming and inclusive culture of volunteering that engages people from all backgrounds with causes they value and creates a sense of belonging.</p>

SP4 Visibility, Engagement, and Strategic Influence

Inputs	Activities	Assumptions	Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising budget. Comms/content creation. Management and staff resources. Rental costs/finance . Board of Directors expertise, skills and commitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Comms Plan Including Digital Engagement. Pop-up Information Events. Advocacy and representation. Governance and quality standards. Secure appropriate premises as KVC's future HQ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building an online community will translate into real-life connections. Algorithms, new platforms, etc. Stakeholder and funder support. Availability of suitable premises in an appropriate location. Affordable rent and moving costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media content. Followers and interactions. Web views. Outreach services (pop-up). Reports on progress, impact and challenges. Visible, accessible HQ. 	<p>Greater awareness of Kildare Volunteer Centre's activities and impact, resulting in more engagement, inclusion, and security for service delivery.</p>

7 Staffing and Resources

The ability of KVC to deliver on the Strategic Plan will depend on the organisation's capacity to attract sufficient resources.

In 2022, the population of County Kildare was 247,774. The CSO regional projections for the Mid-East region (which includes County Kildare) show sustained growth from 14.9% of the national population in 2022 to 15.5–16.1% by 2042.

By 2040, a realistic estimate for County Kildare's population is between 285,000 and 300,000. The exact figure depends notably on migration flows and regional development policies. Population ageing will be significant in the county: the over-65 cohort in County Kildare is projected to rise from 29,700 in 2022 to nearly 59,000 by 2040.

It follows that if KVC's services are to keep pace with projected population growth (and hence volunteering needs), then an increased level of resourcing above the current level will be necessary.

7.1 Staffing Requirements

In 2025, the Kildare Volunteer Centre restructured staff roles and expanded the team to strengthen the organisation. The Participation Officer's role was refocused to work only with VIOs, allowing more targeted support. A new Administrator was hired, easing the Centre Manager's administrative load and improving the focus on strategy and leadership.

The staffing structure below outlines the minimum positions required to implement KVC's Strategic Plan.

Position	Role	Key Responsibilities
Centre Manager (<i>Full-Time</i>)	To lead the strategic direction, governance, and operational management of the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee implementation of the strategic plan and compliance with national policies. Lead on governance, risk management, and funding development. Represent the organisation at local, regional, and national levels. Provide leadership and support to the staff team. Maintain strong relationships with stakeholders, funders, and partners to ensure ongoing support and collaboration.
VIO Engagement Officer (<i>Full-Time</i>)	To provide dedicated support to VIOs across County Kildare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build and maintain relationships with VIOs to understand and support their volunteer needs and requirements. Deliver training, guidance, and best practice support in volunteer management. Assist VIOs in advertising roles and connecting with volunteers via the national volunteering database (IVOL).

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Position	Role	Key Responsibilities
Volunteer Development Officer (Full-Time)	To support the integration of new communities and migrants into local life through volunteering.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide one-to-one support and guidance to individuals from migrant and minority backgrounds who are seeking to volunteer. • Build relationships with integration services, community groups, and individuals to promote volunteering as a way to foster connection and participation. • Deliver outreach in IPAS Centres and other newcomer settings. • Promote inclusive volunteering opportunities that support language learning, skills development, and community engagement.
Community Volunteers Coordinator (Part-Time)	To manage and grow the Community Volunteers Programme in Kildare, linking trained volunteers with community events and emergency response needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit, train, and coordinate Community Volunteers. • Liaise with community event organisers and public bodies to match volunteer support with local needs. • Ensure volunteers are supported, insured, and debriefed appropriately after assignments. • Maintain accurate records and report on programme activity and impact.
Administrator (Part-Time)	To provide efficient and effective administrative support across all areas of the Centre's work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage day-to-day office operations, including scheduling, filing, and financial administration. • Support data entry and reporting on the IVOL database. • Assist with communications, event logistics, and record-keeping. • Provide administrative support to the Centre Manager and staff team as needed.

7.2 Volunteer Requirements

Position	Role	Key Responsibilities
Placement Officer Volunteer	Provide personalised, 1:1 support to match, guide, and retain volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance via calls/emails. • Assist with referrals/placements. • Maintain records.
Graphic Design Volunteer	Create visually engaging graphics and materials to support Volunteer Centre communications, campaigns, and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design graphics for social media, newsletters, flyers, and campaign materials. • Support one-off projects. • Collaborate with staff to deliver creative solutions.

8 New Premises: Meeting Growth Needs

As County Kildare’s population continues to grow, the Volunteer Centre requires a suitable, fit-for-purpose facility to support expanding services across the county.

Other Volunteer Centres nationwide already operate from premises designed to accommodate staff, volunteers, and community partners, providing accessible spaces for training, engagement, and events. Securing a comparable facility will enhance our visibility, accessibility, and capacity, enabling us to fully deliver the objectives outlined in this strategic plan and grow as planned. The table below summarises the key requirements for a new premises to meet current and future needs.

For the Volunteer Centre, a new premises should meet both operational and strategic needs. Key requirements include the following.

Theme	Requirement
Space and Capacity	Enough room for staff offices, administrative tasks and one-to-one conversations
	Flexible meeting spaces for volunteer training, workshops, and events.
	Storage for materials, resources, and equipment.
Accessibility and Visibility	Centrally located in a significant town and easily reachable by public transport.
	Fully accessible for people with disabilities.
	Clear shop front signage and a visible presence to promote awareness.
Facilities and Technology	High-speed internet and IT infrastructure for digital communications and online services.
	Spaces for one-to-one volunteer support and confidential conversations.
	Facilities for hybrid or in-person training sessions.
Flexibility and Growth	Ability to host community events, community partners or engagement initiatives.
	Adaptable layout to accommodate the evolving needs of the Centre.
Safety and Compliance	Meet health, safety, and fire regulations.
	Secure storage for sensitive volunteer and organisational information.

9 Measuring Progress

Our Strategic Plan identifies sixteen activities to be delivered from 2026 to 2031. We recognise the need to measure the implementation of these activities to determine whether they are achieving their design objectives.

9.1 Monitoring and Evaluating Our Strategic Plan

We understand the importance of continuously monitoring and evaluating all our work. To achieve our vision of supporting volunteers and VIOs across Co. Kildare, we need to measure our effectiveness and efficiency systematically.

We will further develop and maintain our internal monitoring and evaluation system with the following objectives in mind: -

1. To improve internal learning and feed into decision-making on research and development, project design, and implementation.
2. Going beyond the reporting requirements of individual initiatives by accurately assessing how efficient and effective we are in achieving our objectives and positively impacting the community.
3. To underpin management decisions and for governance and accountability purposes. The results will be regularly disseminated through reports to our Board and other stakeholders.

9.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit

We will implement the Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit from 2026 to 2031. Progress will be reported internally among staff and volunteers using the toolkit and will be presented routinely to the Board for consideration.

Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit



Kildare Volunteer Centre CLG
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