



**Carlow
Volunteer Centre**
Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Cheatharlach

Annual Report 2023



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Volunteer Centre**
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Carlow Volunteer Centre Team

From left:

Natasha Akerele

Placement Officer

**Garda Vetting
Liaison Officer**

Helen Rothwell

Manager

**Garda Vetting
Liaison Officer**

Sinead Kirwan

Placement Officer

Education Support



Olha Kolodiazhna
Ukrainian Support

Carlow Volunteer Centre Annual Report 2023

Company Name: Carlow Volunteer Centre CLG

Company Number: 426131

CHY Number: CHY17313

Registered Office: C/o Carlow Local Authority
Athy Road Carlow

Current Directors: Martha Jane Duggan
Frank Comerford
Fiona Dunne
Tremayne Horkan
Declan O Kane
Patrick Kennedy
Niamh Dowling

Auditors: Harney Nolan Chartered Accountants
Equity House
Deerpark Business Complex Carlow

Bankers: AIB Bank
Tullow Street Carlow

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1 INTRODUCTION TO CARLOW VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Carlow Volunteer Centre is a registered charity CHY17313 and Company Limited by Guarantee (CRO 426131).

Chairperson: - Martha Jane Duggan

Company Secretary: - Frank Comerford

Carlow Volunteer Centre was registered as a CLG in 1996. It offers support and guidance to individuals and volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) to reach their individual and collective goals while significantly contributing to their local community and society.

This report outlines the work and highlights the achievements of Carlow Volunteer Centre (CVC) in 2023.

CVC currently works with 348 VIOs, including garda vetting organisations, offering them a range of services. In addition, CVC works with 1,957 volunteers in Carlow, is part of a national network of volunteer centres, and works closely with other organisations in the county, including Carlow Public Participation Network, Carlow County Council, and both local partnership companies.

- CVC coordinates with Carlow County Council on the Ukrainian crisis, providing volunteers in befriending roles, Integration projects and conversational language classes.**
- Liaise with all registered VIOs to help them with volunteers and deliver services.**
- Promote training and webinars from Carlow Volunteer Centre, Sports Partnership, ETB, Public Participation Network, Volunteer Ireland, The Wheel, and others.**

- **Organise events and webinars for National Volunteer Week.**
- **Deliver the Transition Year Student programme and promote volunteering opportunities for students.**
- **Deliver volunteer information sessions and have a presence in SETU Carlow.**
- **Hold a Volunteer Expo in Fairgreen Shopping Centre.**
- **Media and promotion in the Carlow Nationalist and our Social media platform, outlining new volunteering opportunities and thanking volunteers for their interest.**

Governance standards:

Carlow Volunteer Centre strives to be a model of good practice and good governance to build trust and confidence in our services. We continue to be compliant with the Charities Regulator Governance Standards in 2023. The Board of Carlow Volunteer Centre reviews policies and procedures on a rolling basis from our Document control matrix.

Staffing:

One full-time member (Manager) and three part-time staff members. Volunteers, the CE scheme and Tus participants are utilised to enhance services.

Volunteering in Carlow

Volunteering is essential to any community, and Co. Carlow is no exception. The volunteer history of this county is rich and diverse, with countless individuals dedicating their time and skills to impact the lives of others positively.

Carlow Volunteer Centre plays a crucial role in connecting volunteers with local charities and community groups. Through their efforts, countless individuals have been able to contribute their time and expertise to causes they are passionate about.

Another notable aspect is the strong tradition of community involvement. Volunteers have played a vital role in shaping the country's social fabric, from local sports clubs to environmental initiatives. Their dedication and selflessness have helped create a sense of unity and pride among the residents of Co. Carlow.

Furthermore, Carlow has a long-standing tradition of volunteerism in the arts and culture sector. Many individuals have generously given their time to support local theatres, museums, and festivals. Their contributions have enriched the county's cultural landscape and provided opportunities for residents to engage with the arts.

Population and Dispersal

The 2022 Census shows that the population of Co. Carlow grew by 9% to 61,968, of which 11% are non-Irish citizens.

This population is divided across the three municipal districts as follows: Carlow, MD, 39.8%; Tullow, MD, 32.2%; and Muinebheag, MD, 27.5%.

Carlow Town is the county's largest urban centre. The portion in County Carlow alone, i.e., including Graiguecullen, has a total population of 24,274, accounting for over one-third (35.1%) of the county's population. This area makes Carlow the thirteenth-largest urban area in the State.

County Carlow has two towns that are classified as second-tier or district towns. These are Tullow (pop. 4,673) and Bagenalstown / Muinebheag (pop. 2,837). Carlow has six towns whose populations range from 500 to 2,000. There are ten villages in County Carlow, with populations in excess of 200.

This means that Co. Carlow is still a predominantly rural County, with over 60% of the population widely dispersed into smaller regional towns and villages.

This presents a unique set of challenges for the Volunteer Centre as we endeavour to deliver services to rural communities, which has significant resource implications for the centre.

Socio-Economic Profile

The unemployment rate in Carlow, as recorded in the Census of Population, is considerably above the regional and national levels. Carlow has the highest unemployment rate of all local authority areas in the South-East Region and the third highest in the State.

Carlow Town records a level of unemployment (21.3%) that is well in excess of that in the rest of the county (14.8%). There are a number of unemployment blackspots in the county,

Many areas are experiencing high levels of deprivation, with over 60% of the population classified as below average or disadvantaged according to the Pobal Deprivation Index.

Volunteering is the only reliable resource in regions where development is slow to achieve community and social objectives, and Volunteer Centres' support is essential.

Therefore, it is vital for our service to be mobile and flexible in order to reach these isolated communities who need support the most.

4 Vision, Mission, Values & Objectives

Vision

A vibrant Carlow society where every person feels connected to their community through active participation in voluntary activities”.

Mission

To promote the value of volunteering and increase the range and quality of volunteering in Carlow.

To help individuals find meaningful volunteer opportunities and support not-for-profit organisations to involve volunteers in their work.

Values

Our key values are:

Equality

We believe all people should be valued and respected equally. We are also committed to removing barriers that exclude vulnerable groups from participating fully in society.

Sense of Community

Volunteering is ultimately about people helping others and feeling connected with their community.

Professionalism

We work in an environment where honesty and integrity are paramount and where people are encouraged to bring their ideas to life while remaining accountable to ourselves and others.

Our Core Objectives

- + Increase access to volunteering by offering a support service to the public and volunteer-involving organisations.
- + Increase the quality of volunteering.
- + Increase awareness of volunteering by marketing and promoting volunteering.
- + Ensure the organisation is sustainable through good governance and management.

Chairperson's Address



I am pleased to provide this Chairperson's address for our 2023 Annual Report, having assumed the Chair position on the Board in April 2023. I would like to pay tribute and express sincere thanks to our outgoing Chair, Michelle O Hara, for her commitment and contribution during her time as Director and Chair of Carlow Volunteer Centre.

This report highlights the significant contributions made by volunteers, the engagement of volunteer involving organisations, the integration of new communities, and the progress made in line with our strategic plan for 2021-2025.

In 2023, we saw a remarkable increase in the number of volunteers, with individuals from all walks of life offering their time and skills to support various causes. We have strengthened our partnerships with volunteer involving organisations, working closely with them to create meaningful and impactful volunteer opportunities.

Carlow Volunteer Centre is working with Carlow Co. Council and other local agencies to promote the integration of new communities into the volunteering sector. We have actively reached out to diverse communities, providing them with information, training, and support to engage in volunteering activities. This inclusive approach has not only empowered individuals from different backgrounds but has also enriched the volunteering landscape by bringing in fresh perspectives and ideas.

Along with implementing our strategic plan for 2021-2025, we have aligned our goals and objectives with the National Volunteering Strategic Plan, ensuring that our efforts are in line with the broader national agenda. By focusing on key areas such as volunteer recruitment, training, and recognition, we have been able to create a robust framework that supports and sustains volunteering in Co. Carlow.

I want to express my gratitude to the Board members and staff of Carlow Volunteer Centre who have contributed to the success of the Centre in 2023. Together, we have made a significant difference in the lives of individuals and the community.

As we move forward, we remain committed to our mission of promoting and supporting volunteering, and we look forward to even greater achievements in the future.

Martha Jane Duggan (Chairperson)

For Volunteers

- + We offer information, support, and advice about volunteering roles across Co. Carlow
- + We offer an opportunity to meet with staff to discuss meaningful volunteering opportunities for you.
- + We provide Information on the how, why, and where of Volunteering.
- + Access to the IVOL database of volunteering opportunities available across Co. Carlow
- + Ongoing support and information



Spotlight on Alina

Alina only came to Ireland last year & has already contributed so much to the community in Carlow.

She has gotten involved in 5 different activities & contributed over 50 hours of her time to volunteer.



For Organisations

- + We offer a free volunteer referral service.
- + Advertise volunteering opportunities.
- + Assess to a pool of volunteers across Co. Carlow
- + Training guidance and support on all aspects of volunteer management
- + Networking and peer learning opportunities for volunteer managers
- + Garda vetting service.
- + Our Community Volunteer program will support short-term events, festivals, and community response in the community.
- + Corporate Volunteering project

O Gorman Home

“Thank you yet again for your excellent service. It is very much appreciated. by us here and makes our job so much easier” Anne.

Community Games

“Thank you so much for all the marvellous volunteers you assigned to us, they were all brilliant and only for them our Community Games events would not have been successful or even able to go ahead.” Joan Poland

Supports for Volunteers

411

New Registered
Volunteers

836

Opportunities
Applied for

523

Confirmed Volunteer
placements

76

Community
Volunteers trained.

102

Repeat
Volunteers

Supports for Organisations

860

Engagements
With Organisations

70

New opportunities
Advertised

76

Community Volunteers
Available for festivals
and events

988

Garda Vetting
applications processed.

249

Total Registered
Organisations

Objective 1: Increase Access to Volunteering by offering a Support Service to the Public and Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs)

- + 411 Volunteers Registered in 2023
- + 523 Volunteer placements in 2023
- + 17,450 Hours given to Volunteering in 2023
- + 6 Volunteer Projects
- + Volunteer Expo with 26 Voluntary Organisations attending.
- + 860 Engagements with Registered Organisations
- + 11 New Organisations in 2023
- + 12 Newsletters circulated.
- + 18 Outreach delivered.
- + 5 Volunteer Education programs delivered.
- + 5 Garda Vetting Training Delivered
- + 988 Garda Vetting Applications processed.
- + 4 Community Volunteer Training delivered.
- + 3 Festivals and events with community Volunteers

Objective 2: Increase the Quality of Volunteering

- + All Volunteers were contacted within four days of registering.**
- + Face-to-face meetings are offered to all volunteers.**
- + Supported VIOs in drafting meaningful volunteer roles.**
- + We only advertised roles for VIOs who comply with “Equal Opportunity” ethos.**
- + We work with Migrant, disability, and mental health services to ensure Volunteering is available to all.**
- + CVC provided an effective Volunteer referral service to all volunteers and VIO’s.**
- + Newsletter sent to all Volunteers and Volunteer Involving organisations in Co. Carlow**
- + Website updated twice monthly.**
- + VIOs were provided with up-to-date information on training, conferences, and other capacity-building events in the VC network.**
- + CVC updates and cleanses data on a rolling basis.**
- + Quality checks carried out on Volunteer and VIO records.**

Objective 3: Increase Awareness of Volunteering by Marketing And Promoting Volunteering

- + CVC carried out six outreaches in Co. Carlow in 2023**
- + Social media was updated regularly with information on Volunteer roles.**
- + Website update twice monthly**
- + Volunteer roles advertised in local newspaper 26 times during 2023.**
- + Volunteer Expo held in Fairgreen Shopping Centre.**
- + Education program delivered to 5 schools and colleges.**
- + Program of events was advertised for National Volunteering Week**

Objective 4: Ensure the Organisation is Sustainable through Good Governance and Management

- + CVC worked from the 2023 work plan, which was approved by the Board of Management and forwarded to the Department for review.**
- + Monthly staff meetings were held, which included analysis of activities against quality standards and work plans.**
- + The Board of CVC reviews policies and procedures on a rolling basis.**
- + VI sent an annual survey to all VIOs.**
- + CVC collects and analyses feedback from all events and activities.**
- + CVC is Compliant with the Charities Regulator**



- **Two 4-week education programme delivered to Transition Years (Coláiste Aindriú and Gaelcholáiste Ceatharlach)**
- **Biodiversity Project completed with Presentation College Carlow.**
- **3 Information Stands in SETU, Carlow College and Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training.**
- **Our promotional materials are included in Carlow College's Fresher's Week Student Pack.**

Sinéad is part of the review committee for a Youth Volunteering Project being carried out by UCC. She was nominated due to Carlow VC's work on youth volunteering, as Carlow is one of the only VCs who engage with youth volunteering.

Carlow Institute of Further Education

"Sinéad, We received fantastic feedback from the students who participated in the four-week interactive programme on Volunteering. Thank you so much," Imelda Dillon

Colaiste Aindriú

"I would like to thank the volunteer centre for running a very successful programme. The feedback to the principal from the students is that your programme is outstanding." Imelda Kelly

10 Ukrainian and International Protection Applicants

Ukrainian Volunteer Registered with Carlow Volunteer Centre

There are 115 Ukrainian and 38 International Protection volunteers registered with the Carlow Volunteer Centre at the end of December 2023. Many of these are volunteering in local charity shops, An Gairdin Beo and St. Clare's Kitchen, to name just a few. They enjoy volunteering as a way of getting out and meeting people and learning conversational English, which they feel is vital to securing employment.

English Language classes

Volunteers are recruited to volunteer with Failte Isteach, giving English language classes to Ukrainian and International protection residents in Co. Carlow. Some of these volunteers are fluent in English.

Community Response forum

The manager of Carlow Volunteer Centre takes part in fortnightly inter-agency meetings with Carlow Local Authority. These have been very informative sessions, and the collaboration meant that roles and work weren't duplicated.

Threading Paths project

Carlow Volunteer Centre continued to hold a knit-and-chat morning for anyone in Carlow every Thursday morning in 2023. The project was “Flowers, United through Craft”. Flowers from all over the world were crafted and put together to create a spectacular mural.

This promoted the use of English as a universal language for all who attended. It was very beneficial for the Ukrainian and International protection attendees as they could chat with people from other countries about how they settled into their new environment and what they found helpful.

As a result of this project, many Ukrainians found it easier to integrate into the community; most registered as volunteers, and many found work by chatting with others.



Connecting through Clay project

This initiative was aimed to foster cultural exchange and understanding between the people of Carlow, Ukraine, and international protection applicants through the medium of clay. Thirty-six participants took part in the project.

Clay has long been used as a means of artistic expression and communication. By bringing together volunteers from Carlow, Ukraine and International Protection Applicants, this project provided a unique opportunity for individuals to connect and learn from one another. By creating clay sculptures, participants not only developed their artistic skills but also gained a deeper understanding of each other's cultures. When working side by side, participants could share stories, traditions, and experiences, fostering a sense of empathy and connection.

"Connecting through Clay" was not just about creating beautiful artwork. It was about building bridges between communities. By engaging in this project, volunteers contributed to promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity in Co. Carlow.





Art Project

One of our International Protection applicants in Carlow was passionate about art. Carlow Volunteer Centre supplied him with canvas, paint, etc., to give him the opportunity to paint. The results were amazing. He now displays his artwork in “Made in Carlow” and offers some art lessons.



Threading Paths project Continued.

The Threading Paths continued with the new residents of Co. Carlow. We decided to craft cushions that would be donated for Christmas to the local hospital and old folks' homes in Co. Carlow. This was a huge success and a perfect example of integration with Irish ladies who helped people from Ukraine and other countries complete the piece. Feedback was very positive, with many wanting to continue with projects like this.



Men's Shed Project

Carlow Volunteer Centre met with the Men's Shed in Tullow, Co Carlow, to brainstorm ways we could work together to integrate migrants into the Men's Shed and the community.

Two projects were decided on.

Carpentry participants will work with members of the Men's shed and make wooden seats, bird boxes and bug hotels. These will then be distributed to Charities around Co. Carlow.

In the Spring, the participants will design and complete a community garden at the back of the Men's shed. This will become a place where members can grow veg and herbs.



11 Highlights



Arts and Crafts Project in Bagenalstown International Protection Accommodation

The Bank House Bagenalstown

"I would like to say thank you so much for coming to the centre yesterday; the residents were delighted to hear about all the work they can do as volunteers. It has given them hope. I look forward to working with ye in the future," Caroline Murphy, Facilities



Celebrating National Volunteering Week



International Women's Day in Carlow Volunteer Centre

Sensory Mats made for Bethany House And for the Sacred Heart Hospital Carlow





**2023 Volunteer Expo
In Fairgreen
Carlow
26 Organisations
attended our
Volunteer Expo**

Carlow St. Patricks Day Parade

"I am emailing to say what a great event the Expo was last week. We had lots of people asking about different roles on offer and got some signed up."

Niamh Wingate





Carlow Volunteer Centre Christmas Integration Event



MSD and UNUM were presented with their Corporate Volunteer Award for the impact they have made in the Community.



**UNUM Corporate
Volunteering in
Bagenalstown**



**Volunteer Coffee
Morning**



Getting the Christmas Hampers ready for distribution.

Christmas Card making





Delivering Christmas Hampers.

Killerig Nursing Home

“Thank you so much for today; our residents had the best time, and it was really wonderful hearing all the wonderful stories. We cannot thank you enough, we got some great pictures and will put them on our Facebook page” Annie.

Sacred Heart Hospital

“Just a note to thank you all for your continuous support of our residents. The cards, blankets, etc. were a lovely Christmas treat and enjoyed by all recipients,” Deirdre.



Delivering Training to Volunteer Centres on Digitalisation and Volunteering

Outreach in Co. Carlow



Carlow Volunteer Centre CLG
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
SCHEDULE 1 : OVERHEAD EXPENSES
for the financial year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 €	2022 €
Administration Expenses		
Wages and salaries	106,382	96,389
Social welfare costs	11,507	10,351
Wages and salaries - Ukraine project	4,998	5,806
Social welfare costs - Ukraine project	312	591
Staff training	1,180	378
Rent payable	100	100
Insurance	914	975
Printing, postage and stationery	6,460	2,991
Advertising	14,543	2,872
Telephone	2,236	2,165
Computer costs	3,125	1,980
Travelling and projects	8,512	11,555
Bank charges	407	309
Bad debts	135	175
General expenses	3,057	3,361
Subscriptions	457	500
Auditor's remuneration	1,661	1,661
Depreciation of tangible assets	3,235	1,703
	<u>169,221</u>	<u>143,862</u>



Carlow Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Cheatharlach

Carlow Volunteer Centre

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Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/carlowvolunteercentre>

Twitter CarlowVolunteer

Company Registration No. 426131/Charity No. CHY 17313