



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

Annual Report 2025



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Volunteer Centre**
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Carlow Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Cheatharlach



From left:

Helen Rothwell

Manager

Garda Vetting
Liaison Officer

Natasha Akerele

Placement Officer

Garda Vetting
Liaison Officer

Sinead Kirwan

Placement Officer

Education Support



Carlow Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Cheatharlach

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 Declan O Kane Patrick Kennedy Niamh Dowling
Auditors:	Harney Nolan Chartered Accountants Equity House Deerpark Business Complex Carlow
Bankers:	AIB Bank Tullow Street Carlow

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chairpersons Report	5
Introduction to Carlow Volunteer Centre	6
Operational Content.....	11
Vision, Mission, Values & Objectives.....	14
Our Services	15
2025 In Numbers	17
Our Core Objectives.....	18
Education.....	23
New Communities.....	24
Community Volunteer.....	25
Garda Vetting.....	26
Spotlight on Organisations.....	27
Corporate Volunteering.....	29
Projects.....	30
Highlights	35

Chairperson's Address



It is my pleasure to present this year's report on behalf of the Board of Carlow Volunteer Centre.

Reflecting on 2025, it has been a year of steady progress, meaningful engagement, and continued growth in volunteering across the county. At its core, our work remains focused on supporting people to get involved in their communities and strengthening the organisations that rely on volunteer support.

A key highlight of the year was the successful hosting of our Volunteer Expo, which brought together a wide range of local organisations and members of the public. The event provided an important platform to showcase volunteering opportunities and to connect individuals with causes that matter to them. It demonstrated clearly the strong appetite for community involvement in Carlow.

We also placed a strong emphasis on engaging new and diverse communities. Through targeted outreach and partnership work, we have continued to make volunteering more accessible and inclusive, ensuring that more people can participate and feel welcomed into the sector.

Our Community Volunteers programme has once again proven invaluable, providing essential support to local events and festivals throughout the year. From large-scale public gatherings to smaller community initiatives, volunteers have played a vital role in ensuring these events could take place safely and successfully.

Chairperson's Address

In addition, we have seen encouraging growth in corporate volunteering, with local businesses increasingly recognising the value of community engagement and supporting their employees to contribute their time and skills.

The collective impact of these efforts is significant. In 2025, over 11,000 volunteer hours were contributed across County Carlow—an achievement that reflects the dedication, generosity, and community spirit of our volunteers.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to sincerely thank our volunteers for their continued commitment, our staff for their professionalism and dedication, and my fellow Board members for their guidance and support throughout the year.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to building on this momentum—expanding participation, strengthening partnerships, and continuing to support a vibrant culture of volunteering in Carlow.

I am confident that, together, we will continue to make a positive and lasting impact in our communities.

Martha Jane Duggan

Chairperson

Carlow Volunteer Centre

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 2025.

CVC currently works with 317 VIOs, including garda vetting organisations, offering them a range of services. In addition, CVC works with 1,776 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 and other inter- agency groups, providing projects and volunteer roles to help integrate our New Communities.**
- 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 2025. 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 two part-time staff members. Volunteers, the CE scheme and Tus participants are utilised to enhance services.

Operational Content

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.

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 remove 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 themselves and others.







Our Services

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



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**

2025 IN NUMBERS

Supports for Volunteers

215

New Registered
Volunteers

1,141

Opportunities
Applied for

656

Confirmed Volunteer
placements

548

Face-to-face
meetings

214

Repeat
Volunteers

Supports for Organisations

1,842

Engagements
With Organisations

89

New opportunities
advertised

188

Total Active
Organisations

181

Community Volunteers
Available for festivals
and events

1080

Garda Vetting
applications processed.

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.



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

In 2025

- **215 Volunteers Registered**
- **656 Volunteer placements in 2023**
- **11,314 Hours given to Volunteering**
- **6 Volunteer Projects**
- **Attended 5 EXPOS to highlight volunteering in Co. Carlow**
- **10 New Organisations in 2023**
- **12 Newsletters circulated.**
- **8 Outreach delivered.**
- **6 Volunteer Education programs delivered to over 600 students**
- **Garda Vetting Training Delivered to 195 vetting officers within Garda vetting Organisations.**
- **1080 Garda Vetting Applications processed.**
- **4 Community Volunteer Training delivered.**
- **6 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 provides 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 weekly.**
- **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 eight outreach sessions in Co. Carlow in 2025**
- **Social media was updated regularly with information on Volunteer roles. Website updated weekly**
- **Volunteer roles were advertised in the local newspaper 26 times during 2023. Volunteer Expo held in Fairgreen Shopping Centre.**
- **Education program delivered to over 600 students in the second and third level schools**
- **The 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 2025 work plan, which was approved by the Board of Management and forwarded to the Department for review.**
- **Monthly staff meetings 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 and volunteers.**
- **CVC collects and analyses feedback from all events and activities. CVC is Compliant with the Charities Regulator**

Education

Education Programme 2025 – An Overview

- **Delivered Volunteer Information Sessions with Transition Year Students and Leaving Cert Applied Students in five schools in County Carlow.**
- **A four-week education programme was delivered to Transition Years in one school.**
- **Almost 600 second-level students were reached in 2025.**
- **Carlow Volunteer Centre attended the SETU Volunteer Fair in October.**

Carlow Volunteer Centre contributed to two government policy documents that were published in 2025.

- 1. Promoting Youth Volunteering in Ireland: Current Practice and Ways Forward.**
- 2. Youth Volunteering Toolkit: Guidelines for Volunteering Involving Organisations and Volunteer Centres.**

Presentation College

“Very informative talk on volunteering. Some great information was given to the TYs.– Edel Murphy



“Many thanks to Sinéad Kirwan from Carlow Volunteer Centre who spoke to our TY students about the importance of volunteering in our local community. They lads really enjoyed learning about opportunities both in the school and local community.” – Lorna

New Communities

- In line with the DRCD, Carlow Volunteer Centre continues to support both the Ukrainian and International Protection applicants in Co. Carlow.
- 497 active non-Irish Volunteers registered with Carlow Volunteer Centre.
- We use a variety of projects as an introduction to volunteering and to integrate our volunteers into their new community.
- Through volunteering, volunteers build social connections, improve language skills, gain confidence and feel a sense of belonging in their new community
- The manager of Carlow Volunteer Centre takes part in inter- agency meetings with Carlow Local Authority.



Community Volunteers

➤ **Carlow Volunteer Centre took part in six Community Volunteer projects in 2025.**

- 1. Lollipop Day**
- 2. St. Patrick's Day Parade**
- 3. Daffodil Day**
- 4. Carlow Pride festival**
- 5. Carlow Arts Festival**
- 6. Pan Celtic Carlow.**

➤ **181 Volunteers have been trained as community Volunteers and are available to take part in events and festivals in Co. Carlow.**

➤ **4 Community Volunteer training sessions took place in 2025**

➤ **Carlow Volunteer Centre receives funding for Community Volunteers through the DRCD and Carlow Co. Council.**



Garda Vetting



- **127 Active Affiliates**
- **125 Affiliates retrained between July and December via 9 Zoom Training sessions.**
- **195 Trained Vetting Officers/Validators**
- **1080 Applications in 2025, a 19% increase on 911 applications in 2024 and the busiest year since 2019**
- **Revenue YTD €10180.00 up from €8060.00 in 2024**
- **33 spot checks carried out YTD- 22 Jan -June and 11 July-December under new compliance guidelines**



Spotlight on Organisations

Spotlight on Organisations

Carlow Volunteer Centre and Kilkenny/Carlow Community Radio delivered a spotlight on five organisations, including Carlow Volunteer Centre, during National Volunteering Week.

déjà vu Charity shop



An Gairdin Beo

Spotlight on Organisations

Spotlight on Organisations



Carlow Park Run

Tullow Men's Shed



Corporate Volunteering



UNUM in IWA



Sli Eile and Tidy town
Clean up

UNUM Clean up



Projects

Threading Paths project

Carlow Volunteer Centre continued to hold a knit-and-chat morning for anyone in Carlow every Thursday morning in 2025. 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, volunteers from our new communities found it easier to integrate, and many have continued to volunteer in events and festivals in Co. Carlow.







People from all over Carlow take part in weekly chess classes as part of our Integration



CVC worked with groups to make stars to contribute to a nationwide goal of weaving one million stars, each representing a stand against violence and a beacon of hope for a safer future.

Delivering Christmas Hampers.



Bethany House

"Thank you so much for your Christmas Hampers, our residents loved them."



St. John's Caring Centre

"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"



Highlight of 2025

Celebrating 20 years Volunteer Recognition event.







Audited Accounts



Carlow Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Cheatharlach

Carlow Volunteer Centre

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

Company Registration No. 426131/Charity No. CHY 17313