



# It's all about time

Volunteering in the Public Sector 2007  
*Summary Report*

An estimated **29,335** (10.4%) of the 282,067 formal volunteers in Northern Ireland are involved in voluntary activities with a public sector body (e.g. hospital, nursing home, etc). This short report looks in detail at the findings in relation to the public sector and it is an extract of the main report available at [www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org)

## Profile

77.2% of all formal volunteers who are involved with a public sector body are female (overall females represent 60.8% of all formal volunteers). This represents 13.1% of all female formal volunteers and 2.8% of all females in the population.

	% of all public sector volunteers	% of total population	% of age group (formal volunteers)	Estimate of public sector volunteers
<b>16-24</b>	22.7	3.7	16.1	<b>6,660</b>
<b>25-34</b>	18.2	2.1	11.8	<b>5,339</b>
<b>35-49</b>	36.4	2.6	11.3	<b>10,677</b>
<b>50-64</b>	18.2	2.1	10.3	<b>5,339</b>
<b>64 plus</b>	4.5	0.4	2.7	<b>1,320</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2.1</b>		<b>29,335</b>

## Activity/focus of the public sector body by number of volunteers

	%	Estimate of public sector volunteers
Children's education/schools	<b>36.4</b>	<b>10,678</b>
Health and social welfare	<b>18.2</b>	<b>5,339</b>
Disability (eg learning, physical, mental)	<b>18.2</b>	<b>5,339</b>
The elderly	<b>13.6</b>	<b>3,990</b>
Youth/children's activities (outside school)	<b>4.6</b>	<b>1,349</b>
Advice and information	<b>4.5</b>	<b>1,320</b>
Cross-community (Protestant/Roman Catholic)	<b>4.5</b>	<b>1,320</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>29,335</b>

### Activities undertaken by volunteers engaged with a public sector body

	%	Estimate of public sector volunteers
Organising or helping to run an activity or event	31.8	9,334
Leading the group/member of a committee/trustees	22.7	6,667
Visiting people	18.2	5,334
Befriending or mentoring people	18.2	5,334
Working with young people	18.2	5,334
Raising or handling money	13.6	4,000
Teaching or training	13.6	4,000
Other	13.6	4,000
Giving advice/information/counselling	9.1	2,667
Representing	9.1	2,667
Other practical help (eg shopping, gardening)	9.1	2,667
Coaching	4.5	1,333
Secretarial, admin or clerical work	4.5	1,333
Promotion	4.5	1,333
Selling tickets	4.5	1,333

Multiple response therefore totals exceed 29,335

- The most common types of formal voluntary activities undertaken by respondents were raising or handling money (32%) and helping to organise or run an activity or event (26%).
- For volunteers involved with a public sector body organising events (31.8%), leading a group/members of committee (most likely a board of governors) (22.7%) and visiting and befriending people (18.2%) are the most common activities.

### How often volunteers are involved with a public sector body

	%	% all formal volunteers
Once a week	45.5	48.6
Once a fortnight	18.2	9.4
Once a month	22.7	15.6
A few times	13.6	17.5
Only once in the last year	-	7.1
Don't know/no reply	-	1.8

- Formal volunteers who are involved with a public sector body tend to volunteer more often than is the case for all formal volunteers. For instance, 86.4% of all public sector volunteers are engaged in some sort of activity at least once a month. Whereas this figure is 73.6% for all formal volunteers.

## Finding out about volunteering opportunities with the public sector

	%
School/college/university	40.0
From someone else already involved in the group	20.0
I set up the group with likeminded people	15.0
Through previously using services provided by the group	5.0
From a friend/family member not involved in the group	5.0
Volunteer bureau or centre (e.g. VSB)	5.0
Local events	5.0
National newspaper	5.0
	100

- For all formal volunteers personal contact through word of mouth, through someone already volunteering in a group, through the church or religious organisation or through friends or family are the main ways through which individuals found out about volunteering opportunities.
- For formal volunteers who engage with the public sector the most common ways they become involved are through schools/colleges, someone else already involved in the group and setting up the group with likeminded people.

## Reasons for becoming involved

	%
I wanted to improve things/help people	40.9
It was connected with the needs of my family/friends	27.3
I had time to spare	22.7
The cause was really important to me	13.6
It helps me get on in my career	13.6
I wanted to meet people/make friends	9.1
My friends/family did it	9.1
I felt there was a need in my community	9.1
I thought it would give me a chance to learn new skills	9.1
I thought it would give me a chance to use my existing skills	9.1
It's part of my religious belief or philosophy of life to help people	9.1
I felt there was no-one else to do it	9.1
I had received voluntary help	4.5
I wanted to structure my day	4.5
It gives a chance to get a recognised qualification	4.5
Other	4.5

Multiple response therefore total exceeds 100

- Just under half of **all formal volunteers** stated they became involved because they wanted to improve things or help people. Motivational factors such as solidarity and associating with a cause such as “the cause was really important to me” and “there was a need in my community” were also important.
- For formal volunteers who engage with the public sector a desire to improve things is also important. This was followed by a connection to friends of family that motivated the individual to volunteer. Having time to spare was the third most cited motivational factor.

## Managing and recruiting volunteers

	%	Overall
Undergo a pre-employment consultancy check	<b>68.2</b>	<b>26</b>
Complete an application form?	<b>54.5</b>	<b>25</b>
Attend an interview/chat?	<b>54.5</b>	<b>30</b>
Provide references?	<b>45.5</b>	<b>24</b>
Declare any criminal record?	<b>40.9</b>	<b>24</b>
Undergo a trial period?	<b>27.3</b>	<b>10</b>

	%	Overall
You are aware of health and safety regulations	<b>90.9</b>	<b>61</b>
You have a named person to go to for support	<b>81.8</b>	<b>45</b>
You are covered by insurance	<b>72.7</b>	<b>51</b>
You received induction into your role	<b>63.6</b>	<b>33</b>
You attend support and / or supervision meetings	<b>50.0</b>	<b>36</b>
You have a written role description	<b>31.8</b>	<b>15</b>
You have a written volunteer agreement	<b>27.3</b>	<b>14</b>

## Experiences of being a volunteer

Friends	Public sector	Overall
Increased	68.2	72.6
Remained the same	31.8	25.0
Decreased	-	-
Don't know	-	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Contact with other community	Public sector	Overall
Increased	54.5	56.1
Remained the same	45.5	40.6
Decreased	-	-
Don't know	-	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## **Public sector volunteers: an organisational perspective**

(9 public sector organisations responded)

### **Level of volunteering in last five years**

	<b>Public sector</b>	<b>All (%)</b>
Increased	<b>57.1</b>	<b>38.0</b>
Decreased	<b>14.3</b>	<b>42.1</b>
Stayed about the same	<b>28.6</b>	<b>17.0</b>
Don't know	-	<b>1.4</b>
Did not have any volunteers five years ago	-	<b>1.5</b>

### **Benefits of engaging with volunteers**

	<b>Public sector</b>	<b>All (%)</b>
Volunteers are very committed/flexible/enthusiastic	<b>100.0</b>	<b>84.3</b>
Volunteers bring new/additional skills to the organisation	<b>100.0</b>	<b>81.7</b>
Volunteers enhance the effectiveness of the organisation	<b>83.3</b>	<b>72.7</b>
Volunteers can help improve services or increase service provision	<b>83.3</b>	<b>69.9</b>
Volunteers assist in the governance and management of the organisation	<b>66.7</b>	<b>79.3</b>
Volunteers raise the profile of the organisation	<b>50.0</b>	<b>67.4</b>
Volunteers promote a sense of community ownership as they are local	<b>50.0</b>	<b>67.1</b>
Volunteers save the organisation money	<b>50.0</b>	<b>65.9</b>
We couldn't operate without their support	<b>33.3</b>	<b>77.0</b>
Volunteers provide a service that we do not have paid staff for	<b>33.3</b>	<b>64.7</b>
Volunteers enable the continuance of programmes — it is the only way we can continue to work	<b>33.3</b>	<b>60.3</b>
Volunteers provide cover/assistance/support to staff	<b>33.3</b>	<b>57.2</b>
Volunteers assist with fundraising	<b>16.7</b>	<b>63.5</b>
Volunteers provide the core work of the organisation	<b>16.7</b>	<b>53.3</b>

**33.3% of public sector bodies surveyed have a specific volunteer budget.**



### **Acknowledgements**

The Volunteer Development Agency would like to thank the Voluntary and Community Unit in the Department for Social Development, for funding this research.

The Agency would like to thank the members of the Research Advisory Group who gave so generously of their time in helping to guide the research.

We would also like to thank all the individuals and organisations that took part in the surveys.

We would especially like to thank NICVA who conducted the research on our behalf and Millward Brown for their assistance in carrying out the Omnibus Survey.



129 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 1SH  
t 028 9023 6100  
f 028 9023 7570  
e [info@volunteering-ni.org](mailto:info@volunteering-ni.org)  
w [www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org)

For copies of the summary or full report in other formats, please contact [info@volunteering-ni.org](mailto:info@volunteering-ni.org)

© Volunteer Development Agency, 2007.

