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JANUARY 2025

# Happy New Year!

*Denise Hayward, CEO, Volunteer Now*



Welcome to the first edition of VConnect in 2025! As we move into a new year, I know you will all be planning to continue to involve volunteers to make a difference in so many communities across N Ireland this year. Although the headline number of people volunteering has returned to pre-covid levels here, I know that there are still challenges to involve people in new and flexible ways. Volunteer Now launched our new [Strategic Plan](#) in November 2024 and will begin implementation in April 2025. We are working to ensure that can continue to support you, our members, in the years ahead by ensuring our sustainability and making sure our work is fit for purpose.

To support you further with this I am pleased to tell you that we have appointed Alice O'Boyle to be the new co-ordinator of Volunteer Now Enterprises. In the next few months,

AIIC: [aiic@volunteernow.co.uk](mailto:aiic@volunteernow.co.uk)

Happy New Year!



## Online Training

- VOLT Session: Investing in Volunteers
- Volunteers & the Law
- Training for Office Bearers, Committee Members, Trustees
- Befriending Training Workshop
- Keeping Children Safe: Designated Officer Training

[View Training Calendar](#)



## VOLT Programme 2025

The team at Volunteer Now are working to develop a programme of VOLT sessions for 2025, aiming to have these arranged as early as possible.

We will be promoting upcoming sessions through our website on the training calendar, but we will also communicate via email.

In January and February we will be delivering the following:

- [Investing in Volunteers Information Session](#) | 28 Jan | 11am-12pm | Online
- [Involving Young People as Volunteers](#) | 13 Feb | 10am-12pm | Hybrid - Belfast & Online
- [Safeguarding Children & Young People - What, When & Who Can You Share Information With?](#) | 25 Feb | 10-11.30am | Online

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## VCSE Digital Hub

Help shape the future of the VCSE Digital Hub in Northern Ireland! The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has engaged Blu Zebra to develop a scoping study and business plan to support the development of a Digital Hub for the VCSE Sector.

Have your say by completing the survey below. Closing date for the survey is 30 January 2025.



### VCSE Digital Hub Survey

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### **Governance Health Check Wednesdays**

The Developing Governance Group members will be delivering five online workshops, one for each of the five principles of the Code of Good Governance (the Code), to help organisations get started on reviewing their own governance practice. They will explain how the Code and Governance Health Check can be used to help board/committee members achieve a greater understanding of what is expected of them in their governance role.

They will also demonstrate how the Governance Health Check and [DIYCommitteeguide.org](http://DIYCommitteeguide.org) can be used to help implement better governance practice in their organisations.

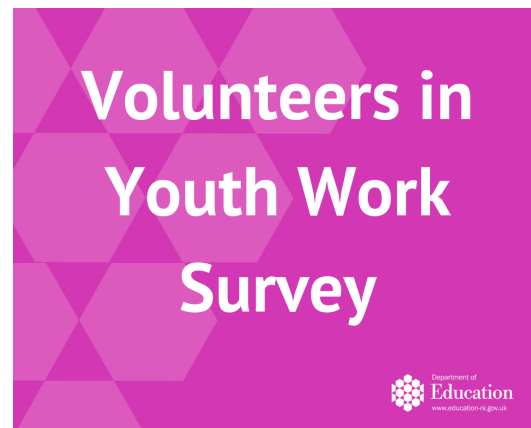
These seminars are open to trustees and employees of voluntary and community organisations as well as those who advise them.

To register for one or all of the workshops, click on the links below:

- **Wed 30 Apr** - workshop 2: Principle 2  
[Working as an effective team](#)
- **Wed 11 June** - Workshop 3: Principle 3  
[Maintaining control, making effective decisions and managing risk](#)
- **Wed 24 Sept** - Workshop 4: Principle 4  
[Acting with integrity](#)
- **Wed 12 Nov** - Workshop 5: Principle 5  
[Being open and accountable](#)

**More information:**

- [The Code of Good Governance](#)
- [Governance Health Check](#)
- [Download the Code of Good Governance](#)

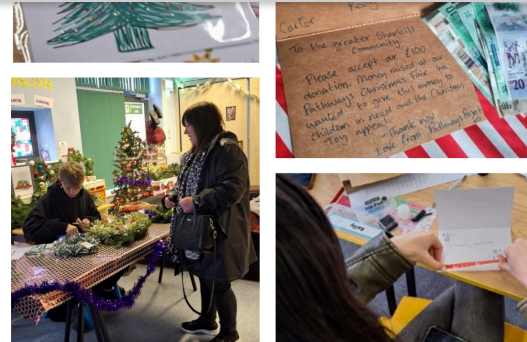


### **Volunteers in Youth Work Survey**

The Department of Education is seeking the views of volunteers involved in youth work. This is to help shape youth work policy.

Please take 10 minutes to complete this survey.

**Volunteers in Youth Work Survey**



## Heroes+ and Extern Pathways

The Heroes+ team have been collaborating with young people from Extern Pathways on Shankill Road since September, fostering creativity, teamwork, and community spirit. This collaboration culminated in a hugely successful Christmas Market held on 17 December, where the group showcased their talents and holiday cheer, all while supporting a meaningful cause.

### Transforming Festive Spirit into Action

The young participants transformed their centre into a magical Christmas Wonderland, complete with festive decorations and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Their creativity and hard work were on full display as they sold a variety of handcrafted items, including homemade shortbread and cupcakes; Christmas wreaths; fabulous handmade cards and custom designed keyrings. Visitors to the market were treated to delicious hot chocolate loaded with festive toppings, while enjoying fun activities like Tree Pong, a creative twist on a holiday game.

The young people were passionate about spreading holiday cheer beyond their centre, ensuring that others in their community could enjoy the magic of Christmas. The group raised £100 and choose to give it to the Greater Shankill Community Toy Appeal.

#### **Team Effort and Support**

With guidance and support from the Heroes+ and Pathways staff, the group not only created and prepared the festive space but also managed the event's operations, showcasing their organisational and entrepreneurial skills. This Christmas market was a shining example of the power of community, creativity, and giving. It highlighted the talents and potential of young people and their ability to make a positive impact.

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why not recognise their efforts through the Volunteer Now Impact Awards?

**We believe that every hour spent volunteering counts, and that's why we offer certification from as little as 10-hours.**

By recognising the commitment of your young volunteers, not only are you rewarding the valuable work they do but you are also supporting their future employment and education prospects.

Click the button below to register.

### Register for Volunteer Now Impact Awards

As part of the Volunteer Now Impact Awards we host an annual recognition event to celebrate young volunteers and the organisations who support them.

We are delighted to announce our next event will take place on the 25 March 2025 at the Europa Hotel, Belfast.

Click the button below to register.



### Register for Annual Recognition Event

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## Grants

### **Ignite Funding Programme - Halifax Foundation**

This funding programme is to support charities that are starting up or recently set up in the last two years. To apply for this funding, organisations must be registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. Priority will be given to charities with limited funds available to them.

### **Ignite Funding Programme**

Home Instead Charities awards grants to wellbeing events, activities or pastimes that prevent social isolation and loneliness among adults over 55. Applications can be submitted four times per year in January, April, July and October. Deadline for January is 31 January 2025.

## Supporting Communities

### **Financial Assistance 2025-26: Call 1 Open - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council**

Find out about the support and funding opportunities available to you. Full information on themes is available by clicking the button below.

Alternatively, you can attend one of the information workshops for further guidance:

- Thursday 23 January | 7pm | Down County Museum, Downpatrick
- Tuesday 28 January | 12.30pm | Online (Teams)

Book your place on [TicketSource](#).

## Financial Assistance 2025-26

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Congratulations to [incredABLE](#), who were awarded their first Investing in Volunteers quality standard and [Depaul](#), who renewed for a second time!

Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is the UK Quality Standard that helps you assess and improve the quality of your volunteer management and involvement, prove and improve the effectiveness of your work with volunteers and enhance your organisation's reputation.

Achieving the standard shows your current, and potential, volunteers how much they are valued and gives them confidence in your ability to provide an outstanding volunteer experience. It also reassures funders of the quality of your practices.



[Find Out More](#)

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Hi, I'm Alice. I joined Volunteer Now as a Development Officer in 2021 and I've just been appointed as the Business Development Coordinator for Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd. I have over 20 years' experience working in the third sector & volunteer management.

My role as Business Development Co-ordinator will include working closely with our delivery teams to shape ideas, programmes and new products and market and deliver these services in order to raise funds that help sustain Volunteer Now. I will be driving growth and sustainability for both Volunteer Now and Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd and creatively engage with the challenges of growing the Enterprises activities.

[Contact Alice](#)

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### Member Spotlight

#### ***Active Communities Network***

Active Communities Network (ACN) Belfast began, in 2009, with a pilot programme in the heart of west Belfast. Ever since, the charity has worked across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland delivering services that benefit disadvantaged communities. We have learnt a lot from the many projects we have delivered across the locality, and have developed a unique methodology from that.

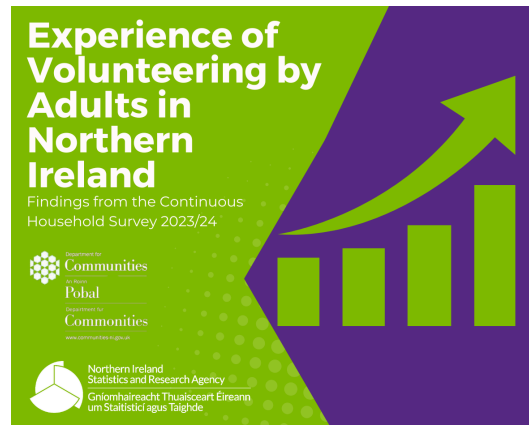
Basing its services on local needs, ACN Belfast works with its partners to deliver the ACN vision: creating opportunities, inspiring

The logo for Active Communities Network is displayed within a teal square. The text 'ACTIVE COMMUNITIES NETWORK' is written in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. To the right of the word 'NETWORK', there are two horizontal teal bars of equal length, stacked vertically.

**ACTIVE  
COMMUNITIES  
NETWORK**

work with a wide range of supportive funders.

## Active Communities Network



### Publication of the Month:

#### **Experience of Volunteering by Adults in Northern Ireland**

In November, the Continuous Household Survey (2023/2024) findings were published, which included specific analysis of volunteering in Northern Ireland. This year, there were different questions asked which assessed formal *and informal* volunteering, allowing for more insight and information. Using the link, please access the full report on volunteering in 2023/2024.

Here, you can find lots of information on trends, the total number of hours, types of activities, reasons why people don't volunteer, and much more. Information can be used to tailor your recruitment approaches, communication with existing volunteers and allow you to see how things are progressing across other organisations.

If you have any queries about the report, please contact [Andrew.Hanna@volunteernow.co.uk](mailto:Andrew.Hanna@volunteernow.co.uk)

## Experience of Volunteering by Adults in NI



### New Members

Welcome to our newest organisational members: [Down District Accessible Transport](#), [Flight Gymnastics Academy](#), [Remakery Studio](#), [Hiking Mums Wales](#), You2Me Play, Fairfield Links CIC, [Versus Arthritis](#), [Dunmurry Community Association](#), [Boys Brigade NI \(Hillsborough\)](#).

This brings our organisational members total to 1164!

[Become A Member](#)



### Flexible, accessible training

Did you know you can learn all you need to know about volunteer management in just 8 hours with our on demand courses? You can complete these anytime, anywhere & on any device! Click below to find out more.

[Find Out More](#)



### Volunteers in Focus: Episode 1 - Jenny, Guide Dogs NI

Meet Jenny, Merchandise Coordinator at Guide Dogs NI. Jenny shares how her work supports the organisation's life-changing services, reflecting on what her role means to her, the fulfilment she finds in making a difference, and the deep emotional connection she's built with the cause.

Volunteers in Focus will prove that no matter your interests, there's a volunteer opportunity waiting for you! Stay tuned for more inspiring stories and discover how you can make a meaningful impact ❤️🌍

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