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MARCH 2025

Older People Volunteering



Denise Hayward, CEO, Volunteer Now

At the end of March 2025, Volunteer Now will launch a campaign in the Belfast area, with support from Public Health Agency, to encourage older people to get involved in volunteering. We know that as a result of covid many older people stepped away from volunteering. Numbers of volunteers overall have rebounded to pre covid levels but numbers of volunteers over 65-year-olds have not gone back to previous levels.

We know that older people benefit hugely from volunteering. It increases physical activity and improves mental health; it prevents loneliness and increases friendships, and it is a huge resource for organisations in our community. Older volunteers report increased levels of overall wellbeing. As a public health approach, volunteering for older people is a very strong positive activity and so Volunteer Now will be leading this campaign to get this message out.

So please share the campaign on your social media when you see it later this month and think about how you can amplify the message to encourage more older people to volunteer in your organisation too. For more information, please contact Lindsay.Armstrong@volunteernow.co.uk.

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- VOLT Volunteer Driving
- Keeping Children Safe: Designated Officer Training
- Inclusion in Volunteering Workshop
- Keeping Adults Safe: Adult Safeguarding Champion & Appointed Person Refresher
- Keeping Children Safe: Designated Officer Refresher Training

[View Training Calendar](#)



Help Shape the Future of Volunteering

The International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) are thrilled to invite you to be a part of their global initiative to develop a Call to Action for the Future of Volunteering! In preparation for the 2026 International Year for Volunteers for Sustainable Development (IVY 2026), IAVE and their partner organisations are leading this effort to hear from volunteers, organisations, businesses, and policymakers about what changes are necessary to unlock the full potential of volunteering for sustainable development.

This is a pivotal moment to elevate the impact of volunteering on sustainable development and secure commitments from governments, organisations, and communities worldwide to create an enabling environment for volunteering to thrive. Don't miss this opportunity to have your voice be heard and to make a difference!

How can you get involved?

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and national dialogues—both in-person and online—to delve deeper into discussions shaping the Call to Action. By lending your voice, you will contribute to a comprehensive strategy aimed at creating an enabling environment for volunteers worldwide.

Get Involved Today

VOLT Session: Volunteer Driving

Join us for this session in partnership with the Community Transport Association. We will be introducing the landscape, explaining the trends and findings from latest research. We will also be speaking about insurance implications, mileage rates and issues around recruitment and retention of volunteers.

If you currently involve volunteers as drivers, or may like to involve volunteers in these roles, we would love to see you at the session.



Book Your FREE Place



Apply Now to Become an #iwill Ambassador!

#iwill is a youth led movement that empowers, supports and amplifies youth social action across the whole of the United Kingdom. Volunteer Now have been the delivery partners of the #iwill movement in Northern Ireland for last decade, directly supporting ambassadors and champions alike.

Each year, a new group of Ambassadors aged 10-24 years old are recruited to join the movement and become the leading voices for young people. Through social action, Ambassadors inspire other young people to join the movement, and collaborate with partners and organisations, playing a pivotal role in shaping and leading change. Ambassadors are provided with exclusive opportunities which develop valuable lifelong leadership skills, through the enhanced support offered by #iwill.

2025 Ambassador applications are now open!

Click the button below to find out more and apply, or contact Matthew, our Volunteering Participation Officer, at matthew.williams@volunteernow.co.uk

[Find Out More & Apply](#)



NEW Short Courses for 2025/26

Volunteer Now have released the first batch of our new short courses for 2025/26! Please click on the course title below to find out more about each course. Don't forget - you can book & pay for any course right away online.

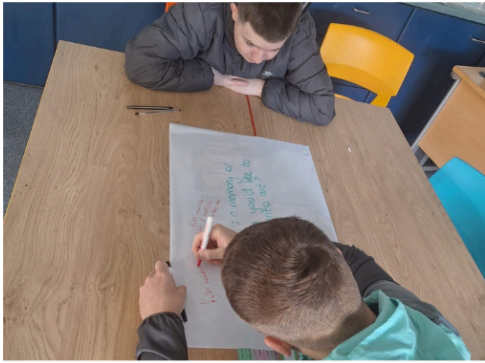
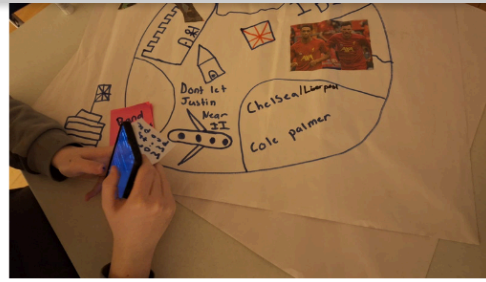
And if you don't see what you are looking for, just drop us an email - we also design bespoke courses.

- [Leading Volunteers: Dealing with Conflicts, Challenges & Problems](#)
- [The 3 R's: Recruit, Retain, Reward Volunteers](#)
- [Induction, Support & Supervision of Volunteers](#)
- [Succession Planning for Volunteering](#)

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Heroes+ Project: March Update

Here are some exciting updates from the Heroes+ project this month! Our team continues to work with incredible young people, helping them to grow and develop new skills. Here's a glimpse of what's been happening:

New Cohort at Lagan Valley Education Centre

We are excited to be working with a new group of young people at Lagan Valley Education Centre. This new cohort brings lots of energy and potential, and we can't wait to support them on their Heroes+ journey.

Focus on Employability with Pathways Group

Our Pathways group has been busy this month, focusing on employability skills and career opportunities. We visited the SSE Arena, where the group had the chance to hear about exciting career paths and learn more about opportunities in the events and entertainment industry. After, we celebrated with some well-earned pizza and time to reflect on what they had learned.

We're also thrilled to announce our partnership with Catalyst, who are running the STRYVE programme. This innovative programme focuses on entrepreneurship, mindset, and creative thinking, giving participants the chance to develop new skills and gain work experience in some of Belfast's most exciting professional environments.

MindOut Programme in Castlereagh

Our Castlereagh group has been making great progress with the *MindOut* programme, which helps participants better understand and manage their emotions. Through engaging activities, they're learning valuable strategies to cope with difficult feelings and develop healthier ways to handle stress and anxiety. It's been wonderful to see the group working through the material as they build their emotional resilience.



Online Health TaskForce Seeks Views

The Online Health Taskforce has launched a survey to seek the views of experts, young people, and concerned parents, on protecting children and young people's health from online harms.

The Taskforce was set up by the [Minister for Health in September 2024](#) in recognition of a growing body of evidence showing a link between online activity and physical and mental health harms, including anxiety, sleep deprivation, eating disorders, self-harm and suicide ideation.

Chaired by children's rights advocate Jillian van Turnhout, the Taskforce is considering the range of social, mental health, physical health and sexual harms linked to online activities and will recommend strategic public health responses to address these harms to children and young people.

To capture the views of experts, young people, and concerned parents, the Online Health Taskforce is inviting interested parties to respond to a survey by 31 March 2025.

Submissions will be used to develop a final report and recommendations for the Minister of Health this year. These recommendations may include national guidelines, regulation, legislation, education, awareness campaigns, as well as additional health and social care supports.

In support of the Online Health Taskforce, the [Institute of Public Health](#) is developing a separate report focusing on the exposure of children in Ireland to the online marketing of health harming products and their engagement in online purchases of these products. Specifically, tobacco, e-cigarettes, gambling, alcohol, sunbed use and foods high in fat, salt, or sugar.

[Complete Online Survey](#)



Supporting Professionals
to Prevent Sexual Abuse



NOTA (NI) Conference

Date: Tuesday 1 April 2025

Venue: Newforge Country Club, 18b Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5NW

Time: Registration from 9.30am - Finish at 4.30pm (lunch included)

Cost: Non-NOTA Members £50, NOTA Members £30, Students £25

The aim of the conference is to raise understanding of:

1. The legal context of adults who commit sexual abuse
2. The risk assessment process of adults who sexually abuse
3. Insight to modus operandi of different types of adults who abuse
4. Exploring the links between domestic, child and animal abuse
5. In-depth insight to intimate partner sexual abuse within domestic abuse
6. Overview of interventions

Who should attend? Those involved in the assessment, treatment and management of adolescents who have displayed concerning sexual behaviour or victims of sexual abuse e.g. social workers, health professionals' psychologists, teachers, youth justice workers, police and probation officers, safeguarding officer in the voluntary sector, policy makers in social care and criminal justice.

[Find Out More](#)



Mid & East Antrim Launch Another Kindness Postbox

Mid and East Antrim Loneliness Network launched another Kindness Postbox between Whitehead Primary School and Radius Housing. The school and housing association have been involved in intergenerational work and are keen to expand this partnership through the Kindness Postbox Scheme.

Marjorie Hawkins, Chairperson of the Loneliness Network, said the initiative holds a special significance for the younger generation.

“The Kindness Postboxes are an incredible way to let local people share a little kindness with each other. Allowing our children to think about care home residents in their community and write to them reminds them they are not forgotten, and someone is thinking about them.

Mid and East Antrim Loneliness Network is committed to reducing loneliness and social isolation in our Borough and getting the message across that help is available and you are never alone. The ‘Kindness Postbox’ scheme is one way of many projects aiming to do just that.”

The Mid and East Antrim Loneliness Network, which launched in 2019, raises awareness about social isolation and coordinates action to address it.

The network brings together key organisations, such as Council, Northern Health and Social Care Trust, as well as voluntary and community groups including Volunteer Now.

The ‘Kindness Postbox’ initiative began in Enniskillen as a response to the isolation caused by the pandemic and is open to everyone. Individuals can contribute by writing a letter, drawing a picture, or sending an uplifting card. All submissions will be collected and distributed to care home residents, offering them much-needed moments of connection.

If you are a school/youth group or a nursing home/fold and would like to get involved in this worthwhile project then please contact Wenda Gray our Volunteering Support Officer and Loneliness Champion wenda.gray@volunteernow.co.uk



Probation Board NI Community Service

Community Service is one of the most successful court sentences in terms of preventing re-offending. Three out of four people who complete community service do not re-offend within one year.

Some examples of community service work are environmental and conservation projects, painting and decorating, contributing to community clean-ups, working in animal shelters or assisting disabled people. The Community Service sentence enables pay back to the community for the harm that has been caused. The work is either under the guidance of our supervisor or staff in the host organisation.

We can't do this without your help! We need to know about projects you think we could work on. Listen to the [Probation Matters podcast](#) where a Probation Service Officer explains what an Enhanced Combination Order and a Community Service Order is, what they entail and how they help change lives for safer communities. There are also interviews with Service Users who have received these Court sentences.

Read the real stories in our [Community Service booklet](#). Service Users and Probation staff were interviewed for the booklet in order to highlight the work done within a community setting to change people's lives for safer communities.

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Belfast Tool Library is the first tool lending library in Northern Ireland. Tool Libraries work just like any other library - you become a member and then you can borrow tools. We're not-for-profit, and are now a registered charity.

Created by a group of keen volunteers with a shared passion to build community, share skills and resources, (and tools!), BTL is growing year on year. Now with 2 part-time members of staff to run both our library and workshop, we offer woodwork classes, and members open workshop sessions, alongside our ever-expanding library of tools.

Belfast Tool Library

Publication of the Month:

Volunteer Satisfaction Survey

It's always important to listen to volunteers' feedback on their role, but also about their experiences as a whole. Volunteers are often your eyes and ears on the ground and therefore, can be a very useful source of feedback.

As we approach the end of the financial year, this time of year can represent a great time to collect feedback and demonstrate the impact being made by your team! This template can give you some inspiration on the types of questions you might wish to ask.



Volunteer Satisfaction Survey



New Members

Welcome to our newest organisational members: [Healthy Living Centre Alliance](#), [The Leprosy](#)



Flexible, accessible training

Did you know you can learn all you need to know about volunteer management in just 8 hours with

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[Beeches Resource Centre](#), [M.E. Support NI](#) and [Include Youth](#). This brings our organisational members total to 1180!

[Become A Member](#)

[Find Out More](#)



Volunteers in Focus: Episode 3 - Kathy, Women's Aid

Meet Kathy, a dedicated volunteer at Women's Aid Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne, Newtownabbey 🌿

Kathy cares for the Safe Haven Garden, providing a peaceful space for the women who come to Women's Aid. Her role lets her blend her love for horticulture with the chance to connect and grow alongside others.

She has helped transform the garden into a welcoming space for everyone—whether they're up for a bit of gardening or simply want to enjoy the peace of this outdoor sanctuary.

Volunteers in Focus shows how passion and purpose come together to make a difference for others and ourselves.

Stay tuned for more inspiring stories and discover how you can make an impact 🌸



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