



Annual Report 2023

**Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more.”
— H. Jackson Brown Jr.**

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Introduction

County Wicklow Volunteer Centre (CWVC) is an independent organisation working with volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. The need for a volunteer centre in Wicklow came from a feasibility study carried out by Bray Area Partnership in 2002, the centre first opened its doors in 2004.

The centre provides a range of services for volunteers and for volunteer involving organisations. For volunteers we act as an information centre, providing advice and support, linking them with their volunteering opportunities of choice. We promote inclusion and integration through every aspect of our work.

We also provide a range of services to volunteer involving organisations. We source volunteers for organisations, provide on going support, help with the development of policies and procedures and give advice as required.

We manage The Wicklow Community Volunteers, providing volunteer support to community events and in emergency situations.

We also provide a Garda Vetting service to groups in County Wicklow.

Our Vision is.....

A vibrant inclusive Irish society; where every person feels connected to their community through active participation in voluntary activities.

Our Mission is.....

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



Core Objectives

Increase access to volunteering by offering a support service to the public and volunteering 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.



A letter from our Chairperson, David Chapman

As this is my first address as Chairman, it would be remiss of me not to open by thanking my predecessor, Eamonn O'Raghallaigh. Having served as Chairperson for almost all of my tenure on the board and through the challenges of the pandemic, I bore witness to his incredible effort in supporting a stretched and strained team within the Centre itself. Having guided the organisation out the other side he provided a seamless handover as he transitioned to the role of Company Secretary.

The Wicklow Volunteer Centre continues to focus and deliver on its core mission to connect volunteers who want to impact their community with the organisations in need of that support. Our team focuses on consistently improving the quality of the volunteering delivered within our communities and broadening awareness through new outreach initiatives across schools, co-sponsored events with the PPN and Ukrainian hubs. The team began a new drive to address the continued challenge of reaching all areas of the county with the first outreach events in West Wicklow, which we plan to build on in 2024.

For such a small team to have such an impact continues to leave me in awe. They have smashed every metric we could put in their stead; enabling nearly 22,000 hours of volunteering, onboarding almost 600 new volunteers and almost 40 new organisations. The team processed over 700 Garda Vetting applications and onboarded 126 new Community Volunteers. These are just some of the achievements of the team, but to think this was achieved by only 4 people is inspiring.

2023 brought with it further challenges in the area of community integration. As global events continued to drive immigration, Wicklow Volunteer Centre was at the heart of helping our new residents find a way to integrate into the local community and get back on their feet. Funding allowed for the hiring of a full-time person to support Ukrainian refugees and other displaced persons within the county. In fact, over 50% of our volunteer registrations in 2023 were non-nationals showing the diversity of those willing to have an impact in the local community.

Possibly the biggest change in 2023 was the retiring of our esteemed and quite simply irreplaceable Manager, Leah Kinsella. Leah served the organisations for over 17 years with incredible fortitude, energy and drive. Her understanding of how to navigate key stakeholders, the respect she garnered from her peers and colleagues and her desire to impact on her community are the foundation of why I'm writing to you today. Few people have given so many years to the Wicklow community. While the Volunteer Centre often works behind the scenes, you'll struggle to find someone who's an impact like Leah Kinsella had on the community of County Wicklow. We are forever indebted.

With Leah's departure, the board and team within the centre were justifiably nervous about the future. We need not fret. Storm Pyper joined the organisation following an interview process in which she shined as having the potential to take us forward with drive and passion. Since stepping into the role, Storm has surpassed our expectations in almost every way. Storm has assimilated into the team seamlessly with an energy and joy that inspires the team to dig deep. Personally, I can't wait to see the impact she has on the organisation in 2024.

None of this would be possible without the incredible team of Fiona Downes, Yvonne Ryan, Olena Geleveria and Storm Pyper. The board and I can't express how impressed we are with your efforts day in and day out. Nothing seems to shake your resolve, there is no challenge too great.

Throughout 2023 and into the current year, Volunteer Ireland has been an incredible supporting organisation. One particular person who deserves recognition is Nina Arwitz, who has gone out of her way to connect and support the network of Chairpersons across the VCs throughout the country. This has been an incredible opportunity to learn and share with other Chairpersons and the benefit continues to grow in 2024.

The year closed with eager anticipation as word started to spread that the funding model review within the DRCD was complete and moving forward to the final proposal. Our centre has not always been in a strong financial position but the last few years, the board and centre team have worked tirelessly to amend that and remove those stresses so we can focus on delivering for the community. However, if the last few years of Covid and Community Volunteers followed by the Ukrainian crisis has taught us anything, it's that we need to be flexible and able to mobilise at a minute's notice. The new funding will be key to securing the right team to support the ever growing needs of our diverse community. The work we've done across the last 12 months wouldn't be possible without the support of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the funding they provide. I'd also like to extend a personal thanks to Michael Nicholson the County Wicklow Council for their support, guidance and funding, a team truly focused on the success of their residents and community.

Within the board, 2023 saw the departure of Eddie Smyth, our trusted Treasurer. Eddie had served on the board for a number of years and was often the one keeping the lights on. At times as a VC, financial prudence can be incredibly stressful but Eddie never shirked no matter how tight the budgets became. His passion for the organisation shone through repeatedly with the time he invested in supporting Leah.

I'd like to conclude by thanking the Board of Directors for continuing to give their time to not only securing the future of the organisation but also their focus on making it a better place to work for the team and to have a bigger impact on the community. A selfless team devoted to their community.

Volunteering in Wicklow 2023.

In 2023 we received funding to support and promote volunteering amongst Ukrainian and other displaced community members seeking protection in Ireland.

Over 50% of volunteer registrations were from non Irish nationals in 2023. We are proud to support our new community members to access volunteering, develop their English language skills, make new friends and integrate into their new communities.

The main challenges in 2023 for the County Wicklow Volunteer Centre was the lack of transportation in rural areas and language barriers between CWVC staff and some of our new community members.

Funding continues to be a challenge. Year by year funding arrangements do not allow for long term strategic planning or job security.



Volunteer Engagement

**Volunteer
Hours**

21,956

62

**Nationalities
represented**

**568 Volunteers
Registered**

Target - 300

**196 Repeat
Volunteers**

The CWVC contacts each volunteer that registers within 72 hours, providing a personal service so that all our volunteers feel valued and appreciated. We offer virtual, in person or over the phone meetings.

The Centre facilitates access to volunteering for non native English speakers. We do this through the multi language translation facility on our website, translated marketing resources and face to face meetings with bi lingual team members.

CWVC runs The Community Volunteer Program and creates local volunteering roles in areas where volunteering opportunities are at a minimum.

Our Bi Monthly EZine is sent to all volunteers on our system detailing new volunteering opportunities that are available.

Our 2022 Volunteer Awards Ceremony was held in February.

Services to Organisations

During 2023, CWVC advertised 195 new volunteering opportunities as well as continuing to highlight and publish ongoing roles from past years.

It is important that we understand the individual needs of each organisation that registers with us. This allows us to build close working relationships that help us to find the right volunteer for each role.

CWVC also provides advice and support regarding volunteer management and and policy writing; attending events and visiting individual groups across the county regularly, promoting best practice in volunteering. Our organisations provide invaluable services to every town and village in Wicklow. We aim to ensure that each organisation provides the best possible volunteering experience.

**38 New
organisations
registered**

Target - 25

**642
organisations
registered in
total**

**195
New Roles
Advertised**

**208
organisations
supported**

10

Outreach Services

In 2023 Wicklow Volunteer Centre visited 8 secondary and other educational settings throughout County Wicklow.

Presentations promoting volunteering were given in conjunction with the Public Participation Network across the 5 municipal districts.

CWVC attended 16 Community Events, networked with local community groups and met with members of the public to increase awareness of the volunteer centre.

All Ukrainian Hubs in Wicklow were visited during 2023. Presentations were given on volunteering and members supported to register. Welcome and integration events were created or supported by Wicklow Volunteer Centre.

IPAS centres were visited giving support to register for residents if needed. Volunteering opportunities were created for the residents of remote centres where transport was an issue.



Community Volunteers

The Wicklow Community Volunteers is a project managed by County Wicklow Volunteer Centre and is part of a wider national Community Volunteers campaign.

The mission of the Community Volunteers is to support community and non-profit events throughout the county as well as providing a coordinated response in the case of a civil emergency.

During the pandemic community volunteers fulfilled their emergency function by supporting the vaccination centres all over County Wicklow. Just as the pandemic restrictions lifted the war in Ukraine began. Our Community Volunteers swiftly jumped into action to support those feeling war. This effort quickly expanded to help those seeking international protection in Ireland. Community Volunteer also help at community events all over the county.

Community Volunteers



126 volunteers were registered on our Community Volunteer Program in 2023

Community Volunteers



Community Volunteers



**Volunteers from
over 27 Countries**

**Helped at 8
Community Events**

**129 hours
completed in 2023**

**Community
Volunteers**

Garda Vetting

CWVC provides a Garda Vetting service for not-for-profits in Wicklow. Alongside processing garda vetting for organisations, the centre offers advice and information around screening and selecting. CWVC specifically delivers training to new vetting officers around their responsibilities in relation to the National Vetting Bureau Act



**701 Vetting Applications
Processed**



**64 Registered
Organisations**



**11
New Organisations
Registered**



**15 New Vetting
Officers Trained**

The Team at Wicklow Volunteer Centre



Yvonne Ryan
Placement Officer

Fiona Downs
Centre Manager

Olena Geleveria
Community Volunteer and
Displaced Persons Support
Coordinator

Storm Pyper
County Manager

Auditors are Colligan O' Cearbhaill,
Bray

County Wicklow Volunteer Centre
Banks with AIB

Company Details

County Wicklow Volunteer Centre
is a company limited by guarantee and
with charity status.

RCN 20057114

Our registered office is
Unit 2 Carlisle House,
Adeliade Rd,
Bray
County Wicklow, A98 K2Y3

info@volunteerwicklow.ie
www.volunteerwicklow.ie



Our Finances

Summary Income	2023	2022
Department of Community and Rural Development	152,306	148,289
Wicklow County Council	10,000	14000
Garda Vetting Services	6070	2530
Ukrainian and Displaced Support Fund	29401	
HSE		26580
Volunteer Ireland	18640	22503
Total	216,417	213,902

Summary Expenditiure	2023	2022
Wages, Salaries and Pensions	157,763	153,091
Rent	8890	6000
Administration and Project Costs	29,857	20,190
Depreciation	1757	876
Total	198,267	180,157
Surplus / deficit	18,150	33,745

A special thank you to all of those who volunteered on our board during 2023

There are six board meetings a year plus the Annual General Meeting.

Eamonn O'Raghallaigh (Chair Jan – May)

David Chapman (Chair June – Dec)

Eddie Smyth (Secretary/Treasurer)

Kieth Scanlon

Deborah Coughlan

Kay O'Connor

Jennifer Darcy

Niamh Comber

(ed May 23)

Each member is interviewed and receives a full induction prior to taking up their position.

