



**Kilkenny
Volunteer Centre**
Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Cill Chainnigh

KILKENNY VOLUNTEER CENTRE

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2025**

WWW.VOLUNTEERKILKENNY.IE

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OUR HISTORY

Kilkenny has a strong and longstanding tradition of volunteering in our county. From the early pioneering work of Bishop Birch and Sr. Stan who founded Kilkenny Social Services which went on to become the blueprint for innovative community care for the rest of Ireland to our deep-rooted sporting traditions, our tourism sector, our environmental initiatives and our world-renowned arts and culture scene, the positive impact of volunteering is felt across all aspects of our community.

Kilkenny Volunteer Centre (KVC) was established with a view to building on this enduring legacy of volunteering in Kilkenny and channelling it where it is most needed in the county.

Prior to the establishment of KVC, County Kilkenny was serviced by a Volunteering Information Service (VIS) under the auspices of Kilkenny LEADER Partnership. This VIS serviced Co Kilkenny from 2016–2020 and provided information to potential volunteers and community organisations.

In 2019, the Department of Rural and Community Development, in tandem with the development of the National Volunteering Strategy, committed to upgrading 7 Volunteering Information Services including Kilkenny to full-scale Volunteer Centres with funding from the dormant accounts fund.

Following the launch of Kilkenny Volunteer Centres and our 6 new sister centres, there is now universal provision in every county with 29 Volunteer Centres in operation nationwide affiliated with Volunteer Ireland, the national support body for volunteering.

Kilkenny Volunteer Centre CLG officially commenced operations and the delivery of an annual workplan of activities in January 2021.



Kilkenny Volunteer Centre is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

The organisation is overseen by a board of 5 trustees. Kilkenny Volunteer Centre board members are appointed on the basis of representing a cross section of the demographics of the county while also having the necessary skills, experience, knowledge and community contacts to assist with the delivery of the core objectives of the Volunteer Centre.

The trustees have responsibility to provide oversight and support to the management, staff, and volunteers of Kilkenny Volunteer Centre. They ensure that KVC meets its legal obligations, that the finances are properly managed, and that the organisation operates in a transparent and fair way.

The board are also responsible for the strategic development of the centre.

As of December 2022, the board of Kilkenny Volunteer Centre are Margaret Whelan, Helen Rothwell, Martin Brennan, Deirdre Hennessy and Mary Mulholland.

Kilkenny Volunteer Centre is staffed by a full-time Centre Manager and a full-time Volunteering Development Officer. Other staff may be employed on specific purpose contracts associated with project delivery.



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KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2021-2022

In 2021

- Launched Kilkenny Volunteer Centre and built steady engagement despite Covid 19 pandemic
- Developed "Volunteering from Home" initiatives in response to Covid restrictions
- Facilitated training to support community organisations to reopen safely during pandemic
- Located and renovated a centrally located premises for Kilkenny Volunteer Centre
- Received our charity status from the Charity Regulator
- Delivered a programme of events for National Volunteering Week 2021
- Developed our Garda Vetting Service
- Developed our website and social media platforms as a community resource for both volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations
- Collaborated with various community organisations to develop inclusive volunteering opportunities for underrepresented groups e.g. Letters of Hope Project and One Million Stars which actively targeted young people and migrant communities
- Delivery of the inaugural Kilkenny Community and Voluntary Awards 2021 in partnership with Kilkenny PPN, Kilkenny County Council and the business sector in Kilkenny which recognised 48 community and voluntary groups and 12 local hero volunteers for their efforts in the community



In 2022

- 🌀 Achieved compliance with the Charities Regulator Governance Code
- 🌀 Delivered a Community Service Roadshow in partnership with Kilkenny PPN to outreach to rural communities
- 🌀 Delivered a structured programme of outreach through the county library service
- 🌀 Trained 8 new affiliate organisations on Garda Vetting legislation
- 🌀 Delivered Volunteer Management training to 22 organisations
- 🌀 Facilitated several inclusive volunteering projects in partnership with key local agencies to enable socially excluded groups to access volunteering e.g. Art of Volunteering project, Knitted Together, One Million Stars, Lets Team Up to Clean Up
- 🌀 Delivered programme of events for National Volunteering Week 2022
- 🌀 Officially opened our new volunteer centre premises with Minister Joe O'Brien
- 🌀 Supported the Ukraine Crisis Response in Kilkenny by participating on the Interagency Response Forum, mobilising volunteers for multiple initiatives and supporting our new Ukrainian community to integrate through volunteering
- 🌀 Continued to strengthen our reputation at the "go to" service for volunteering supports in the county through ongoing relationship building with statutory bodies, community organisations, business sector, education bodies and the heritage and environmental sector in Kilkenny

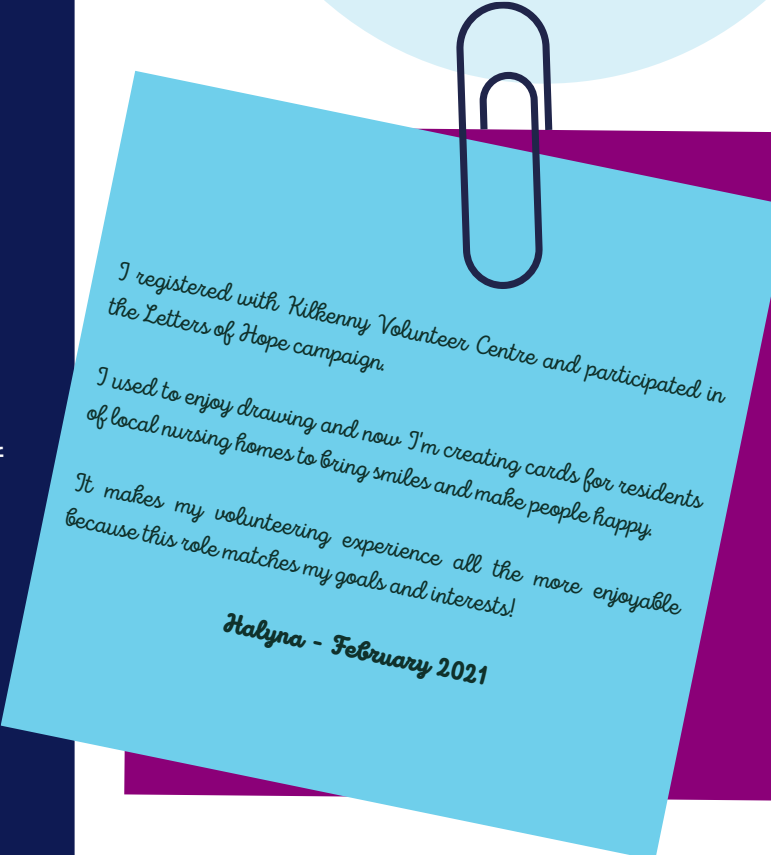


Kilkenny Volunteer is the state funded body tasked with strengthening and supporting volunteering in Co Kilkenny. We do this by supporting people who wish to volunteer to find meaningful volunteering roles, supporting volunteer-involving organisations to recruit volunteers and instil best practice in their work and working collaboratively across multiple sectors to develop, strengthen and celebrate volunteering in our county.

VOLUNTEERS

We offer the following supports to volunteers:

- Information, support, and advice about volunteering roles across Co. Kilkenny
- An opportunity to meet with staff to discuss meaningful volunteering opportunities that address individual needs
- Information on the how, why and where of volunteering
- Access to the IVOL database of volunteering opportunities available across Kilkenny City and County
- Follow-up service to evaluate volunteer experiences



I registered with Kilkenny Volunteer Centre and participated in the Letters of Hope campaign.

I used to enjoy drawing and now I'm creating cards for residents of local nursing homes to bring smiles and make people happy.

It makes my volunteering experience all the more enjoyable because this role matches my goals and interests!

Halyna - February 2021



ORGANISATIONS

We offer the following supports to volunteer involving organisations:

- A free volunteer referral service
- Advertise volunteering opportunities
- Access to a pool of volunteers across Co Kilkenny
- Training, guidance and support on all aspects of best practice in volunteer management
- Networking and peer learning opportunities for volunteer managers
- Garda vetting services
- Kilkenny Community Volunteers programme launching in 2023 will support short-term events, festivals and emergency response in the county



Mullinavat Community Centre is delighted with the service we received from Kilkenny Volunteer Centre.

We recently advertised a volunteering role with them and the calibre of the volunteer referral that we received was exceptional!

We also received helpful advice around appropriate screening for volunteers and we would be more than happy to recommend Kilkenny Volunteer Centre to any organisation in Kilkenny.

Tom Duggan - Mullinavat Community Centre
July 2021

Vision



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

Mission



To promote the inherent value of volunteering and increase the range and quality of volunteering in County Kilkenny

Our Values



Inclusive: We believe that all people should be valued and respected equally and we work hard to be truly inclusive in all aspects of our work



Collaborative: We work in partnership with our volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and other stakeholders to foster and promote meaningful and effective co-operation



Connectivity: We believe that volunteering is a positive force which benefits the community, wider society and the volunteer themselves and helps to build connections with the local community



Integrity: We strive to be professional, trustworthy and accountable and engage openly and honestly with all our stakeholders



In 2020, the board of trustees embarked upon the first strategic planning process for the soon-to-be established Kilkenny Volunteer Centre. With the publication of the National Volunteering Strategy in December 2020, and the resulting commitment by the Department of Rural and Community Development to establish 7 new Volunteer Centres, it was an exciting and energising time for volunteering in Ireland. For the first time, every county would now have access to the services of a full scale Volunteer Centre and the Covid 19 pandemic had ensured that the value of volunteering was front and centre on the national agenda.

Over the next 2 years, Kilkenny Volunteer Centre was warmly welcomed by the community and voluntary sector in the county and despite commencing operations during the height of the pandemic, the service has grown from strength to strength, quickly becoming a well-regarded and dynamic hub for volunteering in Kilkenny.

During these early years, a solid foundation has been laid for the centre grounded in the delivery of quality services, strong governance, and a collaborative approach to our work.

Since its launch, KVC has directly supported over 750 volunteers to find out about volunteering in Kilkenny and engage in voluntary activities that are meaningful to them. The centre has also supported 168 community groups to advertise volunteering roles to wider audiences, engage new volunteers and improve their volunteer management practices.

We have delivered a range of local and national initiatives including National Volunteering Week, the Kilkenny Community and Voluntary Awards, and a structured programme of outreach to bring services to key target areas in rural Kilkenny.

Social inclusion is critical to our work and KVC has developed and delivered a series of inclusive pilot projects in collaboration with key local services which have opened the benefits of volunteering to wider audiences including target underrepresented groups.

Most recently, we have demonstrated our agility and responsiveness by responding quickly and effectively to the Ukraine crisis, mobilising volunteers on a variety of fronts and adding demonstrable value to the Kilkenny community response.

All of this foundational work has already had a tangible and positive impact on the community we serve by raising awareness of volunteering, increasing access to volunteering and improving the quality of the volunteer's experience.

Reflection on these first 2 years of operation has helped us to identify our organisational strengths. Our collaborative ethos has ensured the best use of our time and resources and has allowed us to embed our work within the local infrastructure and foster vital relationships.

Our focus on quality has provided our service users with a positive experience which in turn has helped to cement a strong reputation for our service in a relatively short timeframe.

Finally, our evaluative approach has ensured that the 'voice' of our stakeholders is at the centre of all we do, informing our work with volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and others and ensuring that the services we deliver are relevant and responding to identified needs. We plan to continue to build on these core strengths in all our future endeavours.

As we now embark upon a new strategic planning process, we do however need to acknowledge that the external environment has changed considerably in recent years. International trends are showing that the pandemic has reduced volunteering levels, especially in rural communities. Inflation is now at a record high and the Ukraine crisis continues to place significant strain on all local services.

Furthermore, KVC has experienced steady growth and increasing levels of engagement and demand for our services. While this clearly demonstrates the inherent value of our work, growing demand also has inevitable implications on our resources. While we wish to preserve the quality that has been key to our success to date, resources and staff are now stretched to their limits.

As we move into our second strategic planning phase, we have now had to ask ourselves what will be sustainable on a long-term basis for our centre and what is achievable within our very limited resources.

Our new Strategic Plan has 4 key objectives which have been informed by our discussions on sustainability and capacity as well as consultations with key stakeholders. Workshops were facilitated with staff and board members to feed into this process and a facilitated consultation session with external stakeholders all helped inform and shape this Strategic Plan 2023-2025.

We believe these actions are achievable and will give us a clear framework to guide and progress the work of Kilkenny Volunteer Centre over the next 2 years. We would like to thank all those who have supported our work to date, and we look forward with enthusiasm to implementing these strategic objectives and continuing to develop our centre and promote and support volunteering in our county.



KVC facilitates, develops and supports the volunteering environment in Kilkenny

Rationale: The National Volunteering Strategy was published by the Department of Rural and Community Development in December 2020. It sets out a long-term vision for volunteering in Ireland and provides a clear direction for government policy in relation to the volunteering environment.

Volunteer Centres are named in the strategy as key partners in the implementation of many of the strategic objectives. Therefore, it is vital that the strategic direction of Kilkenny Volunteer Centre is directly aligned with the vision laid out in this strategy. Our first strategic objective is therefore directly linked to strategic objective 2 of the National Volunteering Strategy.

KVC will progress this objective by:

- Connecting those who wish to volunteer with local opportunities to serve their communities
- Providing a volunteer referral service for volunteer-involving organisations
- Promoting the multiple benefits of volunteering to audiences across Co Kilkenny
- Building the capacity of local community groups and organisations to implement best practice in their volunteer programmes
- Exploring and developing opportunities to work collaboratively with current and/or new stakeholders which will advance volunteering in Kilkenny
- Participating in local, regional and national initiatives and advocating for best practice in volunteering

We know we are making progress when:

- Volunteers provide positive feedback on their use of KVC services and their volunteering experiences with local volunteer-involving organisations through our follow-ups, evaluations and annual surveys
- Volunteer-Involving organisations report increased capacity to engage and manage volunteers in their communities
- There is repeat usage of our services and supports by volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations
- Increased collaboration between key stakeholders resulting in greater benefits for the volunteering environment

KVC will increase diversity in volunteering

Rationale: Another key element in the vision of the National Volunteering Strategy is to improve awareness of and increase participation in volunteering activities, particularly among those sections of our society that are currently under-represented (Strategic Objective 1 – National Volunteering Strategy 2020–2025).

Social inclusion is furthermore key to the vision of Kilkenny Volunteer Centre and we believe that everyone should have an equal opportunity to volunteer. We have already seen how volunteering can be a powerful vehicle for social inclusion in our work to date and we will therefore commit to continuously supporting increased diversity in volunteering.

KVC will progress this objective by:

- Actively promoting volunteering to a wide range of people from different backgrounds in our community
- Continuing to develop and deliver taster projects aimed at key target groups which will open the benefits of volunteering to under-represented groups with a view to fostering longer term engagement in their communities
- Supporting Volunteer-Involving Organisations to recognise the value of engaging diverse volunteers and the value of delivering inclusive volunteer programmes
- Increasing the range, quality and number of volunteering opportunities offered to volunteers in the county
- Ensuring that the board of Kilkenny Volunteer Centre is reflective of the diversity of the wider local community

We know we are making progress when:

- The diversity of our communities is reflected more proportionately in the volunteering base
- Volunteers from under-represented groups provide positive feedback on their volunteer experiences during follow-ups, evaluations, and annual surveys
- Membership of the board of Kilkenny Volunteer Centre reflects the diversity of the wider local community

KVC will commit to continued rural presence

Rationale: International and national trends have shown that the Covid 19 pandemic has resulted in a notable decline in formal volunteering. This is most acutely felt in rural communities, the communities that are most dependent upon volunteering for the delivery of key services and supports.

County Kilkenny remains a predominantly rural county and through our outreach work to date, rural groups and organisations have reported significant difficulties in attracting and retaining volunteers. Our engagement with rural communities has also highlighted a lack of awareness about the supports that Kilkenny Volunteer Centre offers. Therefore, we will commit to continued presence in the towns and villages across Co Kilkenny as our resources allow.

KVC will progress this objective by:

- Delivering a structured programme of outreach to key target areas in rural county Kilkenny
- Linking with existing rural infrastructure to build key relationships and raise awareness of our work
- Exploring collaborations with other key agencies who also have a rural remit (e.g. PPN, Older People's Council, KCETB) in order to ensure best use of time and resources
- Building and nurturing relationships with key rural leaders who will champion KVC services in their communities
- Developing projects and initiatives in target areas which will enable KVC to entrench our service in rural Kilkenny

We know we are making progress when:

- There is increased engagement in KVC services by both volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations in rural Kilkenny
- New collaborative projects and initiatives are developed which will advance volunteering in rural communities
- There are strengthened working relationships with rural organisations as evidenced in case studies, evaluations and/or annual surveys

KVC will be committed to sustainability and quality in all we do

Rationale: Kilkenny Volunteer Centre is committed to future-proofing our work by placing quality, transparency, and sustainability at the heart of all we do. As a key support service for the community and voluntary sector, we need to be beacons of best practice across all our activities from our governance, accountability, and resource management to our dedication to quality and our investment in our staff and board. This will help ensure our long-term relevance and our capacity to serve our purpose within our community.

KVC will progress this objective by:

- Continuing to meet our legal and statutory obligations
- Ensuring governance structures, processes and policies meet standards of best practice in the sector
- Achieving the Volunteer Ireland National Volunteer Centre Quality Standards
- Managing our financial resources prudently and transparently and exploring new funding streams to ensure the financial stability and sustainability of KVC
- Developing an annual workplan which advances KVCs strategic objectives and consistently monitoring progress on its implementation
- Evaluating our work and seeking feedback from our service users on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are working to the highest standards
- Investing in KVC staff and board with a view to strengthening our organisational capacity and competence to deliver our strategic goals

We know we are making progress when:

- We achieve the National Volunteer Centre Quality Standards and maintain compliance with the Charities Regulator Governance Code
- Staff and board development, satisfaction and professionalism are maintained and enhanced
- Satisfaction ratings by service users are consistently positive
- Sustainable funding and finance is secured
- We deliver on objectives laid out in annual workplans and strategic plan
- We develop partnerships across multiple sectors in Co Kilkenny (community and voluntary, education, business, health sport, heritage, environment etc) which will serve to sustain, support and celebrate volunteering and volunteers.
- The work of KVC is embedded in local communities across the county

Responsibility for the monitoring and review of this document will sit with the Kilkenny Volunteer Centre board of trustees. A midterm review of this strategic plan will be scheduled in the last quarter of 2023 and a final review at the end of 2025.

The manager will also report on the progress of the strategic actions and on the indicators above at board meetings throughout the term of this plan and progress will be identified based on movement of these indicators. Where the indicators suggest the strategic objectives are not being delivered upon or difficulties are being encountered, the board, with support from the staff team will identify and implement actions to address these issues.

