



20 May 2020

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Chief Executive's Comments

Planning to Sustain Volunteering

Over the past 7 weeks the world as we knew it has changed. Many of the things we took for granted no longer apply. However, as we begin to look to the future with the publication of the NI Executive plans for easing the lockdown, we must focus on planning for the coming months to sustain the volunteering which has been a vital part of the response to date.

Volunteer Now has started a series of discussion sessions for members to give you space to think about how your volunteering programmes will need to adapt in the coming months. For more information [click here](#).

We have a large number of people who are keen to volunteer and in the coming months it is possible that many of the volunteers who have been regularly involved with organisations in the past may be shielding and not able to volunteer at the moment. If you need to recruit new volunteers, please contact my colleague Jane Gribbin – jane.gribbin@volunteernow.co.uk.

We must also consider how to build more sustainable volunteering for the coming months and remember the good practice around effectively managing volunteers, ensuring they have regular breaks, making sure they can have time out to re-charge

their batteries, making sure that they are being well supported and have someone to go to with concerns, especially if the roles they are involved in are emotionally demanding. In the thick of the first stages of the response, many of these things may not have been possible, however, now is the time to start to put things onto a firmer footing for the demands in the months ahead. For more details on our resource information to support you with this, please [click here](#).

Finally, and most importantly, it is important to recognise the volunteers who have played such a vital part in the response.

Volunteers' Week is taking place as usual between the 1st and 7th June. This year the Week will focus on saying thank you to the many volunteers who have made such a difference during the Covid 19 crisis and to the many volunteers who make such a difference in more normal times. For more details on Volunteers' Week please see our article below.

Volunteer Now is working hard to support volunteers and organisations to respond to the COVID 19 pandemic. If you need more support or information, please do not hesitate to contact me at denise.hayward@volunteernow.co.uk.

Denise Hayward

Chief Executive

Volunteers' Week 2020 - Time to Say Thank You!

Volunteers' Week 1–7 June normally sees hundreds of celebratory events take place around the country. It is organised as a partnership between Volunteer Now, NCVO, Volunteer Scotland and Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

Volunteer Now would like to take this opportunity to update you on some decisions we have made about Volunteers' Week 2020.

Each year, every organisation that takes part in Volunteers' Week decides how best to mark the week in their own way however many of us are facing challenges we never imagined and due to social distancing, the usual events and celebrations will not be taking place.

This year we feel it is even more important to raise awareness of the vital role volunteers play in supporting society. We also recognise that many organisations may be facing difficult times and that their volunteers may not currently be engaging in their usual roles. With this in mind we feel strongly that it is important to mark the week and to highlight it as a '**Time to Say Thank You**' to ALL volunteers especially with so many people 'stepping up' to help in a wide variety of ways during this Pandemic.

Each day during Volunteers' Week will focus on a different aspect of volunteering to ensure we shine the spotlight on the many types of volunteers who play a significant role in our communities.

To find out more about our Themes for the week [click here](#).

Your organisation is best placed to decide what to do in your area. If you are going ahead with any Volunteers Week plans please use **#VolunteersWeek** message on social media.

Keep telling volunteering stories. People are stepping up to help in ways we have not seen before. Telling their stories is a great way to recognise and thank them for all the great things they are doing. Volunteer Now has launched the [#HelpEachOther](#) campaign in Northern Ireland to offer guidance and support to Volunteer Involving Organisations and those who want to volunteer. We would love to hear and share your volunteering stories as well as how you have been coping throughout this crisis. Please tag us on social media or email your stories and pics to: Julie.Cusick@volunteernow.co.uk.

Let's make 1-7 June a '**Time to Say Thank you**' for the commitment of our volunteers!

Community Projects

Community Projects are delighted with the fantastic response from our volunteers in delivering much-needed services to vulnerable older people across Belfast. We have moved to providing telephone befriending and shopping support for older people during covid-19. Here are updates from two of our Shopping Support Volunteers, telling you about their role:

Shopping Support Volunteer – Kevin Doonan

Before volunteering I was working as a barista in Belfast City Airport. My plan was to save enough money to pay to do a Masters in psychology which I'm happy to say I've been accepted to study with Queens University. My long term goal is to work toward becoming a clinical psychologist.

I always believe it is important to give back when I can. I lost my mum to cancer two years ago and was inspired by Marie Curie nurses. Since then, I have worked and volunteered with Marie Curie UK on a few different campaigns such as Scrap the Six Months and the 2019 Great Daffodil Appeal. When the lockdown was declared and eventually the trust was looking for volunteers I thought that I should find away to give back during this time. This is when I came across Volunteer Now and applied.

Basically my role consists of food shopping for the most vulnerable individuals who can't leave their homes. I have picked up groceries and topped up electric and gas cards for older people in my local area.

Shopping Support Volunteer – Maura O'Brien

Maura was interviewed by the Belfast Telegraph as she is currently on furlough and has given up some of her time to volunteer. Maura from Glengormley was previously an administrator with a construction firm for over three years before being furloughed on April 1. Now she is using her free time to go shopping for an elderly couple who are self-isolating after registering with the Volunteer Now website.

"It's a chance to give something back because initially I felt a sense of guilt that I was still being paid to do nothing whilst others are working hard on the front line. I phone the couple every week, get their order for groceries the next day, do the shopping and then leave it on their porch. At this stage I know their shopping list better than my own. They are a lovely couple and you could easily sit and talk to them all day on the phone. I'm glad to be doing this as I can't get to see my own parents back in Co Tyrone at the moment. You'd love to be able to do more but every little helps. I'd urge anyone considering doing something to help others so just get out there and do it."

VOLT Online Sessions

Join us on a Thursday morning for a chance to chat and think about volunteering and the issues and challenges in the post COVID scenarios. We have looked at charity shops and explored the issues around recruitment given many volunteers will not be able to return, the measures that need to be in place to operate shops and the new roles that will need to be created to help charity shops do business safely and efficiently.

This week's session is **fully booked** but next week we will be looking at activities with young people and plans in June include community transport, environmental and heritage, fundraising roles.

To find out more information on the VOLT Online Sessions and how to sign up, please [click here](#).

Good Practice Through COVID-19

Volunteer Now has risen to the challenge during lockdown to provide as much information as possible to help groups involve volunteers effectively in a range of COVID related roles. This has also included very important safeguarding information to make sure that volunteers keep themselves safe but also those that they are helping. You can see our full list of resources [here](#).

Note that we have been adding to our volunteer guidelines to include a range of things such as links to resources to help volunteers look after their emotional wellbeing (this includes links to training courses that can help especially if volunteers are dealing with very challenging issues on calls with people who are feeling very vulnerable). We have also developed information that can be given to those who are at the receiving end of offers of help as unfortunately we need to be mindful that not all offers of help are genuine and well-intended. An information sheet about spotting the signs of financial abuse is also now available so please make sure the information gets to the people who need it most.

FREE Online Safeguarding Courses

Volunteer Now have a range of free online safeguarding training, supported by the Health & Social Care Trust and the Department of Health. These courses act as an introduction only and does not replace face to face training, which should be attended following completion of any of these sessions below.

Keeping Adults Safe: See Something, Say Something - This session is suitable for staff and volunteers who may have some interface with adults at risk of harm but who do not work closely with them, to introduce them to adult safeguarding issues. ***This is a Key Course for volunteers taking part in our #HelpEachOther Campaign and it is also suitable for the general public who may have concerns about their family, friends or neighbours.**

Adult Safeguarding Champion: Meeting the Requirements - This taster session is suitable for managers, supervisors and management committee members in organisations which deliver services and/or activities for adults, to find out about the role of the Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC) and provide guidance on how this role should be implemented within their organisation.

Keeping Children & Adults Safe: An Introduction for Management Committee Members - This session is suitable for management committee members in organisations which deliver services or activities to children, young people and/or adults and provides a brief overview of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

To access any of the FREE Safeguarding Courses above, please [click here](#).

Nominate Someone for #TheBigThanks

Eden Project Communities launches #TheBigThanks join in with shout outs on social media, on bill boards and with little gifts popped in the post, to spread positivity in a first step to maintaining community mindedness after the pandemic ends.

As millions of us struggle to cope with continued physical distancing measures, people are beginning to ask what will be the new normal? Hundreds of thousands of people are already taking positive action in response to the Covid-19 crisis, from coming out to clap to creating cheery messages for neighbours to see, sharing groceries or going above and beyond to deliver food parcels, medicines, sewing scrubs for the NHS and more.

Alison in Portstewart is recovering from cancer she is supporting the NI scrubs activism by sourcing materials - We safely dropped some materials off and she told us "I am staying positive and finding energy I never knew I had, its helping me through it all, having a purpose!"

Speaking about #TheBigThanks Northern Ireland Manager of Eden Project Communities and The Big Lunch, Grainne McCloskey said "We dropped off a little thank you to Alison because we want to recognise all the powerfully ordinary people like her doing what they can to be positive and get us through this. With #TheBigThanks campaign we hope it will be a first step in the community response to the question: What will be the new normal? We hope that the new normal may start with a better connected community where people take time for each other, lean in and support each other more.

We have had lots of people get in touch interested to do something on their street after the pandemic, and we are encouraging them to take small steps now, by linking in with our network and following Volunteer Now's guidance being visible and available to neighbours whilst being safe. We are also supporting all those doing what they can where they live with our weekly lunchtime get togethers and anyone can [join in here](#)."

Eden Project Communities developed a Community Action Response to Covid-19, and over thirty of their partners including [The National Lottery Community Fund](#), [NICVA](#), [Volunteer Now](#), [Neighbourhood Watch](#), [Neighbourly](#) and the [Campaign to End Loneliness](#) recognise positive action comes in all guises, and how important it is to celebrate even the small things people do.

The absence of physical human contact has increasingly negative impacts over time, so partners are stepping up efforts to recognise the hyper local action and want to encourage everyone to make positive social gestures, feeding community spirit that will enhance our resilience over time.

Even the smallest acts of kindness can make the world of difference to people who might be struggling, and they allow us to connect with our neighbours.

Join The Big Thanks and spread a little joy with your #TheBigThanks shout out and be part of something special.

The Big Lunch

We're delighted to announce that The Big Lunch will go ahead on 6&7 June! *(but it will be a little different)*

The Big Lunch is the UK's thanksgiving weekend for neighbours and communities - a time when people come together to celebrate community connections and get to know one another a little better. Now more than ever, we need to make time for each other. So let's get the nation talking over a cuppa and a bit to eat and have some fun with The Big Virtual Lunch on 6-7 June 2020.

For those of you who have been to a Big Lunch before, things will need to be a little bit different this year, but community spirit is shining bright, and whether you are a first timer or an old hat, there are lots of ways you can join in. We have created a Big Virtual Lunch pack full of ideas, games and tips that you can download with a simple click, [here](#).

If you have any questions, please send us an [email](#) or call us on 0800 022 3357, and make sure you're signed up for our [monthly newsletter](#) so you can keep up to date with developments. Don't forget to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) too!

EBCDA's eBulletin

East Belfast Community Development Agency's (EBCDA) eBulletin features details on local community support and information available in East Belfast in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. There are sections with updates on neighbourhood support, statutory agencies, community services and other local community news updates.

This eBulletin is produced twice a week. To sign up for the eBulletin, please email jonny@ebcda.org.

Membership

Membership of Volunteer Now is open to all organisations and individuals with an interest in volunteering. There is no fee. By becoming a member you add your voice to support volunteering. Sign up for FREE membership at www.volunteernow.co.uk/members.

Submit your Article

If you have volunteering related news, events, publications etc. to share, email training@volunteernow.co.uk

VTraining

Volunteer Now also publish a free enewsletter called VTraining that includes all Volunteer Now training courses and workshops. To subscribe, please email training@volunteernow.co.uk

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Supported by the Northern Ireland Executive through the Department for Communities.

Volunteer Now delivers services across Northern Ireland. We have offices in Belfast, Antrim, Enniskillen and Newry.

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