

18 November 2020

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Discover events from across the sector, from one-off events to longer term.

Anything you want to add?

Think about what you might want to hear more about in VConnect or anything you want to see on our Training Calendar and [let us know](#).

Chief Executive's Comments

As we have moved through another period of restrictions, we can see that some of the challenges we are facing as a sector are changing. The longer term impacts of isolation on individuals are becoming clearer and the challenges of loneliness are ever more noticeable as the winter evenings are upon us.

Loneliness affects people of all ages and from all backgrounds, with one in five people in Northern Ireland reporting that they feel lonely always or often. Feeling lonely always or often can affect someone's health and wellbeing over time, putting them at higher risk of cognitive decline, coronary heart disease and mental ill-health. For people living alone and with weak social connections, it is as harmful to their health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Despite these severe impacts, Northern Ireland is the only region of the UK without a bespoke Loneliness Strategy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also, inadvertently, made Northern Ireland's loneliness problem worse, with lockdown restrictions – while vital to stopping the spread of the virus – inhibiting many of the connections that act as a buffer against feelings of loneliness.

Volunteer Now is part of the [Action Group on Loneliness Policy](#) which is coordinating a cross-organisational letter to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, asking for the development of a Northern Ireland Loneliness Strategy. The letter raises awareness of the issue and asks for their support in developing a future strategy. If you would like to see a draft copy of the letter, please contact Craig Harrison at the email below.

If you would like to sign the letter could you please send:

- the name of the signatory from your organisation; and
- a copy of your organisation's logo;

to craig.harrison@mariecurie.org.uk by Tuesday 1 December 2020.

Denise Hayward

Chief Executive

Gemma Brolly

Staff at Volunteer Now were deeply saddened on 3 November 2020 to hear of the death of Gemma Brolly from Newry.

Gemma has a long history with our organisation and with the volunteer centre network. A previous Board Member of the Volunteer Development Agency and Manager of the Newry Volunteer Centre, she was instrumental in steering the path for the development of Volunteer Now and an integrated regional and local volunteering infrastructure. She was passionate about volunteering and in particular she was committed to developing volunteer involving services to meet the needs of people in her local area. Despite ill health throughout her working life, she never let it stop her and she had a drive and enthusiasm that was infectious.

Having known Gemma for over 30 years, Sandra Adair, Volunteer Now reflected on Gemma's life by saying:

"I remember the first day I met her. She was one of those people that you would never forget. You just had to meet her once and she made an impression that stayed with you. She inspired you to do things to make a difference in the community, a true legend."

ChristmasTIME - A Time To Give & Connect

As the festive season approaches, Volunteer Now is launching their annual ChristmasTime campaign and appealing to people throughout Northern Ireland to consider volunteering their time to help raise much needed funds or to donate gifts to a local charity.

With the on-going challenges of Covid-19, it is incredibly difficult for many charities to undertake their usual Christmas activities however there are still opportunities available which will still make a huge difference.

In addition, Christmas can be a lonely time for some folk but there are many ways of keeping people connected; checking in with a neighbour, catching up by a phone call or sending a card to show you care.

Denise Hayward, Chief Executive, Volunteer Now explains,

"Many of the charities and community organisations who usually need extra help around Christmas with their festive volunteering opportunities are now faced with cancelling group activities such as santa grottos which were in many cases a fundraising lifeline to the charity.

The on-going pandemic has brought a number of challenges and impacted on us all. However, volunteers have shown that they can really make a difference to individuals and groups and are passionate about helping others through these difficult times. There are many organisations which have safely restarted their volunteer services and requests for help are likely to continue, some in the same ways or perhaps in new ways. We would like to encourage people to think about getting involved in a fundraising activity or offering time to volunteer, not just for Christmas but to make it part of their routine – even an hour can make a very positive impact."

To have a look at volunteering opportunities available near you, use the 'volunteer search' on our homepage:

www.volunteernow.co.uk or check out some ChristmasTime options here: www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteering/inspire-me/christmas-volunteering/

If you are a volunteer involving organisation and would like to promote your volunteering opportunities with us, please get in touch and we will be happy to support you. Contact: opportunities@volunteernow.co.uk.

Online Training

The New Environment: Volunteers & the Law

- [23 November](#), 10.30am-12pm, £10 +VAT

The New Environment: Recruit, Retain, Reward Volunteers

- [30 November](#), 10.00am-11.30am, £5 +VAT

Keeping Children Safe: Policy Development

- [1 December](#), 10am-12.30pm, £15 +VAT

Keeping Children Safe: Designated Officer Training

- [8 December](#), 10am-3.30pm, £75 +VAT

Full Courses Scheduled calendar - <https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/training/courses-scheduled/>

VOLT Sessions

Keeping Volunteers Safe Through a Pandemic - [Wednesday 25 November 2020](#) at 11am-12pm

Incentivisation and Volunteering - Is It A Paradox? - [Thursday 3 December 2020](#) at 11am-12pm

Remote Volunteer Management - Motivating Volunteers From A Distance - [Thursday 10 December 2020](#) at 11am-12pm

If you are interested in attending, please click on the relevant date.

Festival of Discovery

As COVID-19 limits our social interaction again, the Eden Project want to provide a moment this autumn when people can come together and enjoy something which looks to the future.

Running online on 20-21 November 2020, The Festival of Discovery is completely **free** and includes entertainment, wellbeing, topical discussions, things to make and do, and real-life stories from communities across the UK. Join us and some very special celebrity guest and contributors as we set out on an exciting journey to explore what a better future might look like for us all.

Hear what **Eddie Izzard** has to say about making humanity great again, find out the five things **Jo Brand** has discovered about life, and get the blood pumping with **Mr Motivator**, to name but a few of our fantastic festival acts.

Wander round our virtual Eden Project festival grounds from the comfort of your own home and sign up for whatever you fancy - it's all free and with new acts still being added, there is something for everyone at [TheFestivalofDiscovery.com](https://www.edenproject.com/festivalofdiscovery).

The Festival of Discovery is brought to you by the Eden Project and made possible by the National Lottery.

VCSE COVID Recovery Fund

On behalf of the Department for Communities (DfC), Co-operation Ireland in partnership with Rural Community Network announces the opening of the VCSE COVID Recovery Fund.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations across Northern Ireland - a high proportion of these organisations have refocused their objectives to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable in our society. At the same time, the pandemic also demonstrated the value and contribution of VCSE organisations in the delivery of services provided to those most in need.

The VCSE COVID Recovery Fund has a total value of over £3 million and aims to:

1. Provide additional funding to VCSE organisations to procure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other items to

- enable the re-opening and continued delivery of vital community services.
2. Support VCSE organisations to move services online and increase digital connectivity for organisations delivering mental health supports and/or providing services to young people, older people, those who are medically isolated, the disabled and women.

The Fund will be open to applications from Thursday 12 November 2020 to Friday 11 December 2020 at 4pm. Funding must be spent by 31 March 2021.

To make an application or for further information on what support is available, please [click here](#).

#iwill Week and the #PowerOfYouth 16-20 November 2020

Every year, organisations and young people come together to shout about the incredible #PowerOfYouth during #iwill Week. Despite the pandemic, this year is no different. Celebrating what young people are already doing, and looking ahead to what's next. End the year looking into the future by sharing your commitments, what you've learnt by taking part in the campaign, and how you are going to grow the #PowerOfYouth in the post-pandemic world, and to create a better future together.

#PowerOfYouth does not belong to one organisation or to one brand - it is an expression of the power young people have to lead positive change. Young people, organisations, leaders, decision makers. Anyone who believes in supporting and empowering young people. **All are welcome** to take part in the campaign!

[Find out how you can get involved.](#)

Volunteer Wellbeing: What Works & Who Benefits?

Volunteer Now has always promoted the benefits of volunteering, not least to volunteers' own health!

In Northern Ireland, the most recent research (Continuous Household Survey 2019/20) shows that the most commonly cited benefit as a result of volunteering was it **"makes me feel better about myself."** A review carried out in 2020 for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing and Spirit of 2012, has explored 158 studies about volunteers and their wellbeing. Focusing on adult formal volunteers, it has highlighted the key factors involved in improving wellbeing through volunteering. It found high quality evidence that volunteering is positively linked to enhanced wellbeing, including improved life satisfaction, increased happiness and decreases in symptoms of depression. This is clearly important information for those designing, delivering and managing volunteer activities.

We are delighted therefore that **Dr Jurgen Grotz**, Senior Research Fellow, Director of the Institute for Volunteering Research, who was involved in the review is available to tell us more about the findings and how we can learn from them.

Join us for this **free** seminar on **4 December 2020 at 11am-12.30pm**. Book your place [here](#).

Volunteer Now Involved in New Research Project

New research will explore lessons learnt and recommendations for UK recovery.

Experts from across academia and the voluntary sector are to carry out a major research project into the role of voluntary action in the COVID-19 pandemic - exploring the challenges, what worked well and making recommendations to inform planning for future crises.

The research will compare the volunteering response in each of the UK's four nations, sharing positive examples with the aim of shaping future policy and supporting the UK's economic and social recovery.

The project is a partnership between six UK universities and representatives from a variety of voluntary organisations, including the four key voluntary sector infrastructure bodies for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland.

Almost £420,000 has been awarded by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC), part of UK Research & Innovation (UKRI), following a rapid response call for projects which contribute to our understanding of, and response to, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts.

Denise Hayward, CEO of Volunteer Now said:

"Volunteer Now is delighted to be part of this study to enable us to explore the learning from the volunteering response during the pandemic and to learn from that for the future."

Read the full article [here](#).

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.

Main Office: The Skainos Centre, 239 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 1AF. T: 028 9023 2020

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Volunteer Now
The Skainos Centre
239 Newtownards Road
Belfast, England BT4 1AF
UK

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