

20 January 2021

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Looking for volunteers?

Register your organisations volunteering opportunities FREE of charge. Check out our guide - <https://bit.ly/2ZG7cXH>

Events

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

Welcome to the first edition of V Connect for 2021. I would like to wish all of our members and volunteers a Happy New Year, despite the challenging circumstances.

Volunteer Now has updated its guidance in the light of the new restrictions in place since the end of last week and there are further details in this edition of V Connect.

This month sees the 25th Anniversary of the start of our safeguarding work. Our Duty to Care (ODTC) was established in 1996 to promote the principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people, as outlined in the Our Duty To Care guidelines recognised by government and the voluntary and community sector. The project responded to the needs of organisations to meet and maintain minimum standards of good practice. Our thanks to the Department of Health and the Health and Social Care Board who have supported the work over that period as it has developed and grown.

The work of the Volunteer Now Safeguarding Team was extended in 2009 to include working with adults who are at risk. It now also offers support for organisations to use the Access NI service, which did not exist when the work started. The Team has worked with the Department to lead the development of standards for both child and adult safeguarding and has worked across Ireland and the UK. We have worked with a wide range of volunteers, paid staff, management committees and service users within all sizes of groups/organisations to support safer environments for adults and children. Safeguarding is integral to the involvement of volunteers in many organisations and the scope of our work is always developing.

Volunteer Now is proud of the expertise that we have built up and I want to pay tribute to the staff in the Our Duty to Care Team. I also want to thank our many partners, organisations, cascade trainers, staff and volunteers that have worked with us over the

years and enabled Volunteer Now to provide support around safeguarding children, young people and adults across the sectors.

Please keep an eye out for special anniversary events during this year.

Denise Hayward

Chief Executive

Keeping Connected in 2021

Previous New Year plans are usually marked by an array of resolutions from joining a gym to considering a career change. This year is different as we continue to live in the shadow of a pandemic, and we are still facing many Covid19 challenges, however, it isn't all doom and gloom. Positive stories abound – from the huge number of individuals back in March 2020 who responded to our campaign call to #HelpEachOther and registered their offers of help, to the volunteer bikers and those with sewing abilities who rallied other like-minded individuals to utilise their skills and offer their support where needed. During this period, Volunteer Now has been proud and humbled to have had the opportunity to collate a [legacy photographic series](#) of these everyday heroes – the people of Northern Ireland who really have helped each other. This New Year also sees hope, with the roll out of the vaccination programme with Volunteer Now, Red Cross and GAA coordinating a team of volunteers to offer support at the Covid19 vaccine clinics.

Denise Hayward, Chief Executive, Volunteer Now said:

“During 2020, we found new ways of connecting and have felt the desire to reconnect in ways which we may previously have felt too busy to do – the power of letter writing, sending a card or making a phone call to check in on others who may be feeling more disconnected, has proved to be vital. Our work with the recent BBCNI campaign ‘Staying Connected at Christmas’ highlighted this and how even a simple hello can make a difference so let's build on this, reach out and be kind to each other.

Volunteering is a great way to connect, it brings the opportunity to meet new people and to have new experiences. People who volunteer feel valued, have a network of friends and opportunities to get involved in a wide range of activities and are also more likely to be healthy and happy.

There is a growing body of evidence to support this and findings from a two-year study – conducted by the University of Ulster on behalf of Volunteer Now – highlights the role of volunteering in maintaining physical and mental well-being. People of varying age groups who volunteer consistently reported that their confidence, self-esteem, and social networks improve as a consequence of volunteering.”

If you would like to feel more connected and make volunteering part of your life in 2021, have a look at the [opportunity search facility](#) on our website for a wide range of roles available in your area.

Don't Do Lockdown Alone!

Volunteer Now are delighted to be supporting the Great British Bubble – a new initiative sharing uplifting messages from people and communities helping to keep the UK going through COVID-19. Don't do lockdown alone!

View the video our CEO Denise Hayward recorded for the Great British Bubble [here](#).

Follow the Great British Bubble on Twitter here: [@BritishBubble](#), on Facebook here: [@BritishBubble](#) and on Instagram here: [@greatbritishbubble](#).

Online Training

New dates have been added to our online training until March 2021! Take a look at our full Training Calendar [here](#).

Keeping Adults Safe: Adult Safeguarding Champion & Appointed Person Refresher Training

- [22 January 2021](#), 10am-1pm, £30 +VAT

The New Environment: Assess Risk When Developing Volunteer Roles

- [3 February 2021](#), 10am-12pm, £15 +VAT

VOLT Session: Volunteering During the Pandemic & Beyond - New NI Research

- [4 February 2021](#), 11am-12pm, FREE

NEW Online Attracting & Selecting Volunteers Course!

Volunteer Now and Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd are excited to announce the release of our new online training course – Attracting and Selecting Volunteers.

We have been working tirelessly in the last few months to improve our product offering and service, and we believe that this course will help you enjoy your experience with online training even more.

So what is it all about? This unique training will support you and your organisation to follow, innovate and create good practice ideas when planning a recruitment campaign and selecting the right volunteers for your organisation, to meet your mission, vision, aims and objectives for your volunteer involvement, programme and projects.

With visuals, innovative features and practical exercises to enable in-depth learning, this course will offer personal development in a flexible way, whenever and on whatever device...

The course offers a comprehensive overview of good practice and is tremendous value for money at £45 plus VAT per person, with a certificate on completion. It is not time-consuming – an average 3 hours of learning. It is user-friendly and is suitable for those organisations, volunteer managers, coordinators or anyone who manages and involves volunteers on a regular basis.

Organisations have been looking for flexibility and affordability when it comes to Volunteer Management training, and we are positive that we have produced just that.

“I really enjoyed the online Attracting & Selecting Volunteers course! I was very impressed with the online facility. The audio and interactive actions made the course interesting and straightforward to follow. The course was thought-provoking, and I am very much looking forward to putting what I have learned into action.” Eimear Degan, Belfast City Marathon.

Our thanks go to the Department for Communities for financially supporting our organisation in the development of this forward thinking, innovative and user-friendly training course.

In our own small way Volunteer Now and Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd want to play our part in connecting, building and changing volunteering now and into the future.

[Click here](#) to book your place.

Guidance for Volunteering During Lockdown

As you know, in Northern Ireland we have moved once again into a period of tighter restrictions in an attempt to reduce the transmission of COVID -19 within our community. Volunteer Now is therefore updating their guidance in terms of what this means for volunteering ([click here](#) to view). We are asking volunteer involving organisations to consider the regulations guidance very carefully to see how they might apply to their own volunteer roles. In particular, the message from Government is very clear that we should all **stay at home** where possible. From 8 January 2021 you can only leave home with a ‘reasonable excuse’ such as for medical or food needs, exercise and work that cannot be done from home. Notably the guidelines state that you can leave home to provide voluntary or charitable services, if you cannot reasonably do so from home.

As organisations, you will have to decide if your volunteering roles need to be carried out during this period and how they can be completed while adhering to all the specific regulations. Organisations will need to use a risk assessment process to support their decision-making and to manage the risk. Organisations will also need to talk to volunteers about continuing to volunteer if they feel comfortable to do so, providing them with all the relevant information from the guidelines about social distancing, numbers that can meet outdoors, households and bubbles, safety measures. Those considered as clinically extremely vulnerable should not be volunteering outside the home. The new regulations guidance can be found [here](#).

Sign Up As A Public Health Agency Partner

Does your organisation use social media, send newsletters, display posters, provide leaflets, etc? Could you help the Public Health Agency (PHA) to get important health messages to people in Northern Ireland?

The PHA have recently developed an email services by which they provide key health messaging resources for onward sharing by their partners. And now they want to grow the list of groups and organisations that they can reach in this way.

Find out more [here](#).

FREE Capacity Building Training Courses

Volunteer Now are delivering a range of capacity building training courses to groups based in Belfast in the New Year. Workshops will be online and cover good governance, leadership, fundraising and programme planning – find out more [here](#). Sign up now by emailing Sandra.faulkner@volunteernow.co.uk.

Fundraising Regulator Annual Event 2021

Like many events impacted by COVID, this year's event will be held virtually. It offers a unique opportunity for charities, stakeholders and members of the public based in Northern Ireland to engage and hear about the Fundraising Regulator's impact over the past year plus their plans for the future.

Date: Monday 8 February 2021

Time: 10.00am-11.00am

The event will be open and streamed through their website. To join the event, [click here](#). You can [RSVP](#) to receive an email reminder before the live event starts. There is also some further information on opportunities to ask questions.

Community Wellbeing & Resilience Programme

NICVA has launched a new support package for community and voluntary sector staff and volunteers working on the front line of the coronavirus response.

Organised by NICVA, delivered by [Inspire Wellbeing](#) and supported by the Department for Communities, the project will provide access to specially developed online webinars, programmes and resources tailored to support individuals' wellbeing.

This programme will be free to access and open to all in our sector. For further information and to access the programme [click here](#).

The Diana Award - Nominations Now Open

The Diana Award want to hear all about more incredible young people and the game-changing work they're doing to transform people's lives! If you know a young person that is changing the world around them, please let them know as they would love to champion them and their amazing work.

[The Diana Award](#) is the most prestigious accolade a young person can receive for their social action or humanitarian work. The Award is the longest running award for young people that is given to individuals through a retrospective nomination process only. Young people do not work towards the award, rather they demonstrate their suitability through their actions, without any

expectation of reward.

The Diana Award invites you to shine a spotlight on an unsung hero by nominating a young person from your organisation. The Award is open to young people aged 9-25 who have been engaged in at least 12 months of activities, who are selflessly transforming the lives of others, often in the face of adversity. There are many young people in your region who fit this criteria and deserve recognition on a global platform.

The Award is also a vehicle for inspiring many more young people to engage in social action, mobilising new generations to make a positive change in the world, as Princess Diana believed they could. [Click here](#) for a full list of the 2020 Diana Award recipients.

Nominations must be made before the **12 March 2021 deadline** at <https://diana-award.org.uk/nomination-centre/> where further information about the nomination process and our programmes can also be found.

Let's give these young people the recognition they deserve!

Census 2021 is Coming Soon

Households across Northern Ireland will be asked to take part in the 2021 Census. The census happens only once every 10 years and gives a picture of all the people and households in Northern Ireland. The last census was in 2011 and counted 1,810,900 people living here. It will be the first census run predominantly online, with the majority of households receiving a letter with a unique access code, allowing them to complete the questionnaire on their computers, phones or tablets. Paper questionnaires will also be available.

There's nothing else that provides a snapshot of society quite like the census. It gives three windows on our world: one looks at life in the past, another shows how we live now in the present, and one helps predict what we might need in the future. All this together helps make decisions about how to improve life for us all. It benefits everyone.

The information collected in the census is used to help make decisions about how vital services such as education, transport and health are planned and funded including how millions of pounds are invested in emergency services, school places, houses and roads across Northern Ireland.

Census day will be on March 21, but households across Northern Ireland will receive letters with online codes allowing them to take part from the beginning of March 2021.

For more information, visit census.gov.uk/ni or follow on Facebook and Twitter [@NICensus2021](#).

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 e-newsletter called VTraining that includes all Volunteer Now training courses and workshops. To subscribe, please email training@volunteernow.co.uk.

Privacy Policy

Volunteer Now/Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd collects your personal information, holds it securely and only uses it for the purposes for which it is intended. For more information about how we use your data, please see our Privacy Policy at www.volunteernow.co.uk/privacy-policy.

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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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