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DECEMBER 2025

# Thank You!



*Denise Hayward, CEO, Volunteer Now*

In this final edition of VConnect before Christmas, I want to thank all our members and supporters for all that you do to encourage people to volunteer. In the recent report [What If Everyone Stopped Volunteering](#), we can see the huge impact volunteers are making and you are each making a difference in that. With the UN Year of Volunteering for Sustainable Development next year, Volunteer Now is supporting the [IAVE Call to Action](#). The key global calls are set out below:

## Recognition

Volunteers must be systematically valued, not symbolically appreciated.

## Support

Volunteering doesn't happen automatically. It needs infrastructure and investment.

## Safeguarding

Volunteering thrives only when people are safe, supported and protected.

You can sign up to support the global call to action [here](#).

On behalf of our trustees, volunteers and staff, I would like to wish you a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.



- Leading Volunteers: Dealing with Conflicts, Challenges & Problems
- VOLT Session: Beyond Anecdotes: Why Your Volunteer Experience Needs a Benchmark
- Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Workshop - Connection. Purpose. Culture
- Keeping Adults Safe: Creating a Safe Environment (Portadown)
- Keeping Children Safe: Creating a Safe Environment

[View Training Calendar](#)



# Dormant Assets NI

## Dormant Assets for All

Are you seeking funding to make your organisation more resilient and prepared for the future? If you would like to build the skills and capacity of your organisation, this virtual session may be of interest to you.

Dormant Assets for All funding is for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in Northern Ireland.

It helps organisations to:

- building skills and capacity
- be more resilient
- prepare for future challenges

During the session the team will give you an overview of the programme aims and application criteria. You will also receive advice on how you can check that your project and organisation are eligible to apply and how you can make sure you have provided the right information on your application form.

## Book Your Place



### NI Organisations Unite for UN International Volunteer Year

Volunteer Now, the leading voice of volunteering in Northern Ireland, has united a powerful group of local organisations to champion the UN International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development (IVY 2026). This global campaign aims to champion and amplify the critical role volunteers play in achieving the UN's 2030 Agenda.

The year-long campaign will focus on the UN's core themes of recognising, measuring, and integrating volunteerism in the development of sustainability strategies.

The group will host a series of quarterly events for organisations, policy makers, and academia in Northern Ireland. These will drive action to build sustainable communities by valuing, strengthening, and securing investment in volunteering.

The IVY 2026 sub-group in Northern Ireland is chaired by Koulla Yiasouma and consists of representatives from British Red Cross, Easilink, NI Cancer Fund for Children, National Museums NI, Housing Rights Association, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Multi-Ethnic Sports and Culture NI (MSCNI), Department for the Communities, AbbeyField and Wesley and The King's Trust.

Speaking at the launch of the campaign, Denise Hayward, Chief Executive of Volunteer Now, said: "International Volunteer Year is an incredible opportunity for us to amplify the voice and actions of volunteers in Northern Ireland and to secure long-term commitment from decision-makers to recognise the vital role volunteering plays in our communities.

"By fostering community engagement and collective action, volunteering contributes meaningfully to the places we live. The UN's recognition that volunteering is a powerful



Ultimately, our goal is to ensure Northern Ireland offers an environment in which volunteering can truly flourish for the benefit of everyone,” Denise Hayward said.

Next year’s events will explore the key pillars of the UN resolution, calling on stakeholders to address challenges and commit to action through four dedicated quarters.

The campaign will kick off by gaining a better understanding of volunteering and exploring the latest research on the landscape in Northern Ireland. Subsequent events will then examine the barriers to volunteering and how organisations can overcome these. The second half of the year will focus on neighbourliness and informal volunteering, and how organisations can help champion diversity and tackle underrepresentation in the volunteer network.

To find out more about how you or your organisation can get involved with volunteering in Northern Ireland, or to learn more about how you can support IVY 2026, contact Volunteer Now on 02890 232020 or email [info@volunteernow.co.uk](mailto:info@volunteernow.co.uk).

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# Be part of the Fleadh

Celebrating Together **2-9 August**

**VOLUNTEER NOW**  
*Volunteers change lives*





**Join the Volunteer Now Events Team**

- Range of volunteer roles
- Training provided
- 4 hour shifts

✉ [events@volunteernow.co.uk](mailto:events@volunteernow.co.uk)

☎ 004428 90232020

Scan here  
and sign up to  
Volunteer





**Belfast**  
City Council



**Comhaltas**



Anda UCCB

**Comhaltas**  
**Fleadh Cheoil**  
**na hÉireann**  
**Belfast 2026**

## Calling all volunteers - Be the heartbeat of The Fleadh!

Working with Belfast City Council, Volunteer Now are seeking 1,000 plus volunteers to help with the smooth running of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast. We already have almost 600 expressions of interest!

Belfast will host the world's biggest celebration of Irish music and culture, from Sunday 2 August to Sunday 9 August 2026. Qualifying competitors from all over the world will showcase the very best of traditional music, song, dance and language in All-Ireland competitions.

With over 700,000 people set to experience Fleadh 2026 in Belfast next year, visitors will need to know how to get around the city, where to find performance venues, access facilities and more. Volunteers will be instrumental in making the 8-day festival a success.

street ambassadors, team leaders and customer services. Every volunteer will receive specialist training from Volunteer Now.

### Why volunteer?

There's such a feel-good factor to volunteering and becoming a Fleadh volunteer offers the opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills and be part of a community. It's also a chance to experience the energy of this special event from the inside.

### Want to find out more?

To complete an expression of interest and begin your volunteer journey, click the image above or the button below.

## Be Part of the Fleadh

### LGNI's Intergenerational Christmas Campaign

LGNI need your support to make this Christmas Intergenerational by bringing generations together during the festive season! Find out how you can get involved in the campaign and check out their ideas, inspiration and resources via the button below.

Everyone deserves happiness and connection this Christmas and together we can build a truly age friendly NI.



## Ideas, Inspiration & Resources

Co-funded by the  
 European Union  
 UK Government  
 Northern Ireland Executive

# TRAINING PROGRAMME

### Sign up for FREE Workshops

We're delighted to share the programme of activities for the new Investing in Community Volunteers (ICV) Programme, part of the Fermanagh and Omagh PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan, supported by PEACEPLUS and managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

This initiative offers free training and development opportunities for volunteers, committee members, and staff working in the community and voluntary sector.

1. Forming and Strengthening Committees
2. Safeguarding
3. Facilities and Venue Management
4. Income Generation and Funding Applications
5. AI Tools for Community Organisations
6. Succession Planning
7. Delivering Services in Diverse and Multicultural Environments
8. Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Each workshop will be delivered in seven locations across Fermanagh and Omagh from January 2026 to June 2026, morning, evening and online sessions available too ensuring accessibility for all.

Click below to view the full programme and register.

## Programme & Register

# HEROES PLUS



## Heroes+ Update

Volunteer Now's Youth Team have kicked off our second year with Heroes+ with fresh new faces and exciting sessions ahead for our young people across alternative education centres.

Our Youth Team is currently delivering sessions across three centres: Carrig Leap EOTAS, Redburn AEP and Lagan Valley AEP. Since September, we have been working closely with our young people facilitating teambuilding activities; art sessions, employability workshops, youth-led games and workshops focusing on self-care and mindfulness building a solid foundation for the year ahead.

Young people from Redburn AEP took on the challenge of Prison Island, where their problem-solving skills were trialed and tested. It was a highly enjoyable day although very competitive!!



**Disability  
Action**



Department for the  
**Economy**  
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn

**Geilleagair**

**Skills for Life  
and Work**

## Skills for Life and Work!

***Welcoming young people to Disability Action's Inclusive Skills Hub- Skills for Life and Work***

Choosing what comes next after school can be exciting, but it can also feel overwhelming. For young people with disabilities, navigating further education, skills training or employment often brings extra challenges. That's where Disability Action comes in. As Northern Ireland's largest pan-disability organisation our work spans physical, learning, sensory, hidden and mental health disabilities and at the heart of its mission is a commitment to an inclusive society that adapts to people's needs and respects their rights.

### **A Hub That Puts Young People First**

Based near Belfast City Airport, Disability Action's Inclusive Skills Hub is a new, welcoming space designed for young disabled people. It offers tailored learning opportunities and support to achieve work-related qualifications that support each individual's journey—whether that's moving into further education, an apprenticeship or employment. The DA Skills Hub is more than just a skills learning space. It's a supportive community that young people help shape. Here, they are encouraged to be themselves, explore their interests and take ownership of their development.

From day one, experienced staff will work closely with each individual to build a personal training plan that reflects their goals, strengths and unique needs. Whether a young person wants to build job-readiness skills or is still figuring out what's next, they'll find space, structure and encouragement to progress at their own pace.

### **Learning in the Real World**

Through the Skills Hub, young people can:

- Gain recognised qualifications
- Develop practical, social and personal skills
- Learn how to set and achieve realistic goals



### Join the DA Skills for Life and Work Programme

Skills for Life and Work is for you if you are a young person who has left school but need experience of work along with qualifications at Level 1 or Entry Level. If you are aged 16-21 years you can join Skills for Life and Work. If you have a disability, you can join if you are under 22 years of age. If you have an in-care background, you can join if you are under 25 years of age.

### Come See for Yourself: Drop-in Day!

Want to see the Hub, meet the team, and find out more in person? You're invited to our **Open Day**:

- **When:** Wednesday 14 January 2026
- **Time:** 11am – 1pm
- **Where:** 189 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9ED

Ready to explore your future and gain the skills for life and work? **Get in touch for more information!**

## Skills Hub Expression of Interest Form



### Member Spotlight

#### *Erne District Chinese Family & Friends Association*

Erne District Chinese Family & Friends Association was established in 2018 to support people of Chinese origin and their families in integrating into society. Their aims are to promote Chinese culture, ensure future generations are aware of their heritage, to integrate and provide a space to discuss any challenges. They meet on alternate Saturdays at St Michael's Hall, Enniskillen.

## Erne District Chinese Family & Friends Association

### Publication of the Month:

#### Family Volunteering Information Sheet

With schools about to wrap up for the Christmas break, it could be worth giving family volunteering roles consideration. While this isn't always possible (depending on your organisation), are there ways you can involve children with a responsible adult in volunteering roles for your organisation? By getting people involved and offering a positive experience from a young age, you may provide opportunities and avenues for future involvement as they get older. You



## Family Volunteering Information Sheet



### Countdown to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is on!

🎉 The countdown is on to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann - taking place in Belfast in 2026, and we are delighted to have been asked to manage the Volunteer Programme for this momentous event!

The involvement of volunteers is absolutely crucial to its success and you can get in on the act to volunteer at #FleadhBelfast26 by signing up to our Expression of Interest. All the details at <https://ow.ly/SjCu50Xe9gQ>

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