

# VOLUNTEERING – LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE



**THE DERRY CITY & STRABANE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA  
MARCH 2020**



Supported by the  
Public Health Agency Through the CLEAR Project



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The North West Volunteer Centre is the lead volunteer infrastructure in the North West. Our role is to promote and develop volunteering and connect people to organisations that involve volunteers throughout the Derry City and Strabane District Council Area. This project has been developed and delivered by the North West Volunteer Centre and supported by the Public Health Agency through the CLEAR Project. This evaluation report is based on the project “Volunteering – Living your best life”.

“Volunteering – living your best life” fits under a number of themes and long term outcomes of “Making Life Better”, the Public Health’s Strategy Framework. The project focused on people living in areas of greatest social need and higher risk groups in the Derry City and Strabane District Council Area.

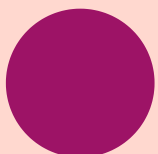


The project had 3 elements



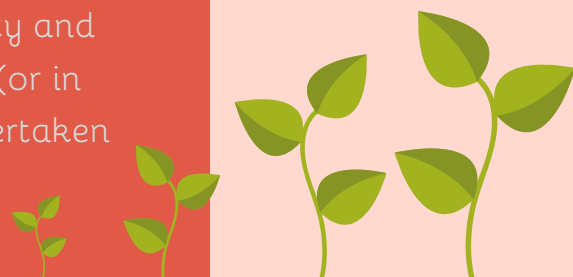
Deliver workshops on the benefits of volunteering based on the 5 steps to well being

Develop a VIBE (Volunteer Individual benefit & engagement) impact measurement tool to evidence the impact of volunteering on Health & Well being



Carry out the impact measurement tool on 50 volunteers to evidence and collate the impacts of volunteering

The Department for Communities defines volunteering as ...‘the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice.’



# Strategic Backdrop.....



The Programme for Government in Northern Ireland (PfG) recognises the relationship between health, disadvantage, inequality and the social and physical environment and economic growth, with the purpose to "achieve better health and well being for everyone and reduce inequalities in health"

*Mental  
ill health*

*Social  
challenges*

*longterm  
unemployment  
& inactivity*

*Environmental  
challenges*

'Making Life Better' is the strategic framework for public health and is committed to "Creating the conditions for individuals and communities to take greater control over their lives and be enabled and supported to lead healthy lives"

## Community Development

*We are more actively  
engaged and can  
influence decisions  
which affect us*

*We have safer  
communities*

*Our Community and  
Voluntary sector is  
more resilient and  
sustainable*

*We have access to  
quality facilities and  
services*

*"social isolation"*

## Derry City & Strabane District Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan

"Increase volunteering within the community and voluntary sector by 10% by 2025 and expand on opportunities to recognise their contribution to society"

*"Living with long  
term health conditions"*

## Community & Social

*We age actively and  
more independently*

*Health inequalities  
are reduced*

*We have improved  
physical and  
mental health*

*We are more  
physically active*

*"Economic  
challenges"*

Through the delivery of "Volunteering - living your best life" participants reported on the following after the workshops taking place.....



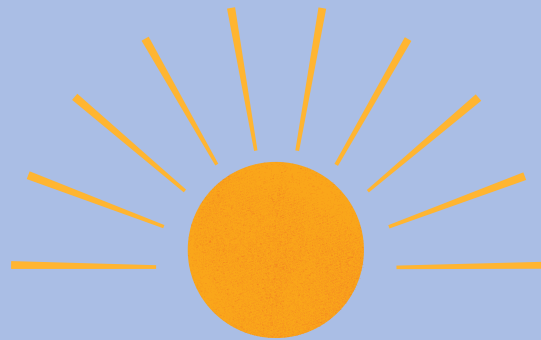
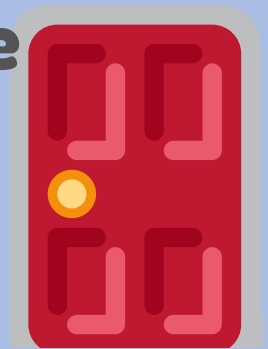
76% have never been a volunteer



88 % would consider volunteering in the future

94%

of participants have an increased awareness of local volunteer opportunities

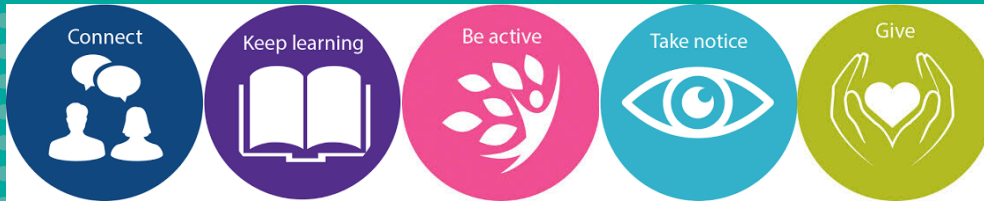


87% have an increased awareness about local organisations who involve volunteers



I ♥ Derry & Strabane

90% of participants who took part in the workshops have more awareness and understanding of the 5 Steps to Well being messages

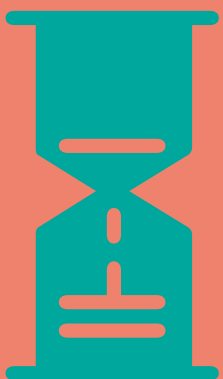


**90% of workshop participants have a better knowledge on how to get involved in volunteering locally**

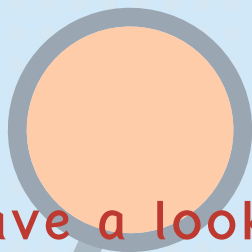


*Did you know the North West Volunteer Centre registers approximately 600 new volunteers each year?*

# A QUALITY VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE IS.....



..... **TIME WELL SPENT**



# VIBE Feedback

Have a look at the feedback from 75 Volunteers  
from across the  
Derry City & Strabane District Council Area



*34% male*

*66% Female*

## Age range

25 yrs or under = 19%

26 yrs to 34 yrs = 16%

45 yrs to 44 yrs = 16%

45 yrs to 54 yrs = 16%

55 yrs to 64 yrs = 18%

65+yrs = 15%

Shortest time  
volunteering

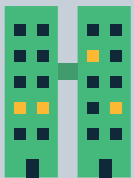
**4 months**



Longest time  
volunteering

**40 years**

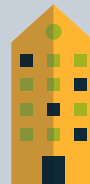
## Organisation Breakdown



5 % Sport



4 % Arts  
& Culture



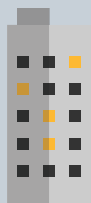
34 % Community  
group



19 % Health



5 % Youth



7 % Older  
people



9 % Disability



1 %

Education



3 % Ethnic  
minorities

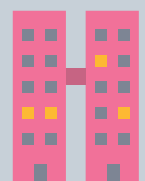


1 % Children



3 %

Environmental



9 % Mental  
Health

# Top motivations for being a volunteer in DCSDC area

**"I wanted to make a difference"**

**"I thought it would give me a chance to learn new skills/use existing skills"**

**"The cause was really important to me"**

**"It provides me with structure and makes good use of my time"**



Volunteers came from the following  
Super Output Areas

East	Strand 1	The Diamond	Shantallow West 1
Culmore 3	North	Rosemount	Ebrington
Victoria	Carnhill 2	Clondermot1	West
Springtown 1	Crevagh 3	Enagh	Brandywell
Shantallow West 2	Shantallow West 3	Creggan South	Ballycolman

Average  
length of  
time  
volunteering  
10 years &  
8 months



# Volunteers were asked -"How can we encourage more people to volunteer ?

## THE TOP 4



**Training opportunities**

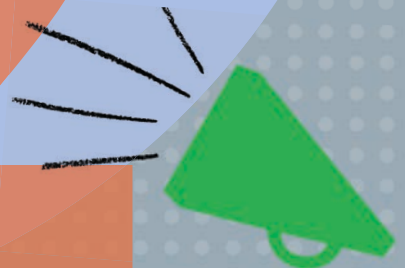
**Volunteer taster Sessions**



**Rewards & making volunteers feel valued**



**Volunteer promotional campaigns**



" In our city there is still a number of people who have no aspiration to volunteer- Volunteering needs a facelift, a fresh approach highlighting the benefits of interacting with others and making a difference. To be part of a network/friendships to make our city a better place"

.....VIBE Volunteer





**33% stated they had No challenges**

**23% claimed that Commitment was a challenge**

**11% indicated Financial/ Lack of out of pocket expenses**

**10% said that Over reliance was a challenge**

**6% of volunteers highlighted that Personality clashes were a challenge**

**5% said they experienced a lack of support**

**5% indicated poor management of volunteers was a challenge**

**4% of volunteers said that Organisation communication was a challenge**

**3% of volunteers claimed that their lack of confidence was a challenge**

**100% of volunteers who took part would recommend volunteering**



# Volunteering and the 5 steps to wellbeing



Connection with others can be strengthened through volunteering - friendships, relationships, networks and integration with others from all walks of life and backgrounds enrich our daily lives



By regularly moving more and being active can be a great mood booster. Getting up and out to volunteer on a weekly basis is a great focus and positive way to keep active



Volunteering can be a great way to take notice and reflect upon issues that face local people, local groups and communities. Volunteer involving organisations from across Derry City and Strabane District Council Area have many roles available to take notice and fulfill the need in helping others



Volunteering can provide opportunities to explore different types of learning. This can be formal accredited courses to informal "on the job" training during your volunteering experience. Learning through volunteering can enhance employability and "road test" specific areas of work for future employment areas of study



Giving your time to help people through your volunteering can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you and in your local community...you decide how much time to give whether its 2 hours a week or a month - "Do good to feel good"



# VOLUNTEERING AND



Volunteers who took part in the research agreed with the following statements "By being a volunteer"....

Connect



## CONNECT STATEMENTS

- I feel valued and part of a team
- It enabled me to have new contacts and networks
- I developed new friendships
- Provides structure to my day
- It allows me to demonstrate and share my skills
- I enjoy helping others
- It takes my mind off my own problems
- Can help to reduce isolation

Be active



## BE ACTIVE STATEMENTS

- I can help improve things locally
- I enjoy feeling useful and needed
- Helps me to be more active physically
- Helps improve my mood
- Helps reduce anxiety and stress

Take notice



## TAKE NOTICE STATEMENTS

- It builds my confidence
- I feel less isolated
- It broadens my experience of life
- Lets me become more aware of local issues
- Improves my sense of well being

## KEEP LEARNING STATEMENTS

- It opens doors to new opportunities
- It boosts my mental health & wellbeing
- It develops my knowledge, skills and experience
- Improves my career/education/job prospects
- It helps to build recognised qualifications
- It allows me to access new learning opportunities

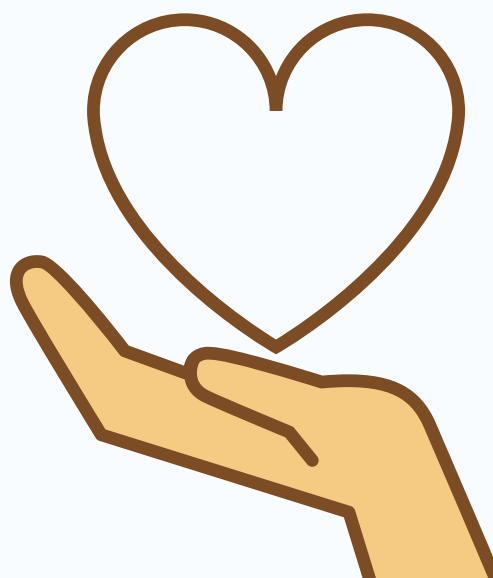
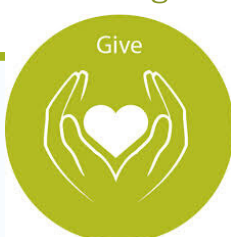
Keep learning



## GIVE STATEMENTS

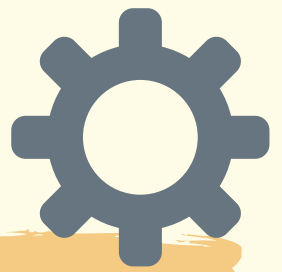
- I feel part of my local community
- Allows me to give something back
- It lets me feel good about myself - by doing good
- Provides a focus for me
- It is a healthy lifestyle choice for me
- A very worthwhile thing to do with my time

Give





# VOLUNTEER ROLES



Fundraising



Campaigning



Visiting people

Helping out in a church or a religious organisation



Working with Children & young people

Being a group leader member of a committee or a trustee



Teaching or Training

Befriending or Mentoring



Counselling or giving information or advice



Sports Coaching

Promotion of a particular cause or event



Secretarial administration or clerical work

Providing transport or driving



Working in a charity shop

Practical help such as shopping, gardening, DIY or Meals on Wheels

Collecting things / making things to be sold for charity



Provision of services and Community Response Aid



# Volunteers were asked – how do you feel volunteering has impacted on you?

"It gives me a sense of purpose and I love that I can help others"

"It keeps me right"

"Made me a stronger person, able to deal with my depression and anxiety and stress alot better, always someone to talk to"

"Volunteering has allowed me to become more compassionate and understanding and it has shown me the importance of diversity and how to achieve a positive, fun environment"

"Greatly - in the past I had to overcome poor mental health from a young age, I suffered from volunteering has helped me a lot. It gives me confidence, self esteem and a sense of pride"

"Volunteering is part of my life- the friendships, networking has been amazing, the interaction with the children and adults has been life changing. It is a gift to give back to those who need our help"

"Increased job potential - new opportunities"

I feel it has given me a broader perspective on life - volunteering has made me a more sociable person and has taught me alot. One major lesson I learned is - never judge a person by a label attached to them. We are all equal and it is a privilege to be allowed into the world of people who I have helped support through my volunteering

It has increased my social skills - gives fulfillment and is fun. It has increased my self confidence

Built up my confidence - being able to speak to people

# Impacts of volunteering continued...

"I feel that it has grown my confidence with working with other people and in daily interactions. It has helped me determine which career I want to be in"

"Impacted on me very well"

"Gives focus and perspective to personal issues - boosts self esteem"

"I have the opportunity in retirement to use skills I utilised in work - I enjoy contact with people and enjoy the structure volunteering provides"

"It has helped with my anxiety and I feel more confident - really good charity to work for"

"Volunteering has allowed me to become more compassionate and understanding and it has shown me the importance of diversity and how to achieve a positive, fun environment"

"It has made me more patient and tolerant and introduced me to a lot of people I had never met previously. It has made me appreciate the fact that your health is your wealth"

"It has given me new skills and helped me to try new things. It has also given me the opportunity of meeting new friends and a sense of belonging - being able to make a difference"

"It has given me a bigger and better outlook in life and has given me more motivation"

"It has made me come out of my shell"

"Positively"

"It gives me an incentive to get up and go in the morning"

# Impacts of volunteering continued...

"On a personal level, I have given my time as a thank you. From volunteering I have been able to share the feelings and thoughts of my time with the hospice to other people. It has given me more confidence to go and do other volunteering in the town"

Volunteering has enriched my life. It has allowed me to realise how lucky I am that I can do something I enjoy while at the same time help others and my local community

"It has made me aware of things that are brushed under the carpet and made me stand up for what I believe in more"

"Volunteering has opened a lot of learning experiences up for me - therefore I would say it has educated me and in turn boosted my confidence"

"Satisfaction of knowing my community and the organisation are benefiting from the time I give"

"I enjoy my hours and it helps in my career path"

"It has been very rewarding to give my time to others - it makes me happy"

"Volunteering helps me to be more active and encourages others to do the same - has made me feel more valued and helped my own confidence"

"Being able to make a difference is a lovely feeling..."

"It has given me a great purpose in life makes me feel valued in that I'm giving something back in my community"

# WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN MOST PROUD OF FROM YOUR TIME VOLUNTEERING?

By using the training I was able to use CPR successfully and give someone a second chance at life"

"I work full time and I enjoy going to the weekly bowling club - getting to know and help young people and adults with learning and physical disabilities"

"Seeing the development of the GAA grounds at Ballycolman site - from a green field to the magnificent complex it is today"

"Helping others"

"I am proud that I think I'm doing something worthwhile and providing a service that people appreciate"

"Being able to help others and make a difference in my local community"

"I'm proud of my commitment to the service and I'm proud of how I have grown as a person from volunteering"

"Seeing the students improving their swimming and taking part in swimming galas over the years"

"I am most proud of being part of the Zero Waste North West dynamic team, always coming up with creative ways to engage people"

"Improved self esteem and confidence, improved mental health & wellbeing - in turn has also had a positive impact on my family"

"Helping people"

"Raising money for cancer"

"Volunteering is such a big part of my life that I forget it is volunteering! Filling in this form has reminded me"

"Made me realise the difference I can make for someone just by listening to them"

"Helping clients to a better understanding of mental health and improving it"

**"Mostly improving awareness and knowledge among others around issues of sustainability and zero waste, but also recognition of my own motivation and capacity to learn"**

**"I'm proud to continue helping this one particular charity as I think it helps so many poor people living in the developing world. I've made some good friends too and feel worthwhile"**

**"Growing my own produce"**

**"Helping clients improve their mental health"**

**"My health and my prospects; life getting better as a whole"**

**"Volunteering has enriched my life"**

**"Volunteering has improved my wellbeing and sense of empowerment and achievement by connecting me with others who have similar views and passion to my own. It has also helped me to feel more connected to others in my community"**

**"Seeing clients' mental health improve and go on with their life with clearer thoughts"**

**"It has made me more appreciative of the everyday things I tend to take for granted - good health, mobility, freedom, etc.."**

**"Developing a summer programme for children and adults with a learning disability and setting up a social evening on a weekly basis. It is very satisfying that parents and carers are getting much needed respite"**

**"I'm proud to be committed to volunteering, enjoy coming down on a Monday night - very rewarding, enjoy meeting new people"**

**"Being an assistant unit commander"**

**"Helping people at their lowest point in their life and giving them the help that they need"**

**"Becoming a project manager from volunteering"**

**"I am very proud and privileged to be able to support people through bereavement in a safe non-judgmental and empathetic environment"**

# Volunteering - Living your best life

## Key Stats At A Glance

### Workshop Evaluation feedback



88% of participants would consider volunteering in the future



94% of participants have increased awareness of local volunteer opportunities



87% have an increased awareness about local organisations who involve volunteers



90% of participants have more awareness and understanding of the 5 steps to wellbeing messages



90% of participant workshop participants have a better understanding of how to get involved in volunteering locally

### VIBE Volunteer Questionnaire feedback



34% of volunteers were part of a community group



younger people aged 25 or under represented the largest group



"I wanted to make a difference was the top motivation for volunteering"



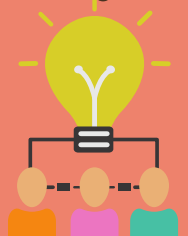
"Providing training opportunities was the way to encourage more volunteering"



The majority of volunteers faced no challenges in their volunteering however 23% claimed that commitment was a challenge...



40 years was the longest time volunteering





# Health benefits from volunteering

## Mental health and wellbeing benefits

Feedback from "Volunteering – living your best life" provides a clear indication that volunteering is good for your health. Feedback and comments from 75 volunteers from across the Derry City & Strabane District Council area collectively highlight volunteering and helping others, feels good, and boosts individual wellbeing.

Volunteering can help to counteract the effects of stress and anxiety. In the right environment volunteering can help combat and reduce the risk of depression and poor mental health. Feedback also highlights that Volunteering increases self-confidence and provides a sense of purpose. 100 % of volunteers that took part in the VIBE research agree that volunteering is a healthy lifestyle choice and would recommend it.

## Physical benefits

Responses from participants of how volunteering has made an impact and what has made them most proud during their volunteering reflects a huge range of personal benefits. Comments such as " Benefits me health wise and gives me a reason to help" to "It gives me an incentive to get up and go in the morning" show how important and profound volunteering can be individually. Volunteering on a regular basis can increase our levels of activity and help to reduce stress, anxiety and build self confidence. Feeling good by doing good can only have a positive impact on our health and help us to maintain good physical health.





# CONCLUSIONS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Volunteers that took part in volunteering living your best life come from different areas and backgrounds from Derry City & Strabane District Council Area. They share a common desire to help others but have different reasons as to why they got involved in volunteering and what motivates them to continue in their volunteering journey. The group who participated in this research include men and women of all age groups from under 25 to over 65. Some participants have only begun their volunteering journey while others have been sharing their time for 40 years and over which is truly amazing.

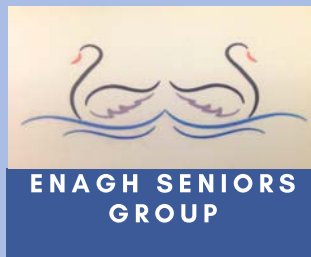
The work from this project shows that regular acts of kindness through volunteering can improve confidence, self esteem and optimism which has positive knock-on effect for health and well being.

In terms of the Programme for Government, Making Life Better Strategic Framework and the Strategic Growth Plan for Derry City and Strabane District – volunteering matters, and it is a valuable and constructive means to buffer health inequalities that individuals and communities encounter in Derry & Strabane.

The North West Volunteer Centre would like to thank the organisations and individuals that helped to arrange the delivery of workshops for this project. The Centre would also like to acknowledge the volunteer involving organisations from across the Derry City and Strabane District Council area who got their volunteers to take part and complete the VIBE questionnaires.  
– Thank you

Thank you to Developing Healthy Communities through the Clear project for funding "Volunteering – Living your best life".

The NWVC is committed to supporting, enabling and celebrating volunteering in all its diversity across the district and looks forward to continue working with our community partners to build and strengthen our local volunteering infrastructure.



Thank you to all the  
volunteers & organisations  
who participated