



# National Volunteer Management Conference

**Wednesday 30 April 2025**

**Sheraton Athlone Hotel, Gleeson Street  
Athlone, County Westmeath, N37 D953**



Event partner



# Conference programme

09:00 Informal yoga and wake up session with **Anna** from Sirana Spa (*optional*)

09:30 Registration opens: Informal networking

10:00 Ignite & Inspire: Conference & programme essentials **Stuart Garland**

## Morning plenary

10:10 Welcome address **Nina Arwitz**

10:20 Opening Address **Jerry Buttimer T.D., Minister of State for Community Development and Charities**

10:35 Keynote: How does volunteering succeed and fail in promoting solidarity?  
**Dr. Stuart Fox**

11:00 Thriving through learning: A path to success **Stuart Garland**

11:10 **Mid-morning tea and coffee break** Chat & connect with your peers

11:30 **Morning master classes** (*select one*)

- Challenges with identifying the effects of volunteering **Dr. Stuart Fox**
- Bias and the bystander **Emma Balfe**
- Revitalising engagement: making volunteering dynamic and flexible **Zsé Varga**
- Highlighting the stories of our volunteers **Claire McGowran**
- Exploring the Digital in Volunteering Toolkit **Chris Martin** (TeamKinetic)

12:30 **Lunch** Informal networking

13:15 Transforming volunteer management at Children in Hospital (*optional*)  
**Elizabeth Morrin** (Children in Hospital) and **James Colclough** (Volunteero)

13:45 AI, its impact and use in our volunteer programmes **John Kilroy**

14:15 **Afternoon master classes** (*select one*)

- Involving persons with disabilities as volunteers **Tenna Sørensen Jochumsen**
- European funding opportunities for capacity building **Jemma Lee & Suzanne Kavangh**
- Effective engagement of younger volunteers **Jenny Lavin & Mikayla Morton**
- Leveraging corporate volunteering **Terri O'Brien & Amy McBride**

15:15 **Afternoon comfort break** Chat & connect with your peers

15:30 **Afternoon Plenary**

Investing in Volunteers Awards **Denise Hayward & Nina Arwitz**

Legal protections for volunteers **Patricia Munatsi**

Panel discussion with **Amy Woods**: Volunteering reimagined, candid conversations on volunteer engagement

16:30 Closing remarks

Conference Ends

## Welcome

A warm welcome to Volunteer Ireland's annual conference. With a mix of national and international speakers, nine master classes and networking over the course of the day, we look forward to engaging with you at the premiere event for Leaders of Volunteers.

## Visit the Volunteering Village

Drop in early, join us for some networking with colleagues and visit some of our exhibitors' stands during the day.

- **Better Impact**
- **Comhlámh**
- **Computershare Entity Solutions**
- **Léargas**
- **StudentVolunteer.ie**
- **TeamKinetic**
- **Volunteero**
- **We Act**

## Relax with our free yoga session

Rushing to the conference and feeling frazzled? Join Anna from Sirana Spa for a gentle session of stretches, movement and breath awareness to reconnect with your body. We'll end with a short meditation to find stillness before your busy day. No experience needed—just come as you are! Put your phone aside, take a break, and tune in to tune out. This free yoga session is beginner-friendly.

# Morning master classes (11:30 to 12:30)



## Challenges with identifying the effects of volunteering, Dr. Stuart Fox (Red)

Assessing volunteering's impact is challenging, as data collection is complex, costly, and time-consuming. However, demand—especially from funders—continues to grow. Stuart explores the need to evaluate both positive and negative impacts, key challenges and practical solutions. Participants will share insights and strategies to improve how volunteering's benefits are measured and communicated effectively.



## Bias and the bystander, Emma Balfe (Yellow)

This workshop explores how unconscious bias influences Bystander Intervention. Participants will learn about unconscious bias, the Bystander Effect, and the pyramid of violence while developing effective intervention strategies. With an anti-racist perspective, the session helps participants recognise their biases and apply practical techniques to create safer, more inclusive environments. Through discussion and practice, they will gain confidence in using informed Bystander Intervention strategies.



## Revitalising engagement: making volunteering dynamic & flexible, Zsé Varga (Light blue)

Struggling to engage volunteers? The gap between volunteer expectations and organisational offerings is growing—but it doesn't have to. Join this session to explore flexible approaches, real-life examples and strategies for creating roles that meet today's needs and align with organisational goals. Let's go beyond "getting volunteers back" and discover new ways to energise and diversify our programmes!



## Highlighting the stories of our volunteers, Claire McGowran (Purple)

Storytelling is essential for recruiting and retaining volunteers by showcasing their impact. This session teaches you how to share volunteer stories, regardless of resources. Learn how to find stories within your volunteer pool and present them for fundraising, events, social media and onboarding. Gain simple tools for capturing and sharing your volunteers' experiences and impact with supporters to inspire engagement and support.



## Exploring the Digital in Volunteering Toolkit, Chris Martin (Brown)

The Digital in Volunteering Toolkit helps leaders of volunteers make informed tech choices. Created by Gethyn Williams, TeamKinetic, and the Association of Volunteer Managers, it offers practical advice, diagnostic tools, and real-world insights. It also introduces a Community of Practice, connecting professionals to share experiences. Designed to make digital work for volunteering, the toolkit supports smarter, more effective tech use in the sector.

# The Volunteer Charter

## Welcoming All, Growing Together

Volunteers bring passion, dedication, and energy to every organisation. But for volunteering to thrive, there must be trust, respect, and clear expectations—that's where The Volunteer Charter comes in!

This two-way commitment outlines what volunteers and organisations can expect from each other, creating a positive and rewarding experience for all.

### Why does it matter?

- **Clarity & Confidence** – Everyone knows what to expect.
- **Stronger Relationships** – Built on trust and respect.
- **Better Experiences** – Motivated and engaged volunteers make a bigger impact.

The Volunteer Charter helps VIOs show their commitment to build a thriving, inclusive environment.

## Networking

Today is about meeting with and networking with your peers, chat to colleagues but also take the opportunity to connect with leaders of volunteers you haven't met before.



# Afternoon master classes (14:15 to 15:15)



## **Involving persons with disabilities as volunteers, Tenna Sørensen Jochumsen (Orange)**

When thinking about volunteering, too often the role of people with disabilities is limited to recipients of help while failing to recognise the huge potential impact that a person with disabilities can make as a volunteer, as a giver of help rather than receiver. In this workshop, we want to address this trend through discussions on how best to engage people with disabilities as volunteers with a focus on existing barriers for participation and potential solutions to these.



## **European funding opportunities for capacity building, Jemma Lee & Suzanne Kavanagh (Pink)**

Find out how European funding can support you to upskill your volunteers and volunteer managers, develop your organisation and make an impact in your community. Léargas manage exchange programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training. Léargas are the National Agency for Erasmus+ in Adult Education, School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Youth and Sport.



## **Engaging and empowering young volunteers, Jenny Lavin & Mikayla Morton (Green)**

This master class offers a unique opportunity to reflect on youth volunteer engagement, emphasising the importance of listening to young people and adopting a rights-based approach to volunteerism. Drawing from Jigsaw's experience with their Youth Advocate volunteers nationwide, participants will reflect on and learn practical strategies for engaging, involving, and retaining these volunteers, and consider how to implement these practices within their own volunteer involving organisations.



## **Leveraging corporate volunteering, Terri O'Brien & Amy McBride (Blue)**

Corporate volunteering should serve your needs – not just the company's. This session will explore how to design volunteer opportunities that fill critical needs in your organisation, while leveraging corporate skills and resources. Through real-world examples, learn how to attract companies, align their ESG and CSRD goals with your mission, and build long-term support. Participants will gain strategies to engage employee volunteers in one-off and ongoing opportunities, driving meaningful impact for all.



Thank you to volunteers from **Midlands Polish Community** and **MPC TV** who are recording the event and to **Leah Carroll** our event photographer.



## **Presentation of Investing in Volunteers Awards**

Investing in Volunteers is the UK and Ireland Quality Standard that helps assess and improve the quality of your volunteer management and involvement.

Achieving the standard shows your current, and potential, volunteers how much they are valued and gives them confidence in your ability to provide an outstanding volunteer experience.

Presentations will be made at the conference to the most recent achievers:

- **Depaul Ireland**
- **Galway Hospice Foundation**
- **Jigsaw, the national centre for youth mental health**
- **St John of God Dementia Care at St. Joseph's Shankill**

To find out more about Investing in Volunteers visit [The Quality and Impact pages on our web site.](#)

# Speaker biographies



## **Nina Arwitz (She/Her), Chief Executive Officer, Volunteer Ireland**

Nina's background is in the environmental non-profit sector where she focused on social inclusion, engaging new audiences and volunteering; as well as fundraising, campaigning and strategic development. Nina is responsible for the overall strategic direction of Volunteer Ireland and ensuring that we deliver our mission to promote, support and advocate for excellent, accessible and inclusive volunteering in Ireland.



## **Emma Balfe (They/Them), Dignity and Respect Officer, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire**

Emma works in the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Unit and Human Resources at IADT, focusing on institutional culture change through training and policy development. They hold an MA in Gender Studies (UCD), a BA in Visual Culture (NCAD), and Postgraduate Certificates in Consent, Sexual Violence & Harassment (NUIG), Assessment & Evaluation (IADT), and Learning & Teaching (IADT).



## **James Colclough, Head of Growth, Volunteero**

James has helped hundreds of voluntary organisations streamline operations and boost engagement with innovative tech. With experience across enterprises and community groups, he delivers tailored, impactful results. At Volunteero, he's focused on making volunteering easier by empowering volunteers and reducing admin. Their mission: unlock the full potential of volunteer programs, fostering meaningful connections and maximising impact for all.



## **Dr. Stuart Fox, Senior Lecturer in Politics, University of Exeter**

Stuart, a Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Exeter, specialises in political behaviour and youth engagement. His research examines how volunteering influences civic participation, particularly among disadvantaged youth. Committed to bridging academia and practice, he collaborates with organisations like the Centre for European Volunteering, SALTO, and NCVO. Previously, he lectured at Brunel University London after earning his PhD from Nottingham in 2015.



## **Stuart Garland (He/Him), Learning and Capacity Building Manager, Volunteer Ireland**

Stuart is the Learning and Capacity Building Manager at Volunteer Ireland, with over 30 years of experience in the third sector and youth work. He specialises in volunteer management, inclusive engagement, and capacity building, collaborating with national and European organisations. A lead trainer in volunteer impact assessment and quality standards, he has delivered training and consultancy globally. He holds advanced qualifications in volunteer leadership, human resources, and organisational management.



## **Denise Hayward, Chief Executive, Volunteer Now**

Denise has extensive experience in supporting volunteer involvement. She has wide ranging expertise in public and organisational volunteering policy development, volunteering research and supporting good practice in volunteering. She is experienced in third sector governance issues through many years working at a senior level in the voluntary and community sector. Denise is an active volunteer for Portadown YMCA, Armagh Rural Transport and Belfast Central Mission.

Thank you to **Noo Chocolates** for their handmade Irish Chocolates.



[www.volunteer.ie/nvmc](http://www.volunteer.ie/nvmc)

# Speaker biographies



## **Suzanne Kavanagh, Senior Higher Executive Officer, Léargas**

Suzanne has strategic responsibility for implementing the European Solidarity Corps Programme in Ireland, which has awarded over €10 million since 2016 to the voluntary and community sector. The programme promotes solidarity through volunteering and strengthens cohesion, democracy, and citizenship in Europe. Previously, she worked in Ballymun Job Centre on national and European initiatives addressing disadvantage, with a focus on how such programmes support young people facing exclusion and educational inequality.



## **Jenny Lavin (She/Her), Youth Voice & Engagement Coordinator, Jigsaw The National Centre for Youth Mental Health**

Jenny uses a rights-based approach to ensure that young people's voices are heard when making decisions that affect them. She is an experienced project manager, teacher and trainer who has worked with and on behalf of young people for the majority of her career. Jenny is passionate about supporting our youth and recognises the powerful impact that volunteering has on individuals and communities.



## **Jemma Lee, Senior Support & Development Officer Adult Education, Léargas**

Jemma is a youth and community worker with a passion for youth empowerment and gender equality. She believes in the value of volunteering and lifelong learning for building resilient and equal societies. An Applied Social Studies graduate with a passion for youth empowerment and gender equality, and a belief in the value of volunteering and lifelong learning for building resilient and equal societies.



## **Chris Martin, Founder, TeamKinetic**

Chris is the founder and CEO of TeamKinetic, a leading volunteer management software provider. With over 20 years of experience, he has guided the platform's growth from the beginning. Passionate about improving volunteer management, he contributes to the Sports Volunteer Research Network and recently launched the 'Digital in Volunteering' community of practice. He holds degrees in Sport Science and Human Movement Studies from Leeds Metropolitan University.



## **Claire McGowran (She/Her), Project Manager, We Act Campaign**

Claire is the Campaign Manager for We Act, a national campaign to celebrate charities and community groups in Ireland. Claire has over 15 years in print and digital media and has written for the Irish Times and Irish Independent. She worked on the #HomeToVote campaign and a UNICEF campaign to end child marriage.



## **Elizabeth Morrin, Volunteer Manager, Children in Hospital Ireland**

Elizabeth has been a Volunteer Manager with Children in Hospital Ireland since 2017. She has a background in children's rights and a particular interest in the value of play. Elizabeth currently supports over 350 volunteers in 15 different hospitals across Ireland and she loves that every day of working with Children in Hospital volunteers and in hospitals is different.



## **Mikayla Morton (She/Her), Youth Advocate, Jigsaw**

Mikayla has been a volunteer Youth Advocate with Jigsaw for 5.5 years, most recently working within the Jigsaw National Office with the Youth Voice & Engagement team. She has a background in psychology and works with SilverCloud to help clients work through online CBT programmes. In addition to Jigsaw, she is a NiteLine Volunteer and has spent the last year leading the charity as Coordinator of the Service.



# Speaker biographies



## **Amy McBride, Corporate Programmes Officer, Volunteer Ireland**

Amy is Volunteer Ireland's Corporate Programmes Officer, supporting corporate employees in large-scale volunteering projects that connect businesses with non-profits for impactful one-off initiatives. With over a decade in the non-profit sector, she previously led a team in a busy community centre and continues to volunteer with her local youth club. Amy is passionate about volunteering's vital role in strengthening grassroots community organisations.



## **Patricia Munatsi, Public Affairs Manager, Volunteer Ireland**

Patricia joined Volunteer Ireland in February 2024 as the Public Affairs Manager. Patricia is an international human rights lawyer with expertise in public policy, strategic engagements, lobbying and advocacy. She is also a keynote speaker, diversity, equality and inclusion advocate and an anti-racism trainer. Patricia's education includes an LLM in International Human Rights Law from University College Dublin and a Bachelor of Laws Honors Degree from the University of Zimbabwe.



## **Terri O'Brien, Corporate Programmes Manager, Volunteer Ireland**

Terri leads Volunteer Ireland's corporate volunteering programme, managing partnerships and helping companies create impactful initiatives. As part of the leadership team, she shapes strategy and advances volunteering nationwide. A member of the Points of Light global network, she stays connected to corporate volunteering innovations. Passionate about high-quality programmes, she builds meaningful partnerships that strengthen communities and drive lasting impact.



## **Tenna Sørensen Jochumsen (She/Her), Project Officer, Centre for European Volunteering**

Tenna is from Denmark but based in Brussels, Belgium where she works as Project Officer for Centre for European Volunteering (CEV). For several years, Tenna has engaged herself in the civil society sector mainly focusing on volunteering and creating inclusive activities for young people and marginalised groups. She has done so both as a volunteer herself and through previous roles in Danish and International Non-Governmental Organisations.



## **Amy Woods, Head of Advocacy and Engagement, Volunteer Ireland**

Amy joined Volunteer Ireland in August 2015. In July 2023, Amy took on the role of Head of Advocacy and Engagement. Amy's role involves overseeing Volunteer Ireland's internal and external communications; advocacy and research outputs; and the Community Volunteers programme. Amy acts as primary spokesperson for the organisation and represents Volunteer Ireland on a number of fora. Managing a small team, Amy strives to set a culture in line with our values.



## **Zsé Varga (She/Her), Development and Capacity Building Manager, Volunteer Ireland**

Zsé drives innovation in volunteering, focusing on flexibility, diversity, and meaningful engagement. She leads initiatives to empower leaders and has a background in volunteer management training and consultancy across Ireland, Hungary, and Europe. With expertise in flexible volunteer roles, she is shaping the future of engagement. Zsé is a Blood Bikes East volunteer.



Volunteering Equality  
Rights Action  
VERA 2025



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[www.volunteer.ie/nvmc](http://www.volunteer.ie/nvmc)

# Venue information

## Is the venue wheelchair accessible?

Yes, the hotel is fully wheelchair accessible. There are lifts to all floors from the underground car park, which also has designated EU Parking Card spaces. Service dogs are welcome. The venue has step-free access throughout.

## I use a JAM Card / Sunflower Hidden Disabilities lanyard

We welcome people with invisible disabilities. Volunteer Ireland team members have completed [JAM Card](#) training. Check in with us at registration if you have any questions or need support.

## What if I have additional support needs?

Contact Stuart Garland at [stuart@volunteer.ie](mailto:stuart@volunteer.ie) or call (087) 696 4020 in advance of the conference. If you have a carer or assistant, they can attend with you and will only need to pay for refreshments.

## Can I get a scholarship?

A limited number of reduced-cost and subsidised tickets are available for those with limited resources. To apply, email [stuart@volunteer.ie](mailto:stuart@volunteer.ie) explaining how attending would benefit you and why you need a scholarship.

## Diversity and Inclusion

We recognise that attendees come from diverse and inclusive backgrounds. Our conference is a place where everyone is valued, respected, and celebrated. We are committed to creating a welcoming space where all attendees can engage, learn, and connect in a positive and supportive environment. By being part of this conference, you join a community that champions respect, equality, and kindness – ensuring that everyone feels safe, heard, and empowered. Together we can inspire change.

## How can I show if I want to network or not?

We offer three wristbands to help with social interaction: **Red** – Prefer to keep your distance, **Orange** – Okay to chat but no physical contact, **Green** – Comfortable with handshakes and high-fives. Wristbands are available at registration.

## What is the full address of the venue?

Sheraton Athlone Hotel, Gleeson Street, Athlone, County Westmeath, N37 D953.

## Can I travel by train to the conference?

Yes, trains arrive in Athlone train station from Westport/Ballina at 09:04, Galway at 10:03 and Dublin Heuston at 09:06. Trains depart at 16:12 for all three destinations. It's best to reserve a seat at [www.irishrail.ie](http://www.irishrail.ie). The conference venue is a 6 minute walk from the Athlone train station.

## Can I travel by bus to the conference?

Yes, Bus Éireann operates services to Athlone bus station. Visit [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie) for details. [CityLink Service 763](#) runs between Dublin Airport, Dublin City, and Galway, with the nearest stop at B&Q Arcadia Retail Centre, Athlone (a 25-minute walk from the venue). The conference venue is a 6 minute walk from Athlone bus station.

## How easy is it to access the venue by car?

The venue is: a 3-minute drive from Exit 10 on the M6 Dublin-Galway Motorway, a one-hour drive from the M50 and a 50-minute drive from Galway. There is an indoor car park at the venue.

## Where in the hotel is the conference?

- Car park: **Level -1**
- Reception: **Level 0**
- Main plenary (Hoey Suite 1, 2 & 3): **Level 1**
- Breakout rooms (Masterclasses):
  - **Level 2:** Burke 1, Burke 2, Grace 3
  - **Level -1:** De Gray Suite
- Quiet spaces: **Level 2** (Siege Suite & an area outside Grace 1 & 2)
- Outdoor area: **Level 2** (accessible from Siege Suite)

Lifts and stairs provide access to all floors. Toilets and baby-changing facilities are available on each level. Lunch is in La Provence Restaurant on **Level 1**.

## Are there electric car charging points?

Charging stations are on Level A of the underground car park.



**Join the conversation  
on social media with the  
hashtag #NVMC2025**

**National  
Volunteer  
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Conference**



**Volunteer  
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Obair Dheonach Éireann



To reduce our impact we have reduced the amount of materials we print, if you have a requirement to have a hard copy of this programme please ask at the registration desk.

Version 8