

Press Release

Powerful and heartwarming new video celebrates often hidden role played by volunteers in Ireland

We Act is launching a [new video today](#) (18/05/2022) to celebrate the one million volunteers in communities all over Ireland. As part of their national campaign to raise awareness of the value and impact of Irish charities and community groups, We Act is launching the video to coincide with National Volunteering Week (16th to 22nd May).

The video, *We Volunteer, We Act*, features four volunteers – from Irish Cancer Society, Friends of the Elderly, Ronald McDonald House Crumlin and Aoibhneas - sitting down to speak with someone they've impacted through their role.

It's a candid and emotive look at the power of volunteering, and the impact it can have, not only on those directly availing of services, but on our wider society too.

"So much hidden work is done in communities all over Ireland by volunteers, we're not always aware of it but we all benefit," says We Act Campaign Spokesperson, Claire McGowran. "This video lets us put a face to just some of those one million plus volunteers – the people who drive patients to appointments; who lead on boards and committees; who keep others company; who organise events; who clean our towns; rivers and beaches; who coach our local teams; or who cook meals for those who need them."

Public Survey

A survey of 1,000 people in Ireland conducted on behalf of the We Act campaign found:

- 28 per cent said they had volunteered with a charity or community organisation in the past 12 months
- 23 percent say they have volunteered as a board or committee member in the past 12 months
- 57 per cent agree that they do or would get a lot out of volunteering
- The biggest barriers to volunteering were identified as not having enough time and not being aware of volunteering opportunities
- 40 percent believe those who serve on charity boards are paid a salary when in fact trustees are unpaid volunteers.

Accompanying the release of the video, We Act have also launched a new Volunteering Hub on their website - [WeAct.ie/volunteer](#) - to showcase volunteer stories, and share the breadth and variety of roles for those interested in volunteering.

"There is such a variety of volunteer roles out there, whatever skills, experience or availability you have", says Amy Woods, We Act Campaign Spokesperson and Communications and Advocacy Manager for Volunteer Ireland. "We want to make sure that everyone who wants to volunteer can do so, by helping them identify roles they are interested in, matching them with the right organisations and working to address any barriers they might have to volunteering."

One often misunderstood volunteer role is that of a charity board member. According to the Charities Regulator, there are more than 73,000 charity trustees in Ireland. According to

Claire McGowran, "These board members volunteer their time and expertise to ensure charities are well governed and achieve their strategic objectives. It's an essential role and many people don't realise that charity board members are not paid. As with other volunteer roles, organisations are always looking for people with a variety of skills and life experiences to bring to a board."

The We Act campaign was launched last October with the aim of sharing stories from charities and community groups around Ireland. The idea behind the campaign is to celebrate staff and volunteers, but also to show the public how these organisations are run, what they do day to day and the impact they have.

According to Claire McGowran, "Our charities and our community organisations belong to all of us. We've all spent more time in our communities in recent years, and now that all these spaces have opened up - our community centres, sports clubs, youth groups, and arts centres - we want the public to learn about and get involved in what's happening in their own towns, villages and neighbourhoods. Because there's a lot happening!"

"A better public understanding of these organisations and of the role of volunteers within them, is vital to the sustainability of our charities and communities. A vibrant voluntary sector is essential for engaged communities and active citizenship, but also for the continued post-Covid recovery in wider society."

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Notes to Editors

About We Act:

We Act is a public awareness campaign to promote the value and impact of the charity and community sector in Ireland. The campaign is being managed by a coalition of charities and community groups, led by Boardmatch, Charities Institute Ireland, the Disability Federation of Ireland, Dóchas, The Wheel and Volunteer Ireland. The campaign is currently funded by the Government of Ireland through the National Volunteering Strategy.

About the video:

The video was made by The Reelists and filmed on location at Ronald McDonald House in Crumlin. It stars:

- Nicola Fowler, a volunteer board member with Aoibhneas and Emma Reidy, Aoibhneas CEO
- Seán Mahon, a volunteer cook at Ronald McDonald House Crumlin and Paul O'Halloran, whose family are staying at the house
- Gigi Kubitz, a volunteer with Friends of the Elderly and Georgina Clarke, who attends the social club every Wednesday
- Paul Markey, a volunteer driver with the Irish Cancer Society and Deirdre Browne, a cancer patient he drives to appointments

The video can be found here: On Vimeo [We Volunteer, We Act](#) or you can [download the files here](#).

#WeAct | Find out more at www.weact.ie | Follow on Twitter (@WeActIreland), Instagram (WeActIreland) and Facebook (WeActIreland)

Research: The nfpSynergy research was conducted on 21st March 2021 amongst a base of 1,000 adults (aged 16+) in Ireland. Key findings from the research are available on request.

Spokespeople: We Act spokespeople Claire McGowran and Amy Woods are available for interview / comment. Claire is Campaigns Officer at The Wheel and Amy Woods is Communications and Advocacy Manager at Volunteer Ireland – email claire@wheel.ie.

Images available on request