A review of volunteers in the Citizens Information Services

April 2023

BearingPoint®

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary of Terms

Term	Description
C&V Sector	Community and Voluntary Sector
CE Scheme	Community Employment Scheme
CIB	Citizens Information Board The national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services, and for the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service. The CIB fund the Citizens Information Service companies.
CIC	Citizens Information Centre The CICs provide free, impartial information, advice and advocacy to the public. CICs are staffed and managed at local level and their work is overseen by a Regional Manager.
CIC Network	Network of CIC locations throughout the country
CIS	Citizens Information Services Each Citizens Information Service is a limited company overseen by a Regional Manager and a voluntary board of directors. Each CIS is responsible for all operational and staffing matters for network of Citizens Information Centres which cover a geographical area within their region. The eight regional CIS companies are: • North Connacht & Ulster CIS • South Connacht CIS • Dublin South CIS • North Dublin CIS • North Leinster CIS • South Leinster CIS • North Munster CIS • South Munster CIS
CLG	Companies Limited by Guarantee
DM	Development Manager
DSP	Department of Social Protection Government department who encourage full social inclusion and active involvement through the provision of financial assistance, employment assistance, and other services. DSP are the funding department for CIB.
ESP	Employment Scheme Participants
FLAC	Free Legal Advice Centres
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation

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Term	Description
IO	Information Officers are paid staff members who provide information, advice and advocacy in Citizens Information Centres
Information Provider	Volunteer information provider
MABS	Money Advice and Budgeting Service A free and confidential service for people who are having problems with money management and debt.
PCR	Periodic Critical Review Identifies areas for improvement by comparing performance to the body's original mandate and the changing external environment.
RM	Regional Manager
Service Delivery Companies Network	Network of CIS companies, MABS companies, National Advocacy Services and other companies funded by CIB.
SLA	Service Level Agreement Sets the expectations of the funder to the service provider, detailing the metrics by which services are measured.
Tier 2 Support Companies	Companies supporting CISs through helpline, clinics or onward referral. These include FLAC, Threshold, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Treoir
VIOs	Volunteer Involving Organisations
WTE	Whole Time Equivalents

Acknowledgement

BearingPoint has received excellent cooperation from the management, staff and volunteers of the Citizens Information Services, who gave freely of their opinions and ideas. This helped the review enormously and we wish to express our thanks to all who contributed over the past two months. The Citizens Information Board staff also provided valuable input which was much appreciated. Several other tier two support companies were consulted and were very cooperative and we thank them for their assistance.

Without the support of volunteers and CIS staff, the review would not have garnished the insights and perspectives from all CIS organisations. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that the time volunteers and staff gave to the review and we appreciate their commitment and value their input.

Executive Summary

Introduction

In September 2022, terms of reference for this review were determined by the Board of Citizens Information Board in order to undertake a review of volunteering in the Citizens Information Service. BearingPoint was engaged in October to support and facilitate this review to capture views and experiences from stakeholders, assess the impact volunteering has on Citizens Information Services and to consider the continued sustainability of the volunteer model.

The overarching purpose of this report (as per the terms of reference provided by the Board of CIB) is to assess the role of volunteers in Citizens Information Centres and to understand the impact volunteering has on the provision of information, advice and advocacy to the public throughout the country.

Approach & Timeline

BearingPoint followed a structured approach in conducting this review consisting of four stages: planning, stakeholder consultation, data analysis and report development. See Appendix A for an overview of the project timeline. A critical element of this review was to capture insights from across key stakeholder groups. The stakeholder engagement phase included online surveys, interviews and focus groups. An overview of the stakeholder consultation can be found in Appendix B.

Volunteers

Citizens Information Centres were established in the 1960s and 1970s by volunteers for their local communities. Volunteers managed and supported the CIC and provided information and advice to the citizens in their locality. Paid staff were introduced to the CIS in the early 1990s, the service continued to evolve with the Comhairle Act 2000 combining the functions of the existing National Social Services Board and certain disability support functions of the National Rehabilitation Board. The Comhairle Act 2000 was amended by the Citizens Information Act 2007, which also changed Comhairle's name to the Citizens Information Board.

Volunteers have held a variety of roles in CICs, including providing a first point of contact, reception roles, information provider roles, working in outreach clinics and supporting specialist clinics. In many regions, volunteers played an important part in ensuring that the service was delivered successfully. There were variations in the numbers of and the roles of volunteers across CISs and disparities in the number of volunteers across regions. Approaches to management, communication, recruitment, training, quality assessments etc. varied by CIS organisation. Given this, the experience of volunteering within each CIS region and the role of a volunteer was not consistent.

In March 2020, the CIC offices were closed in accordance with COVID-19 public health recommendations. During this time, services continued to be provided by staff via a regional call back system and email.

As COVID-19 restrictions eased in 2021, services began reopening CICs for in-person services. Following discussions with some CIS companies which highlighted concerns regarding ensuring

consistent service delivery across the network where there was a reliance on volunteering, the executive of CIB reached the decision to request CISs defer the return of volunteers until a volunteer reintegration plan and volunteer role clarity was agreed. CIB would not usually instruct the CISs on operational matters, however, the impact of the pandemic created this unique situation.

The CIB and CIS Employer Group reinstated the Volunteer Strategy Working Group in 2021 to clarify the role of volunteers and to review and develop an interim CIS Volunteer Strategy to support the return of volunteers. In developing the strategy, the working group assessed new processes that had been developed during the pandemic, including a "triage" process where the very first step is to capture a full and accurate assessment of the client's query before promptly assigning it to an appropriately qualified member of the team to deliver an optimal outcome for the client.

The Working Group considered a number of areas including the roles, processes and functions that may be appropriately assigned to volunteers and the reengagement process with volunteers. Additional factors included service quality, training and methods of review were also assessed.

The final version of the strategy was completed in July and verbally agreed by the eight CIS organisations. Final agreement of the strategy by all eight companies was due to take place at a scheduled meeting in early September.

In advance of this, communications were issued by some CIS organisations in relation to the revised role of volunteers in CICs. This differed from their previous role and received negative feedback from volunteers in, what was considered, a diminution of their role.

Many volunteers have not yet been invited, or have opted not, to return to the roles they undertook before COVID-19.[1] In some regions, volunteers have returned and are performing receptionist and form filling roles. These changes in roles which limit volunteers' scope within a CIC, has left volunteers feeling they don't have an opportunity to apply their skills and capability that they would have utilised and trained for prior to the pandemic.

In many regions, volunteers play an important part in ensuring that the service is delivered. There is a long tradition of volunteering in the Citizens Information Service which has been central to the service since its inception. Volunteers highlight the importance of the service as the main reason for volunteering with CIS. Volunteers feel they fill a need within their service and support each other in knowledge sharing and nurturing community spirit. Volunteers find supporting their local CIC to be hugely rewarding. Volunteers have a substantial positive impact on service offerings in CICs.

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[1] Review data including interview, focus group, survey and CIC insights were collected in Oct/Nov 2022.

Service Provision

This review has identified a clear disparity in the numbers of volunteers among CIS organisations. Prior to the pandemic North Munster, South Munster and South Leinster had the greatest number of volunteers and relied on volunteer support to deliver a service. North Connacht & Ulster and South Connacht had very few volunteers and did not have this reliance. The reason for this disparity is largely historical and is derived from the creation of local CICs in these regions.

A full picture of the volunteer number disparity across regions should be assessed alongside the number of paid staff and staff employed through employment schemes. The disparity of resource numbers across regions creates a challenging environment for each CIS company to deliver a national service offering in a consistent manner. This disparity in turn adds to the challenge of implementing and managing national standards and policies relating to quality, training approaches, reviews and management.

Impacts have not been felt consistently across the CIS organisations, as some regions availed of volunteers to a lesser extent as outlined in detail in the report.

As volunteer numbers have not returned to pre COVID-19 levels, there has been an impact on the availability of services, service options and outreach clinics in regions where there was a reliance on volunteers.

Review Recommendations

The review was tasked with providing recommendations on the reintegration of volunteers to the CIS following the pandemic and to consider the continued sustainability of the volunteer model.

Reintegration of volunteers to the CIS

The purpose of the following is to offer practical guidance for the reintegration of volunteers. Given the regional differences and the disparity of Information Officers and volunteer numbers, the reintroduction of volunteers back into the service needs to reflect these regional variations.

- **Volunteers as Information Providers:** This review recommends the reintegration of volunteers into the CIS. Volunteers can enhance CIC opening hours and support staff and the public. Volunteers should be supported to perform an Information Provider role where they wish to in line with guidelines outlined in the main report.

- **Volunteer Duties:** This review recommends that volunteers should support the provision of information and advice services to the public as CIS have identified that they are essential to the service provision in many CICs.

- **Reintegration Communication Plan:** An agreed communication plan is required between all CIS to manage messaging and ensure consistent information is provided to volunteers and CIS staff in a timely manner. This should be monitored on an on-going basis as volunteers continue to return to services.

- **Reintroduction Refresher Training:** Structured reintroduction refresher training should be implemented for all volunteers returning to CICs.

- **Best Practice Sharing:** A best practice sharing exchange where CISs who have already reintroduced volunteers to the service, share their approach and insights on the reintegration process.

- **National Approach to Supporting Volunteers:** Continued implementation of a national approach to supporting volunteers in the CIS including the adoption of an updated Volunteer Handbook.

- **CIB and CIS Engagement Model:** Implementation of a new CIB and CIS engagement approach which supports improved communication and ways of working. There is an opportunity to provide a forum for discussion to support the reintegration of volunteers into the service.

Sustainability of the CIS Volunteer Model

The CIS volunteer model is sustainable in the short term once there is an agreed national vision and approach of how volunteers can support the CIS. However, this review cannot make a judgement of the long-term sustainability of the model given the unknown number of volunteers who may commit to volunteer in the future.

80% of volunteers who engaged in this review indicated their wish to return to the service to continue to provide information, advice and support to their local communities. The review notes that 20% of volunteers who participated in the volunteer survey indicated they do not wish to return to volunteering in the CIS. Post pandemic, CIB and CIS organisations would like to move the service to an employee led service which volunteers support. However, not all CICs have an appropriate level of staff and with current staff numbers it is not feasible to fully deliver an employee led service supported by volunteers. For the volunteer model to work, there is a dependency on the CIS staffing model. The ongoing sustainability of the current model is dependent on volunteer support, the support provided to IOs and DMs and a number of positive actions from a range of stakeholders.

Volunteers are central to the CIS and the volunteer model is sustainable once the required supports, staffing and resources are established.

Each Citizens Information Service delivers trusted, independent information, advice and advocacy to all members of the public. CIS is open for business and is delivering services to the public throughout the network of Citizen Information Centres. The return of volunteers has been completed in some regions and in other regions volunteers are being engaged with to welcome them back to the service. *Given the regional differences and the disparity of IO and volunteer numbers, each CIS must determine the most appropriate approach to support volunteers and staff to reintroduce volunteers into their service within an agreed national reintegration framework.*

There is a long tradition of volunteering in the Citizens Information Service which has been central to the service since its inception. Volunteers continue to be an important part of each CIC to support the delivery of services and ensure all people can access trusted information, advice and advocacy services when they need them most.

1 Introduction

1.1 Review Context

In March 2020, the CIC offices were closed in accordance with COVID-19 public health recommendations. During this time, services continued to be provided by paid Information Officers and other staff via a regional call back system and email.

As COVID-19 restrictions eased in 2021, services began reopening Citizens Information Centres for in-person services. Following discussion with some CIS companies which highlighted concerns regarding ensuring consistent service delivery across the network where there was a reliance on volunteering, the executive of CIB reached the decision to request CISs to defer the return of volunteers until a volunteer reintegration plan and volunteer role clarity was agreed. This was due to the limited capacity within some services to support the level of induction, support and training that would be required for volunteers after the long gap in service. CIB would not usually instruct the CISs on operational matters, however, the impact of the pandemic created this unique situation.

The CIB and CIS Employer Group reinstated the Volunteer Interim Strategy Working Group in 2021. The Working Group was given the remit to define parameters within which volunteers could return to CIS services and in what capacity, within a requirement that the provision of information to the public within CICs be led by CIS employees. In developing the strategy, the Working Group assessed new processes that had been developed during the pandemic. The Working Group also considered a number of areas including the roles, processes and functions that may be appropriately assigned to volunteers and the reengagement process with volunteers. Additional factors included service quality, training and methods of review were also assessed. The work of the Volunteer Strategy Working Group was ongoing as CICs reopened. As volunteers had not been active since March 2020, communications from CIB initially directed CIS organisations that volunteers should not return to providing an information service to the public but instead focus on a volunteer receptionist role and volunteer specialist service provider role. During the course of the working group, this direction was updated to invite volunteers to return to the service to support the provision of services which included form filling, initial screening and signposting etc.

The CIS Boards highlighted the need for volunteer information providers as an important resource and one that enabled centres to provide a critical service to the most vulnerable in society. Ongoing communications continued regarding the role of volunteers between CIB and the CIS Boards via the CIS Employer Group. While awaiting clarity on the role of volunteers, some CIS companies invited volunteers back as information providers, other regions invited volunteers back as receptionists and some CIS companies have not yet brought volunteers back to the service. Each CIS was responsible for managing communications with their volunteers. There was no consistent, national approach to communicating with volunteers during this process.

The Volunteer Strategy Working Group's interim strategy was completed in July 2022 and verbally agreed by the eight CIS. Final agreement of the strategy was due to take place at a scheduled meeting in September 2022.

The Board of CIB decided to undertake a review of volunteering in the Citizens Information Service in September 2022. BearingPoint was engaged in October to support and facilitate this review to capture views and experiences from all stakeholders, assess the impact volunteering has on the CIS and to consider the continued sustainability of the volunteer model.

1.2   Purpose and Scope of Review

The overarching purpose of this report (as per the terms of reference provided by the Board of CIB) is to assess the role of volunteers in Citizens Information Centres and to understand the impact volunteers have on the provision of information, advice and advocacy to the public throughout the country.

The terms of reference identified a particular focus on ensuring that the role of volunteers within CICs is fit for purpose and provides a high quality, consistent service for the public and to support, and be supported by, the paid and scheme staff.

The scope of the review was to explore the role of the volunteer in the Citizens Information Service, including an examination of:

    a.   The volunteer profile, pre- and post- Covid-19.
    b.   The experience of volunteering in a Citizens Information Service.
    c.   The impact of volunteering on the provision of information, advice and advocacy.
    d.   The disparity of volunteer numbers across regions and how this may impact on national service offer.
    e.   The value and cost of utilising volunteers in Citizens Information Services.
    f.   Current and future training requirements/ skills audit.
    g.   The features of the overall CIS volunteer programme as they compare to the strategic objectives set out in the National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025.

The review was tasked with providing recommendations on the re-integration of volunteers to the CIS following the pandemic. It also considered the continued sustainability of the volunteer model and considered recommendations made in Periodic Critical Review of the Citizens Information Board.

Outside the scope of this report was to:

- Conduct a detailed staffing analysis

- Undertake a detailed examination of the operational details of each CIC

2 Approach

This section provides an overview of the approach and timeline of the CIS Volunteer Review.

2.1 Review Approach & Timeline

This review was conducted by BearingPoint between October and November 2022. A CIB project team was established to monitor the status of the review progress.

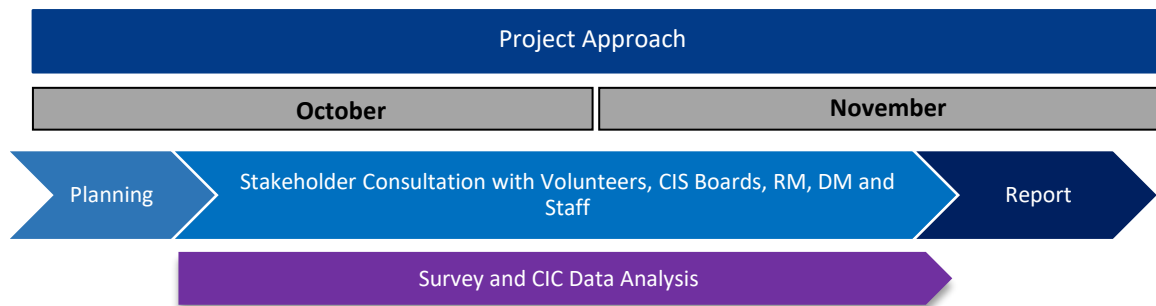See Appendix A for an overview of the project timeline.

Figure 1 - Volunteer Review Approach

See Appendix D for a list of documents reviewed during the planning phase. Please see Appendix B for more information on stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

2.2 Stakeholder Engagement

A critical element of this review was to capture insights from across key stakeholder groups. The following diagram provides an overview of the stakeholder consultation.
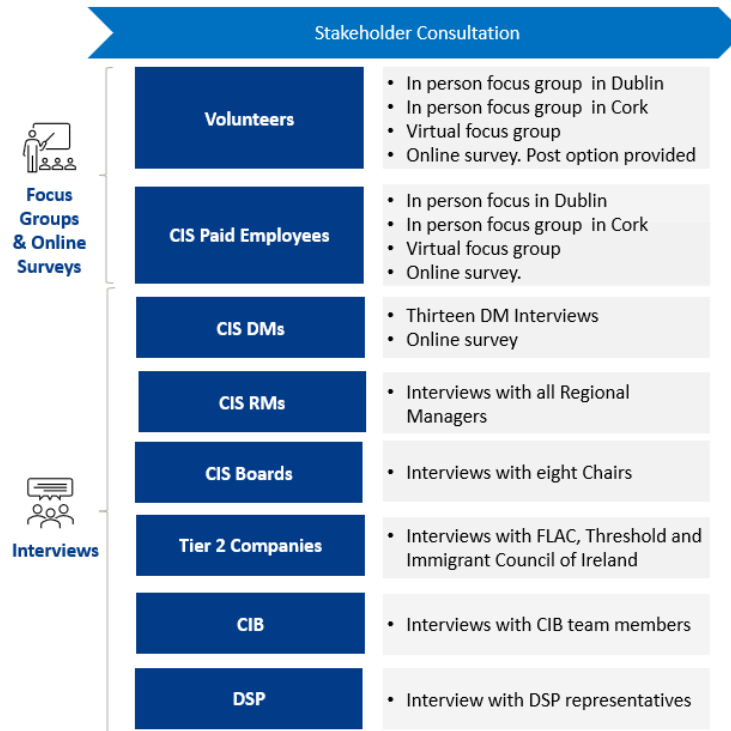
Figure 2 - Stakeholder Consultation

2.2.1 Surveys

Three separate surveys were issued to different stakeholder groups. Surveys were issued electronically. Regional Managers distributed the survey links to the volunteers within their companies. Volunteers had the option to complete the survey online or submit a paper-based response.

Survey	Audience	Purpose
Volunteer Survey	Former and current volunteers	To capture insights and data on the volunteer profile, including: • Age • Current employment status • Educational background • Professional background or area of expertise The surveys sought to capture how volunteers feel about CIS volunteering and identify how many volunteers wished to return to their CIC to volunteer.
CIS Staff Survey	CIS paid staff CE scheme staff	To capture insights on: • The staff members role • The impact volunteers have on staff and service delivery

Survey	Audience	Purpose
Development Manager Survey	All DMs across every region	To capture insights on: • How service delivery would be affected if volunteers were not in their CICs • What supports each DM provides to volunteers DMs were also requested to provide CIC data on the: • Number of offices covered by DM • Number of paid staff, CE scheme staff and numbers of volunteers supporting their CICs pre and post COVID-19

Table 1 - Stakeholder Consultation Survey Types

Appendix C provides details of the response rate to each survey.

2.2.2 Interviews

Regional Managers, Chairpersons and Development Managers were invited to attend an individual virtual interview. During the consultation phase, all Regional Managers, eight Chairpersons and thirteen Development Managers were interviewed. There were between one and three DMs interviewed per region. Interviewee input was key to informing our understanding of the needs and demands of Citizens Information Centres in each region.

Tier two support company interviews were held with Threshold, Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) and the Immigrant Council of Ireland. Tier two companies are companies that work closely with both CIS staff and volunteers and are a resource to CICs for fact checking and onward referral if a member of the public requires further support.

2.2.3 Focus Groups

Focus group meetings were held to capture views from CIC staff and volunteers. This included:
- In-person focus groups in Dublin and Cork
- Two virtual focus groups for those who could not attend in-person

Attendance was between four and twelve at each focus group with fifty-seven participants in total. Please see Appendix B for more information on stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

3 Background & Context

This section provides an overview of the CIS and outlines the origins of the CIS and the events in the last five years that provide an important context for this review.

3.1 Origins of the CIS

There is a long tradition of volunteering in the CISs which has been central to the service since its inception. CICs were established by volunteers over 50 years ago where a need was identified in the local community. Volunteers managed and supported the CIC to provide information and advice to the citizens in their locality. The service continued to evolve and funding was provided for paid CIC staff from the early 1990s.

The Comhairle Act 2000 established a new organisation named "Comhairle", now known as the CIB. Comhairle was established by combining the functions of the existing National Social Services Board and certain disability support functions of the National Rehabilitation Board. The Comhairle Act 2000 was amended by the Citizens Information Act 2007, which changed the name of the organisation to the Citizens Information Board.

3.2 CIS Delivery Model

3.2.1 CIS Delivery Model Until 2018

Prior to 2018, the CIS network encompassed 42 independent CIS companies which were funded and supported by CIB. In 2018, the CIB restructured the 42 CIS Service Delivery Companies to eight regional companies to improve control and oversight, financial management and governance of the CIS network.

Prior to restructuring, CIB also provided a variety on non-funding supports e.g. implementation and provision of national ICT and telephone infrastructure, development of query and case management systems and managed CIS training needs and supports including the management of training supports. CIB also organised national volunteer recognition events and facilitated best practice sharing between the CISs.

3.2.2 CIS Delivery Model Post 2018 Restructuring

Since 2018, the eight regional companies have operated a network of CISs which provide confidential, free, impartial information, advice and advocacy services to the public from 111 Citizens Information Centre (CIC) locations around the country. See figure 3 below for an overview of the eight CIS regions.

The eight CISs are independent Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLG) and are registered charities. Each CIS has a voluntary Board to oversee strategic direction, governance and management of the CIS organisation.

Each CIS organisation receives funding from CIB to deliver services through formal Service Level Agreements (SLAs). As well as funding, CIB provides non-financial support through shared services including IT equipment and technical support, training support via an eLearning

platform and HR support as mandated in the Comhairle Act. CIB also directly hosts citzensinformation.ie and funds and supports the Citizens Information Phone Service.

Figure 3 - Eight CIS Regions

The staffing of CISs consists of permanent employees, Employment Scheme Participants (ESPs) and volunteers. The CIS resourcing model as a whole is not set up to independently run a service with paid staff alone.

Volunteers

Volunteers give up their time freely to support the provision of information and advice in their local CICs. Up until March 2020, volunteers undertook receptionist and Information Provider roles, as well as supporting specialist and outreach clinics. In each CIC, volunteers were rostered based on the hours they were willing to commit with an expectation that they would volunteer for seven hours a week which could equate to two half days of 3.5 hours. This seven-hour time commitment includes any administration or training hours that volunteers undertake.

Paid Employees

Each CIS organisation has the following paid staff roles within their region. The number and location of roles varies from region to region.

- A Regional Manager is responsible for the overall management of a CIS Regional Company
- Development Managers are responsible for the management of the service in their locality or county within a region. Development Managers are responsible for volunteer support, training and management.
- Advocacy Support Workers provide support to Information Officers in their delivery of advocacy services and assist the DMs with case reviews and other work.
- Senior Information Officers provides information, advice and advocacy at a high level to members of the public in a designated service area. They also coach, mentor and support Information Officers to ensure that all customer-service quality objectives and standards are met.

- Information Officers provide information, advice and advocacy to the public as well as supporting volunteers in their various roles. IOs play an important role in training, mentoring and supporting volunteers.
- Administrators, who provide administrative support to the Regional Manager and the Development Managers. [2]

Employment Scheme Participants (ESPs) - Community Employment and Tús Workers

As well as having paid staff and volunteers, CISs operate another resource model which includes Employment Scheme Participant scheme staff. This resource model is not applied consistently across all regions.

The purpose of Employment Schemes, which are a part of Ireland's Active Labour Market Policies, is to enhance the employability and mobility of unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities. The Department of Social Protection support and funds participants in Employment Schemes.

Community Employment (CE) participants make up the majority of the ESP cohort within the CIS network, with the remaining members split between the Tús, Job Initiative, Rural Social Scheme, and Job Bridge schemes. Depending on the specific employment scheme and the individual's circumstances, an ESP placement period could range from one year to three years[3].

3.2.3   CIB Reorganisation

Until 2021 there was a specific department within CIB responsible for providing oversight and support to the information provision and advocacy service provided through the CIS.   A Department of Social Protection Periodic Critical Review (PCR) of the CIB recommended the CIB review its organisation structure to separate responsibilities for the oversight and support of SDCs. The executive organisational structure was subsequently restructured in June 2022.

Within the new structure, CISs are supported by two divisions: Compliance and Reporting, and Standards and Development.

3.3   Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 prompted significant changes in the CISs. In March 2020, the CICs closed their office network in accordance with public health recommendations. During this unprecedented time of change, CIB and CIS worked successfully to implement efficient decision making and ensured the public had access to services. Throughout this period, there were increased adoption levels of email and telephone services.

As government restrictions were lifted, CICs in-person services reopened however volunteers were not immediately brought back. The review has noted that there has been a reduction in CIC opening hours since the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. While the long-term impact of COVID-19 and the required service delivery channel shifts is still not apparent, CIB and the CISs see a clear need for in-person services and telephone service options.

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[2] Section 1.2, Volunteer Handbook – July 2022
[3] Community Employment Procedures Manual, April 2022. Terms may be extended for those over the age of 60.

3.4   Periodic Critical Review of the CIB

In May 2022, the Department of Social Protection undertook a Periodic Critical Review of the Citizens Information Board. The PCR concluded with 25 recommendations for the CIB to address. Recommendation 14 related to the CIS volunteer programme.

Recommendation 14: Review the volunteer *programme in light of Covid-19 to assess its long-term feasibility and potential alternative approaches.*

The PCR notes an evaluation is required following the pandemic and the changes in service delivery that arose from the response to COVID-19. The PCR caveated this recommendation with the assumption that it is likely that when CIB and CISs strategically approach this issue, some in-person services will be streamlined, with the prospect of co-location and possibly adjustments to the volunteer structure.

Given the complexities and significant amount of change CIS organisations have managed since the COVID-19 pandemic, it is too soon to evaluate the long-term feasibility and potential alternative approaches. This review has identified the value that volunteers bring to their CICs and any new approach must be mindful of the important role and impact volunteers bring to CIS organisations.

4 Volunteers

Each CIS company has oversight, governance and ownership of the service they deliver in their network of CICs. Staffing models, services and approaches to management, communication, recruitment, training, quality assessments etc. vary by region. The experience of volunteering within each CIS region and the role of a volunteer is not consistent. Within this context, the following section provides an overview of the CIS volunteer profile. Please see Appendix C for detailed survey response rates.

4.1 Volunteer Profile

In many regions, volunteers play an important part in ensuring that the service is delivered. Through our stakeholder consultation, volunteers have been described as empathetic, skilled, educated and valuable connections to the community.
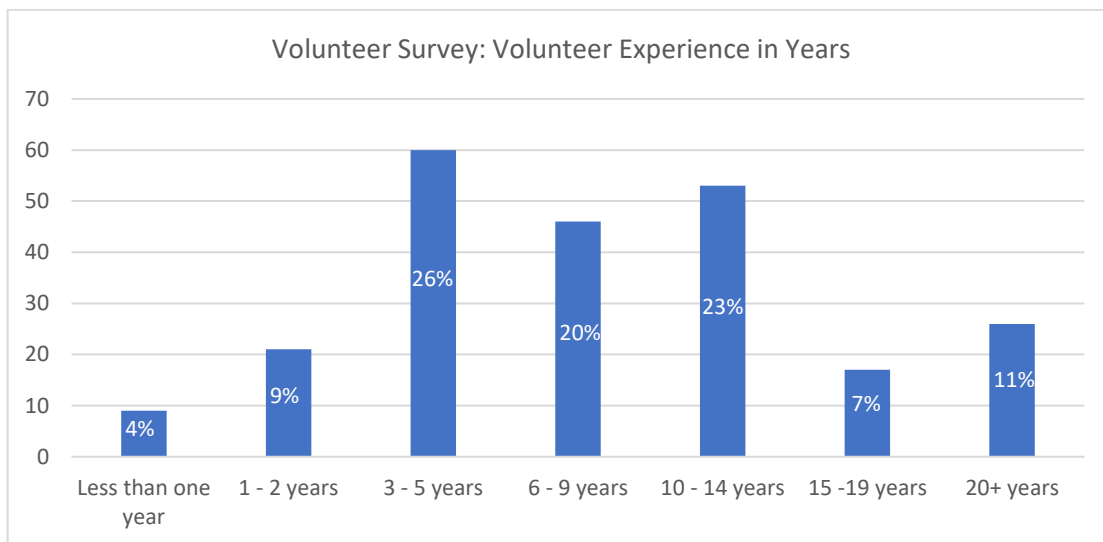

Figure 4 - Volunteer Experience in years, Volunteer Survey, October 2022[4]

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[4] Volunteer survey data based off 232 volunteers. A response rate of 29% of the number of volunteers supporting the service in Jan 2020. Number of volunteers in Jan 2020 provided by DMs in each region.
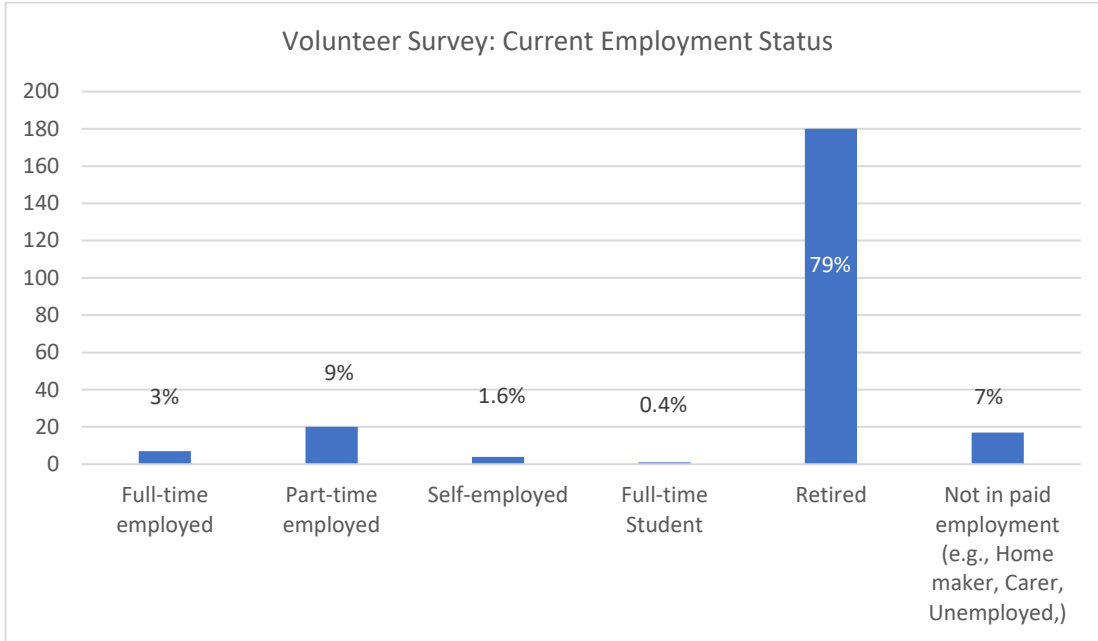
Volunteer Survey: Current Employment Status

Category	Value
Full-time employed	3%
Part-time employed	9%
Self-employed	1.6%
Full-time Student	0.4%
Retired	79%
Not in paid employment (e.g., Home maker, Carer, Unemployed,)	7%

Figure 5 - Employment Experience in Years, Volunteer Survey, October 2022

79% of volunteer respondents are retired with expertise in areas such as business management, insurance, social welfare, taxation, finance, etc.

Volunteer Survey: Volunteer Age Range

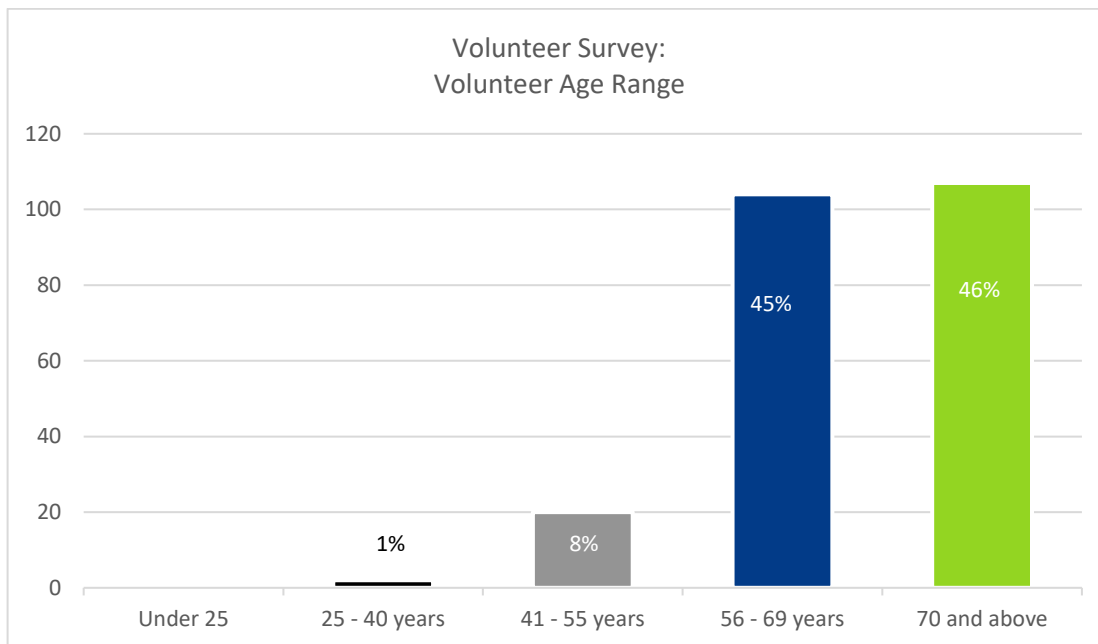| Category	Value
Under 25	
25 - 40 years	1%
41 - 55 years	8%
56 - 69 years	45%
70 and above	46%

Figure 6 - Age range of volunteers, Volunteer Survey, October 2022

A majority of the volunteers are in the 56-69 age bracket (45%) and the 70 and above age bracket (45%).

A number of volunteers were previously Information Officers within the CIS. 46% of volunteer respondents have obtained a third level qualification.
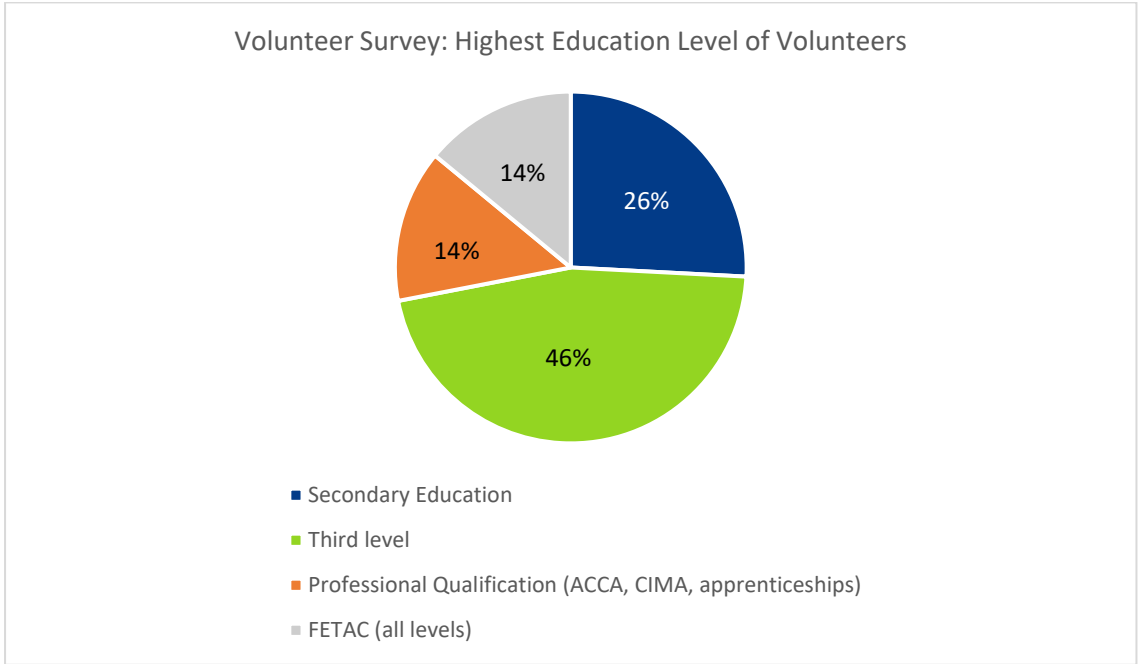
Volunteer Survey: Highest Education Level of Volunteers

- Secondary Education
- Third level
- Professional Qualification (ACCA, CIMA, apprenticeships)
- FETAC (all levels)

Figure 7 - Highest Education level of Volunteers, Volunteer Survey, October 2022

4.2   Volunteer Experience

This review identified numerous regional variations between each CIS organisation in terms of ways of working, training, management etc. These variations impact the experience of volunteering in a CIC. Volunteers' perspectives and experience of volunteering in the Citizens Information Service have changed significantly since COVID-19. Given this, a general assessment of the experience pre and post COVID-19 is outlined below.

4.2.1   Experience of Volunteering Pre COVID-19

As the following figure demonstrates, volunteers highlight the importance of the service as the main reason for volunteering with CIS.
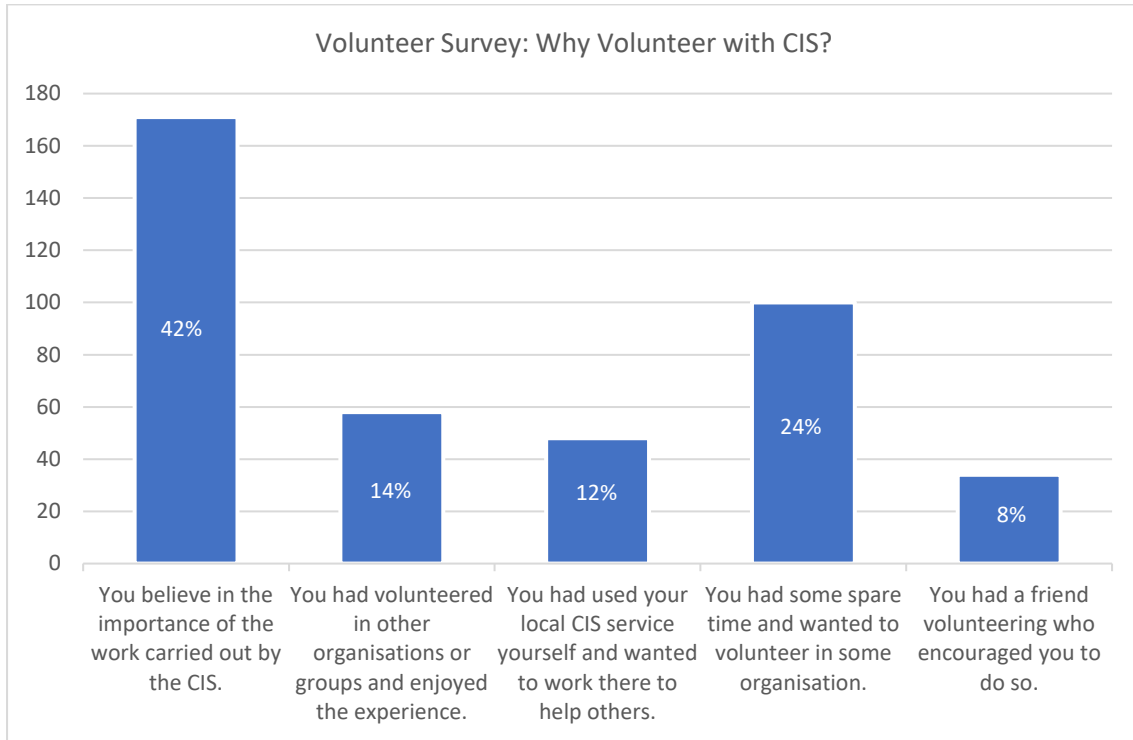
Figure 8 - Motivations for Volunteering, Volunteer Survey, October 2022

Until March 2020, the majority of the CIS service offering was available via in-person drop ins at each CIC. CIS also supported significant outreach clinics across their regions.

See section 5.1 'Impact of volunteering on the provision of information, advice and advocacy for more detail on volunteer roles during this period.

4.2.2   Current Experience of Volunteering

Many volunteers have not been invited to return or have opted not to return to the roles they undertook before COVID-19.[5] In some regions, volunteers have been invited back to perform receptionist and form filling roles. These changes in roles which limit volunteers' scope within a CIC, has left volunteers feeling they don't have an opportunity to apply their skills and capability that they would have utilised and trained for prior to the pandemic. Of those volunteers who wish to return to volunteering in their CIS, they wish to return to the role they performed before COVID-19.

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[5] Review data including interview, focus group, survey and CIC insights were collected in Oct/Nov 2022.

Volunteer Survey: Are you interested in continuing to volunteer?

- Yes, I am interested in volunteering less than 7 hours per week
- Yes, I am interested in volunteering 7 or more hours per week
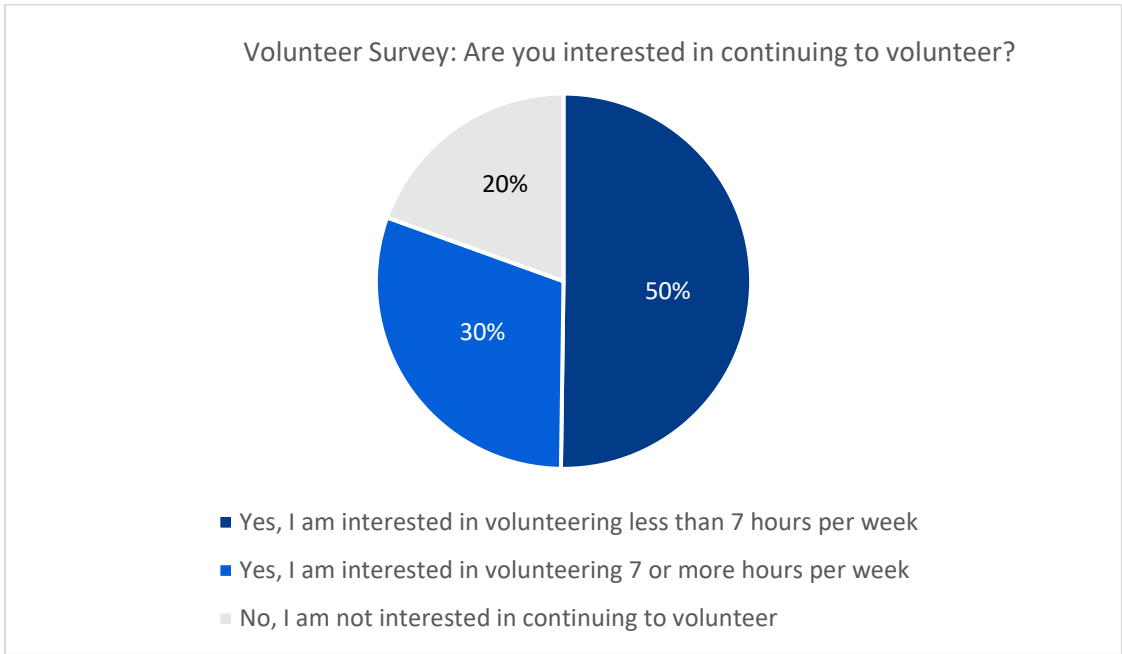- No, I am not interested in continuing to volunteer

Figure 9 - Interest in continuing to volunteer, Volunteer Survey, October 2022

The following graph outlines the reasons why volunteers may not be interested in returning to volunteer with CIS.
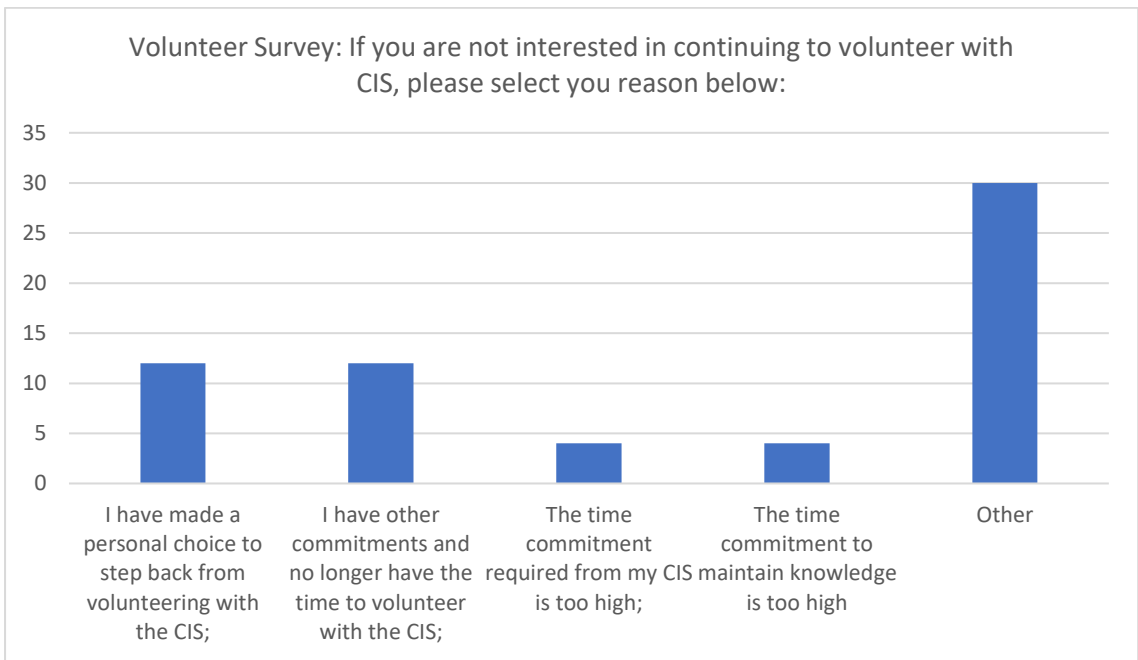

Figure 10 - Reasons for no longer volunteering, Volunteer Survey, October 2022

The 'Other' responses were analysed further, and a number of themes identified.

- Do not agree volunteers should only perform receptionist or form filling duties
- Lack of clarity regarding volunteer role
- Sense of feeling let down

These reasons were reiterated in the volunteer focus group feedback.

5 Service Provision

5.1 Impact of volunteering on the provision of information, advice and advocacy

The following section details the impact to service delivery for regions where volunteers have not returned, have returned in reduced numbers or where volunteers are performing different roles.

The vast majority of Development Managers have indicated that their service would be affected if volunteers were not available.
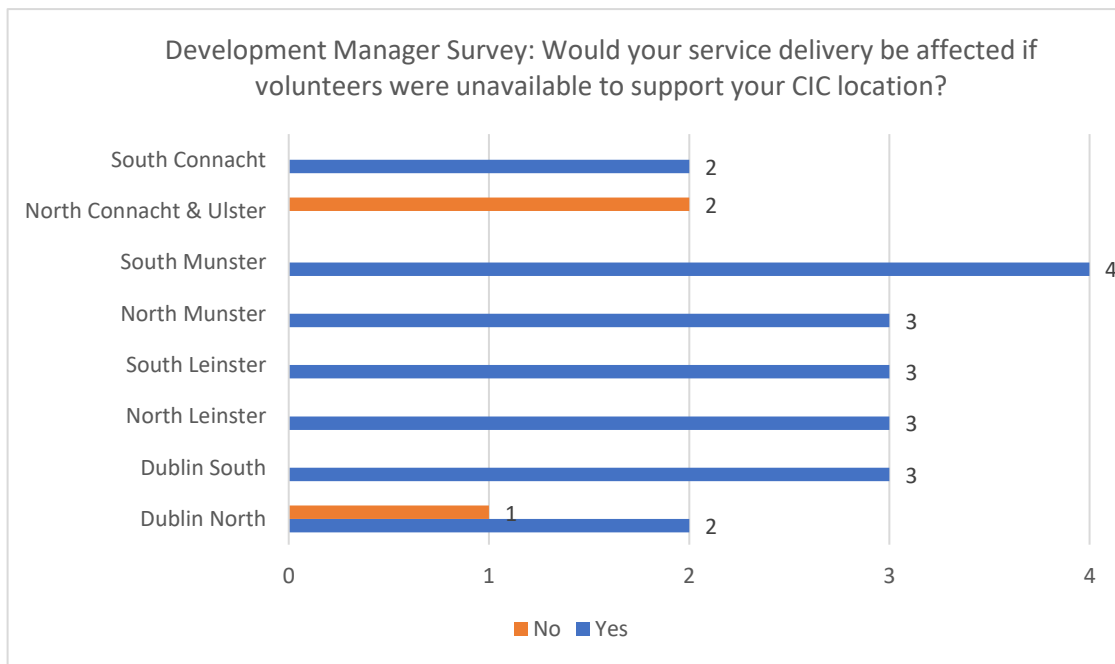

Figure 11 - Would your service delivery be affected if volunteers were unavailable to support your CIC locations?

Volunteer Information Providers

There were a number of roles which volunteers supported pre COVID-19. These included:

- Providing information, advice and support to the CIC drop-in services. Volunteers supported the public with form filling or applying for entitlements.

- Signposting the public to a range of services available to them in their local communities.

- Completing calculations related to pensions or welfare, if they had the relevant experience.

- Identify complex issues and seeking support from Information Officers.

- Recording queries and capturing social policy returns (SPR) in the CIS Case Management System (Oyster). SPR data provides CIB with insights of the problems the public face when trying to access social and public services.

- Supporting outreach clinics.

- Some volunteers worked in a receptionist role. These volunteers acted as the first point of contact for drop-in and appointment services and would support information provision over the phone.

There were a number of other roles carried out by volunteers within some CIS which were aligned to individual volunteer's specific skills. Following the pandemic, the Volunteer Strategy Working Group was established to define parameters within which volunteers could return to CIS services and in what capacity.

An overview of volunteer numbers pre and post COVID-19 is detailed in section 5.2.

Service Opening Hours

A detailed examination of the operational details of each CIC in Ireland was not within the scope of this review, however from current opening hour details of each CIC only 47% operate more than 30 hours per week.

A number of assumptions were utilised during analysis of the CIC service opening hours:

- CIC is considered "open" when the public can access the CIC office in person via drop-in or appointments.

- CICs offering phone call only service were deemed as 'closed'

- Outreach clinic locations have not been included. Only CIC office locations have been analysed.

From interviews and focus group feedback, the reduced opening hours in some regions is in part due to the roles volunteers provided to support the day-to-day operations of each CIC and the provision advice and information to the public.

Impact on Information Officers

Information Officers in some regions have been impacted where there was a reliance on volunteers to support the service. Volunteers who would have provided extra support, receptionist roles, or information provider roles, are no longer there to support paid staff in the CICs. Focus group feedback identified that staff feel burnt out and there will be, or already has in some areas, an impact on staff health and wellbeing.

In rural areas, where Information Officers are covering multiple locations, Information Officers are finding it difficult to keep pace with the demand. In some regions, there aren't enough Information Officers to cover CIC planned or unplanned leave so CICs without adequate cover must close their doors to the public.

In some regions, where there were a large number of volunteers relative to the number of Information Officers, the time to manage and support volunteers, impacted on Information Officers. IOs highlighted that supporting new and returning volunteers can require a high time investment for CIC staff. This is particularly felt where support for complex queries is required during walk-in clinics.

See section 5.3.2 for more detail on the cost of volunteers in the CIS.

Advocacy Impact

Advocacy is a key service delivered by each CIS. Volunteer IPs do not perform long term advocacy roles, however there is a general consensus from CIS RMs, DMs and IOs, that without volunteers or the necessary staffing levels, each CIS cannot provide the level of advocacy services that is required to meet public demand. With the support of volunteers to handle less complex cases and provide information and advice to the public, IOs and DMs had time to prepare and support advocacy cases.

Specialist Clinics

Specialist clinics including Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) have been impacted post COVID-19. Specialist training from Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) continues to be delivered to CIC staff, which is usually arranged at a regional level by RMs.

Pre COVID-19, FLAC provided 89 free legal advice clinics after working hours in 67 CIC locations around the country. In-person FLAC clinics have not resumed since the pandemic in part due to the reduced number of volunteers in some regions to support the opening and facilitation of clinics. FLAC now provides 18/20 virtual phone clinics per week. These virtual clinics have advantages but, ideally, the public should have the option to access virtual or in-person clinics.

Outreach Clinics

Prior to March 2020, CICs organised outreach clinics in some towns or areas which didn't have a CIC in their locality. Volunteers provided capacity to deliver these clinics by facilitating and supporting opening and closing of the outreach locations and providing the resources to hold afterhours clinics. Outreach clinics included events at adult education centres, schools or local community centres.

Outreach clinics are currently not available to the public[6]. In some cases, this is, in part, due to lack of volunteer resources and in some instances due to the low level of public usage.

5.2   Volunteer Number Disparity Across Regions

In this section, the review assessed the disparity of volunteer numbers across regions and how this may impact a national service offering.

An analysis was completed of the number of volunteers in each CIC pre-COVID-19 in October 2022 and compared against the volunteer numbers in January 2020.

Regional Volunteer Numbers

This review has identified a clear disparity of volunteer number among regional CISs. The reason for this disparity is largely historical and is derived from the creation of local CICs in these regions.

Prior to the pandemic North Munster, South Munster and South Leinster had the greatest number of volunteers. North Connacht & Ulster CIS had very few volunteers.
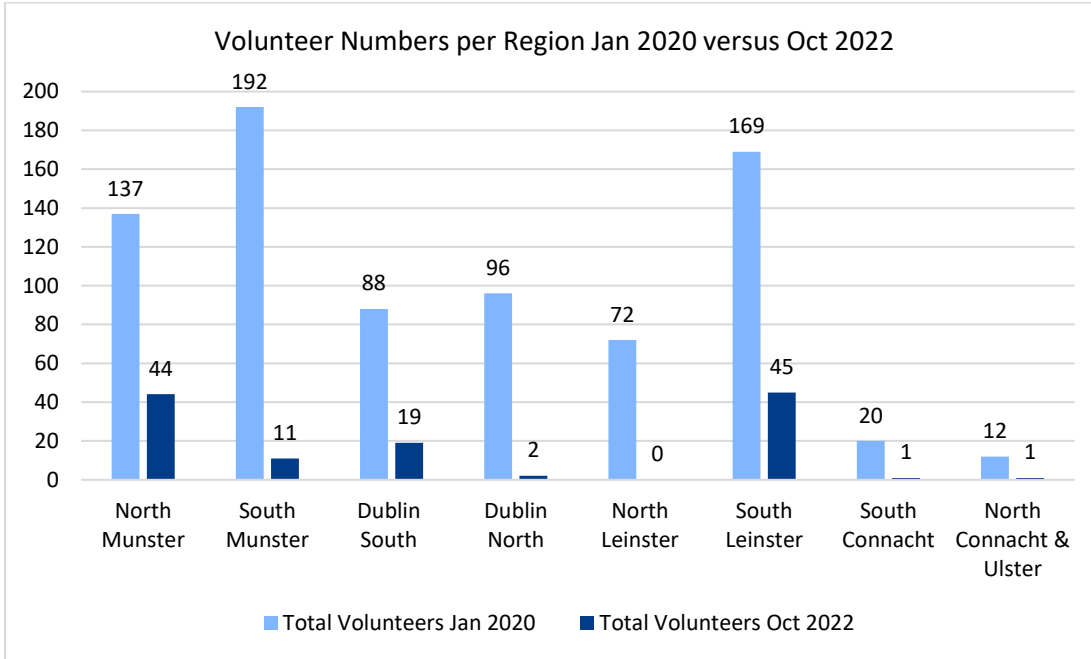
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[6] As of November 2022

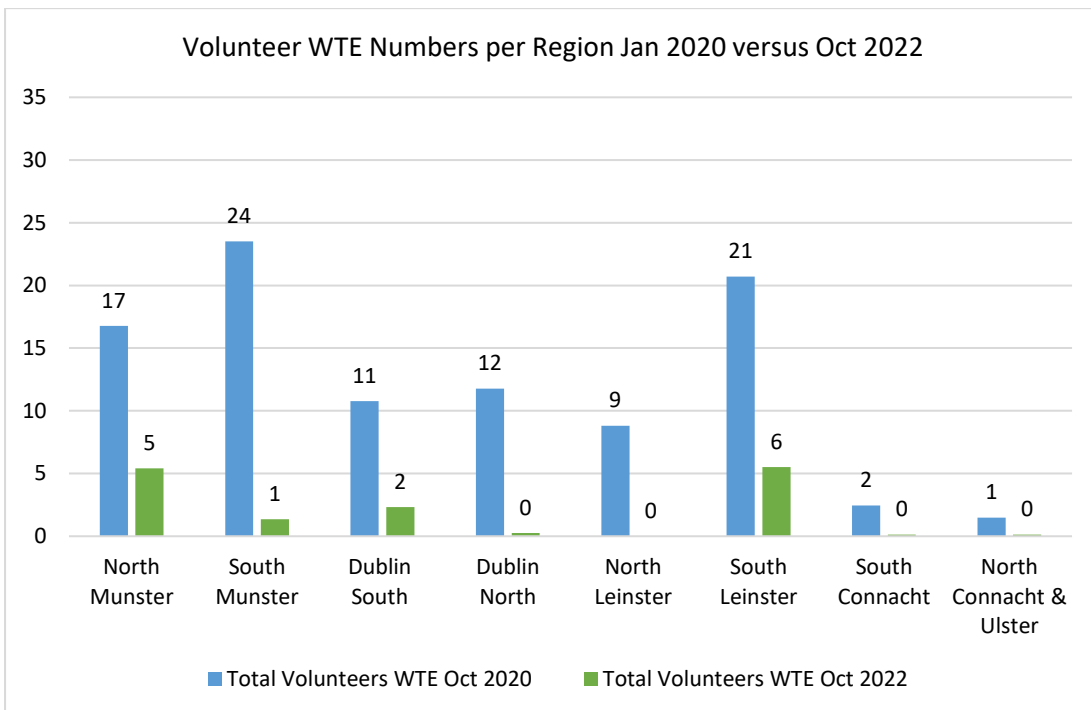Figure 12 - Volunteer Numbers January 2020 vs October 2022

Figure 13 – WTE Volunteer Numbers per Region Jan 2020 versus Oct 2022[7]

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[7] WTE calculation assumes that 30% of Volunteers wish to volunteer 7hrs per week and 70% wish to volunteer 4hrs per week. The WTE calculation is based on a 35hr working week and 10.5 months a year.
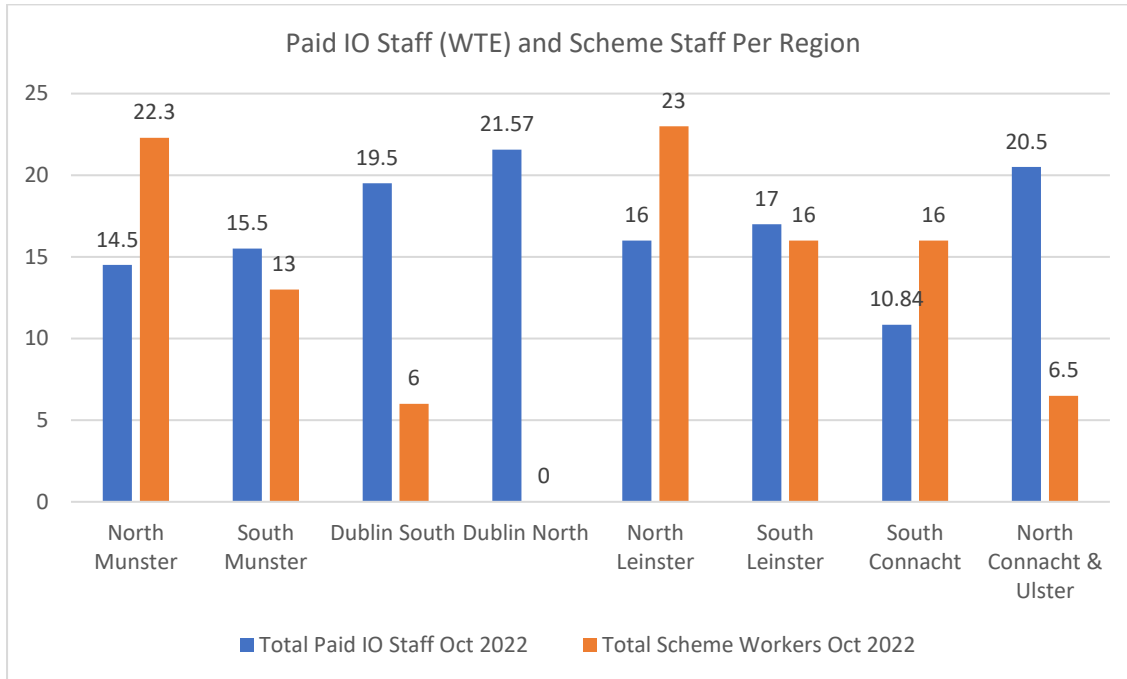
Figure 14 - Paid IO Staff (WTE) and Scheme staff per region[8]

The following section will focus in on the outliers from a volunteer disparity perspective – South Munster and North Connacht & Ulster.

South Munster CIS

South Munster CIS had 14 CIC locations. As the following graph demonstrates, these locations had a large number of volunteers and compared to a relatively small number of IOs. Some IOs were supporting multiple CIC locations in a week. As of October 2022, a number of CICs are no longer open to the public. The reason for this cannot be deduced to one cause, although the absence of volunteers has had significant impact on the ability of some CICs to return to pre-COVID-19 opening hours.

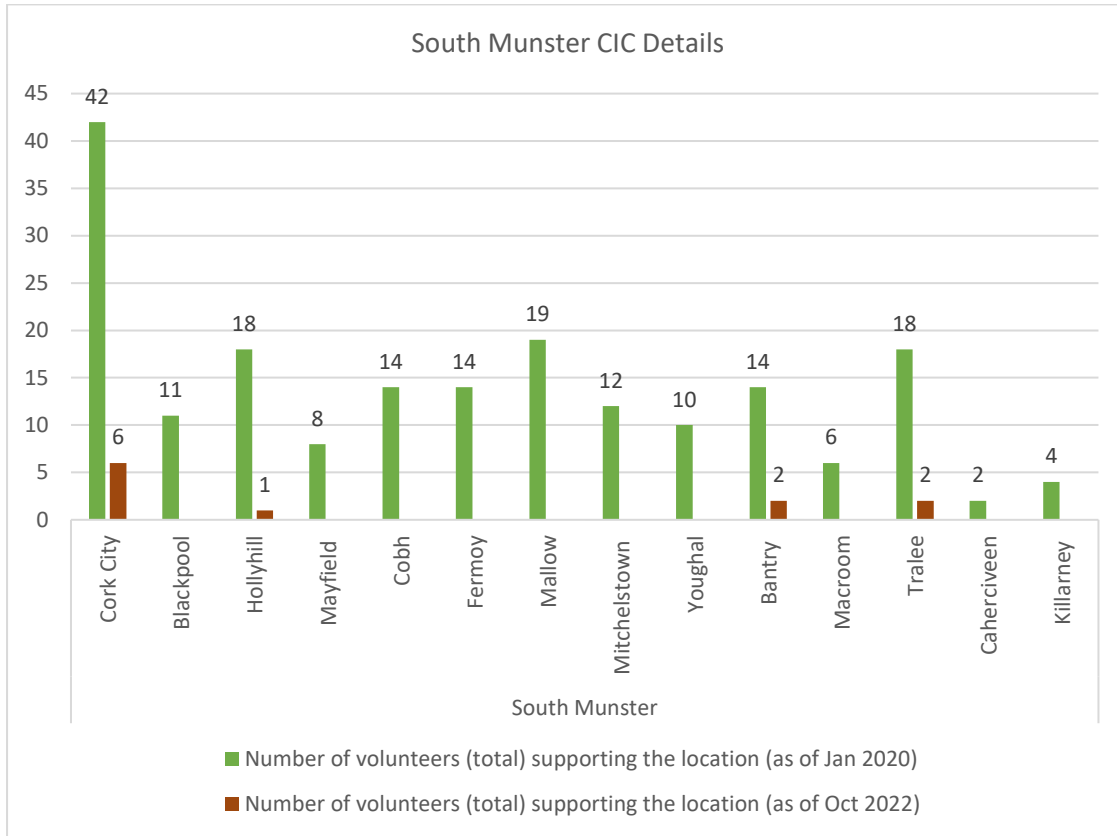[8] Data source: CIB Regional Manager WTE report

Figure 15- South Munster CIC Details, Volunteer Numbers, January 2020 - October 2022

North Connacht & Ulster CIS

Volunteers are not as integral to the North Connacht & Ulster CIS. In Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim and Sligo CICs, the volunteer numbers ranged from 1 to 8. Each CIC had permanent staff supported by staff from job initiative schemes.

Donegal has not had volunteers for a number of decades. In the early 2000s, the CIS Board of Donegal participated in an integrated service model. Public services centres were built in five locations around the county and CIC offices were provided with an office space within these buildings. This meant that each CIC had no overheads relating to rent, heat or maintenance costs. Given this, a decision was made to provide greater staff funding to run these service locations.
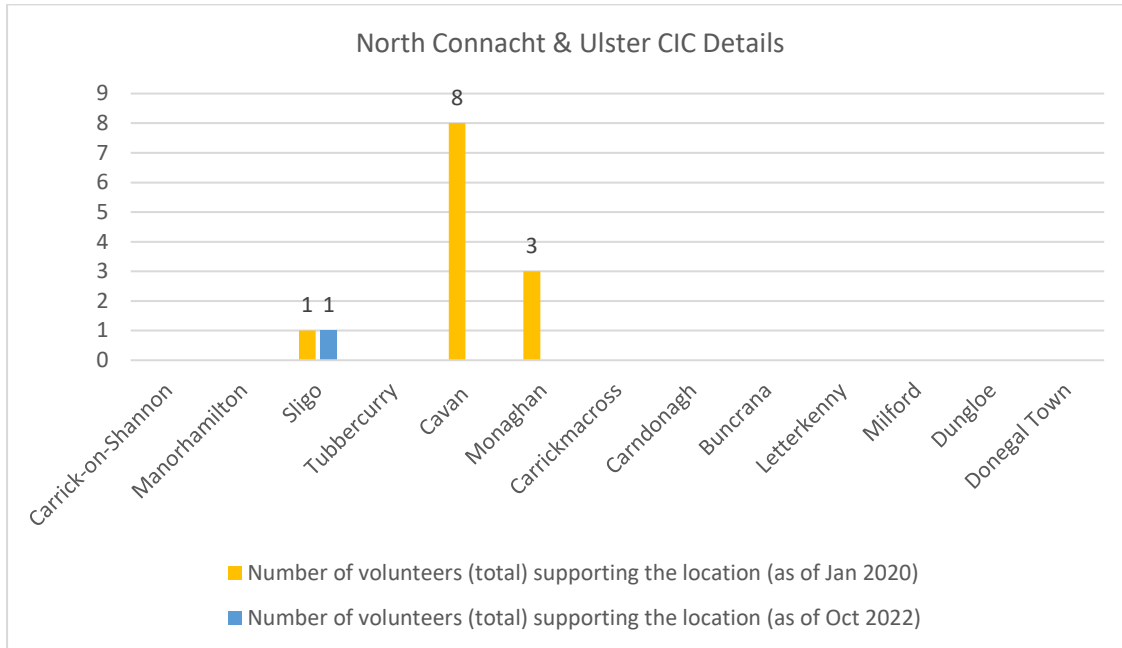
Figure 16- North Connacht & Ulster, CIC Details, Volunteer numbers January 2020 - October 2022

Impact to National Service Offering

The structure of each CIS is quite complex and has evolved over time. A full picture of the volunteer number disparity across regions needs to be assessed alongside the number of IOs and importance of staff employed through a scheme. Community Employment staff are an important part of the service staffing mix. The regional disparity creates a challenging environment for each CIS company to deliver a consistent service offering to the public and to implement and manage national policies relating to quality processes, training approaches, reviews and management.

The assessment of the impact volunteer number disparity has on the national service is bigger than one metric. There are a number of regional differentiators that impact public service offerings:

- Regional size
- Population size
- Disparity of CIC locations
- Socioeconomic needs
- Rural versus urban
- Regional demographics – social housing, digital literacy etc

The needs of rural Ireland are notably different to those in urban centres.

As detailed in section 5.1, volunteers have a substantial impact on service offerings in some regions. Focus group feedback and interviews highlighted that the public are currently being turned away in some regions as the service cannot open to a similar level experienced prior to COVID-19. CIS RMs, DMs and IOs noted the importance of in-person face to face interaction in identifying the citizen's needs. A reduction in volunteers has impacted the service offering in some regions and resulted in reduced opening hours and the removal of some in person outreach clinics.

Citizens Information Services

5.3 Value and Cost of Volunteering in Citizens Information Services

The following section outlines the value volunteers bring to the CIS and summarises the non-monetary cost of volunteering in CIS. Please see Appendix C for survey response rate details.

5.3.1 Value of Volunteers in the CIS

The Citizens Information Service Volunteer Handbook outlines the value volunteers bring to the service:

- *'Recognises that without volunteers it would be unable to meet its objectives;*
- *Views volunteers as complementary to paid staff and adding significant value to the CIS's activities;*
- *Is committed to making volunteering a worthwhile and enjoyable activity;*
- *Delivers a quality service to the public.*
We regard volunteers as a key resource and encourage them to become involved in all appropriate activities.'[9]

Volunteering with their local CIC gave volunteers a feeling of being an active citizen, contributing to their communities and ensuring marginalised people didn't fall through the gaps. Volunteers feel they filled a need within their service and supported each other in knowledge sharing and nurturing community spirit. Volunteers found supporting their local CIC to be hugely rewarding.

The following descriptors summarise the feedback from focus group participants of the value volunteers bring to the services. Focus groups were comprised of volunteers and CIS staff.

- Supporting society through community involvement
- Positive role models
- Commitment
- Empathetic
- Diversity
- Life experience

The following graph represents CIC staff's perspective of the impact volunteers have on aspects of the CIS service delivery.[10]

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[9] Volunteer Handbook, July 2022, Section 1.3 Statement of Policy

[10] Figure 17 based on CIC Staff survey responses of 166 staff. 54% of the 306 staff (paid IO and staff employed via a scheme) on record.

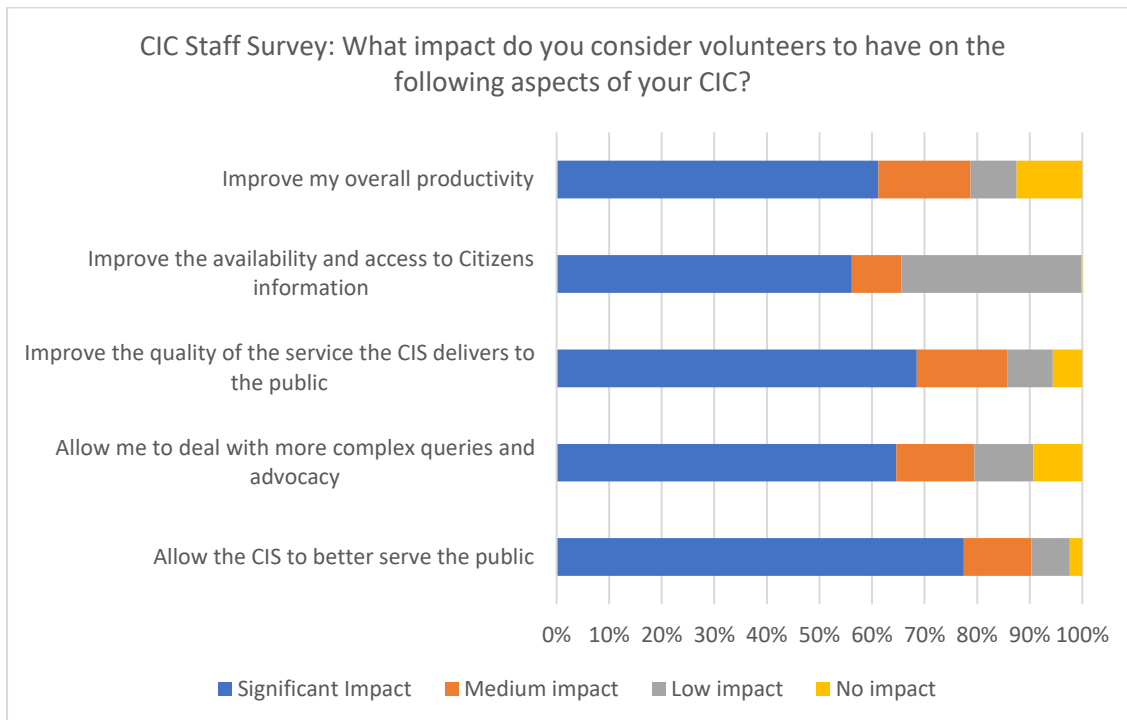CIC Staff Survey: What impact do you consider volunteers to have on the following aspects of your CIC?

Figure 17 - Impact of Volunteers, CIS Staff Survey, October 2022

Across all regions, CIS staff had a consistent perspective that volunteers had a significant impact on improving the quality of the service that CIS delivers.

CIS Staff : What impact do you consider volunteers have on improving the quality of service the CIS delivers
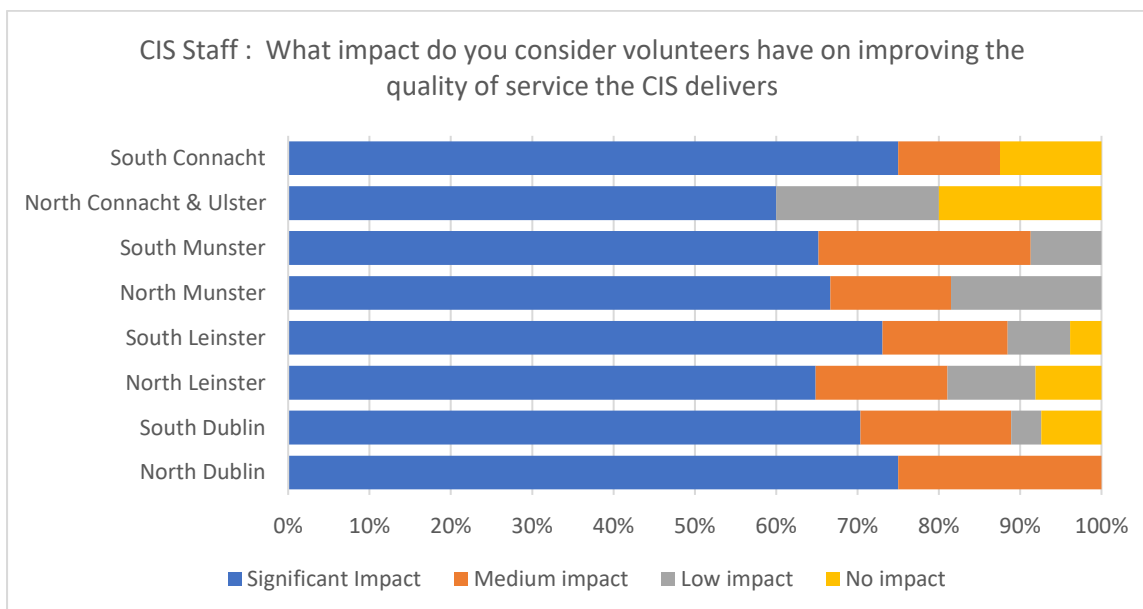
Figure 18 - Impact of Volunteers on improving the quality of the service the CIS delivers, CIS Staff Survey, Oct 2022

When Development Managers were asked how the service would be affected if volunteers were not available to support CIC locations, the consensus was that some of the main aspects of service delivery would operate at a reduced capacity. Please see the following graph.
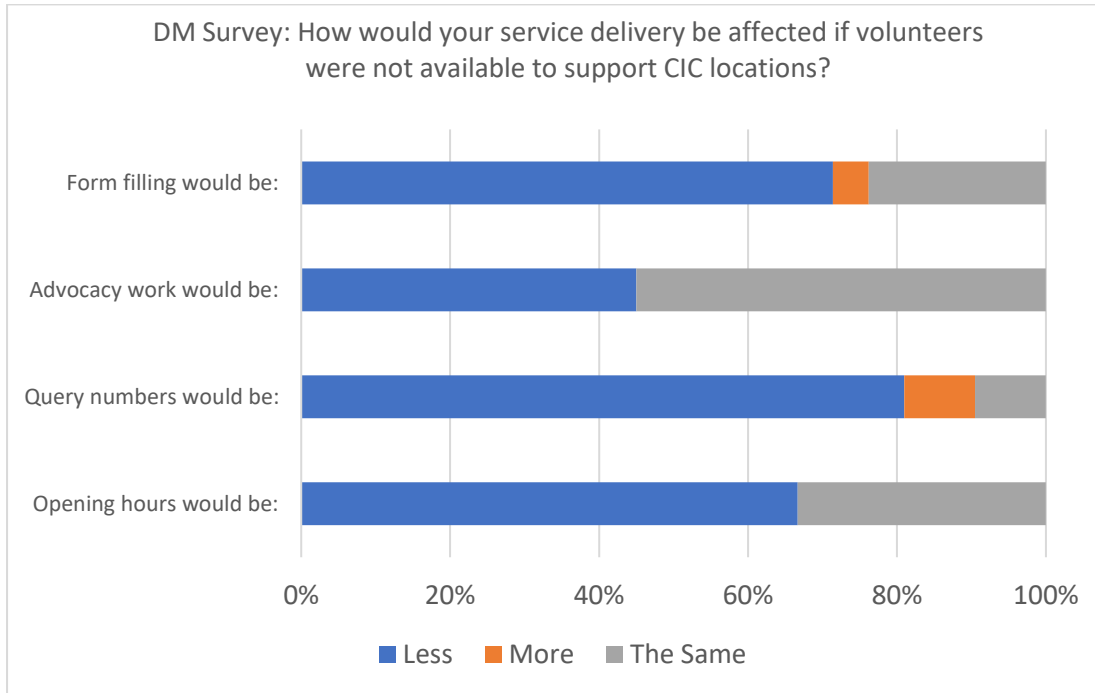
Figure 19 - Impact of Volunteers on roles in CICs, Development Manager Survey, October 2022

As well as supporting increased opening hours and providing an important link to the community, volunteers enable some CICs to provide afterhours outreach and specialist clinics to the public.

5.3.2 Cost of Volunteers in the CIS

As stated in the Volunteer Handbook *'Volunteers are not permitted to gain financially or to seek/obtain any commercial advantage that might arise from their duties as a volunteer '.* [11] Volunteers receive no salary or payment for the service they provided to the CIS. Volunteers who work over 7 hours in one day are entitled to receive a €5 stipend to cover their costs, providing they submit a request with relevant receipt. Though there may be no salary cost associated with volunteers, there are a number of activities that require time and support from DMs and IOs. The time required to support and manage volunteers varies across regions and CICs. Survey respondents noted that competent and trained volunteers are a critical resource, however resources are required to locally recruit, induct, train, review and quality assess volunteers.

Management of Volunteers

When DMs were asked about the time spent managing and supporting volunteers, 50% of DMs spent more than 5 hours per week on these activities.

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[11] Volunteer Handbook, July 2022
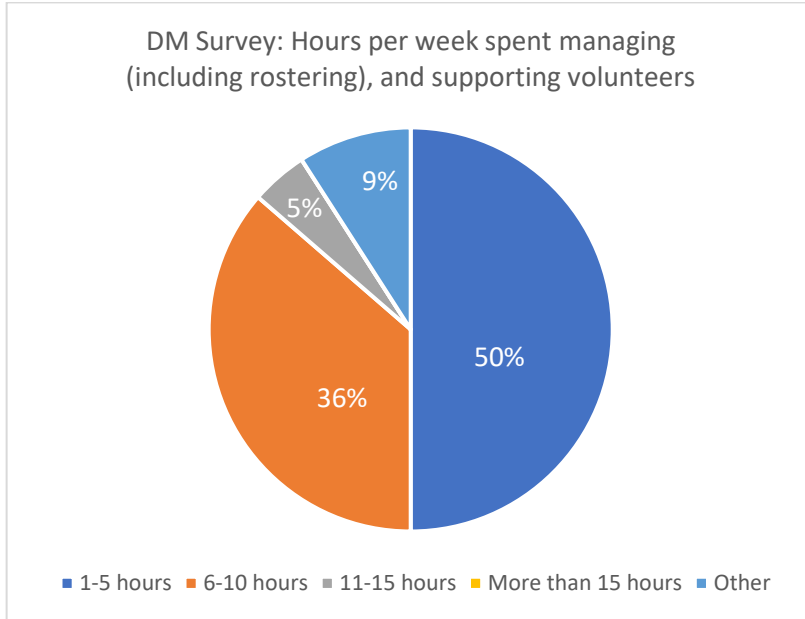
Figure 20 - Time spent managing Volunteers, Development Manager Survey, October 2022

Rostering is done on monthly basis by DMs. Depending on the number of volunteers, this can be a challenge, given volunteer availability, requests for specific volunteering hours etc. When asked what supports DMs offer to volunteers 83% offer onsite training, 87% offer one-to-one support from CIS employees and 65% offer quality information reviews. For more information, please see the following figure.

Figure 21 - Supports provided to volunteers by DMs, DM Survey

Focus group feedback highlighted that previously some services had local volunteer coordinators who would support rostering and volunteer communications. This role was not consistent across all regions.

Mentoring & Support
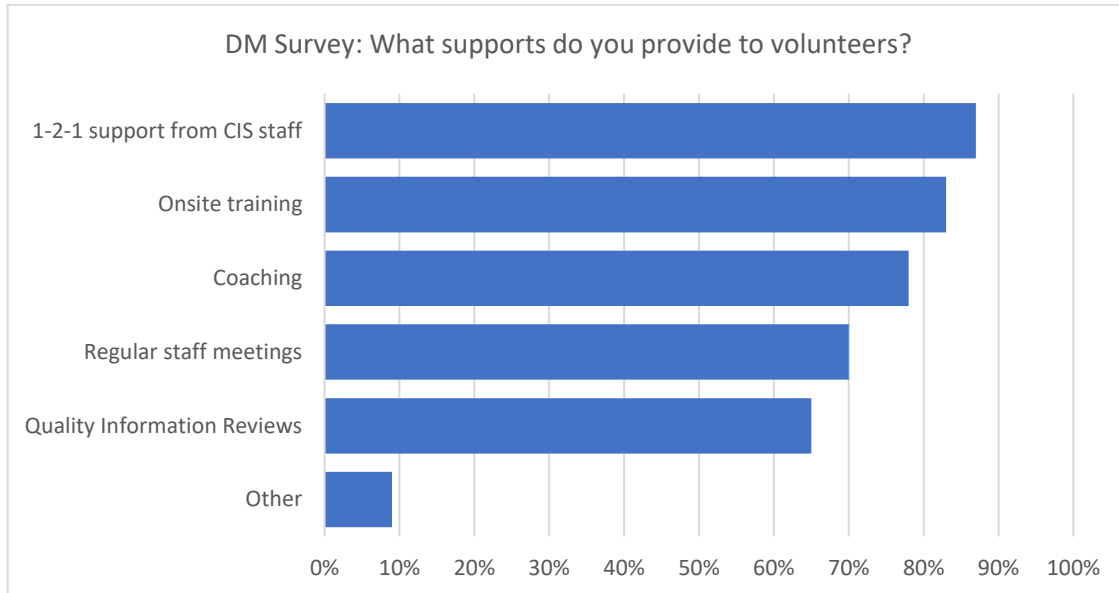
Like all staff, paid and unpaid, volunteers need support, time and investment. IOs highlighted that new and returning volunteers need training/systems/processes updates which require a high time investment for CIC staff. This is particularly felt where support for complex queries is required during walk-in clinics. In some regions, where there were a large number of volunteers relative to the number of Information Officers, the time to manage and support volunteers, impacted on Information Officers.

The impact of offering peer to peer support to volunteers depended on the experience of a volunteer. Whilst an IO may be looking after a complex case, they may have to divert their time to support volunteers with separate tasks.

This was particularly felt in regions where CICs relied on a large number of volunteers prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were also staff in other regions who highlighted concerns regarding the amount of time required to support some volunteers.

When asked, could your CIC function without support from volunteers, there were IOs and CE Scheme Staff who responded that their CIC could operate without volunteers. As the following graph outlines, this view was greatest in North Leinster. The review notes that there were low response rates to this question from North Connacht & Ulster and Dublin North regions.
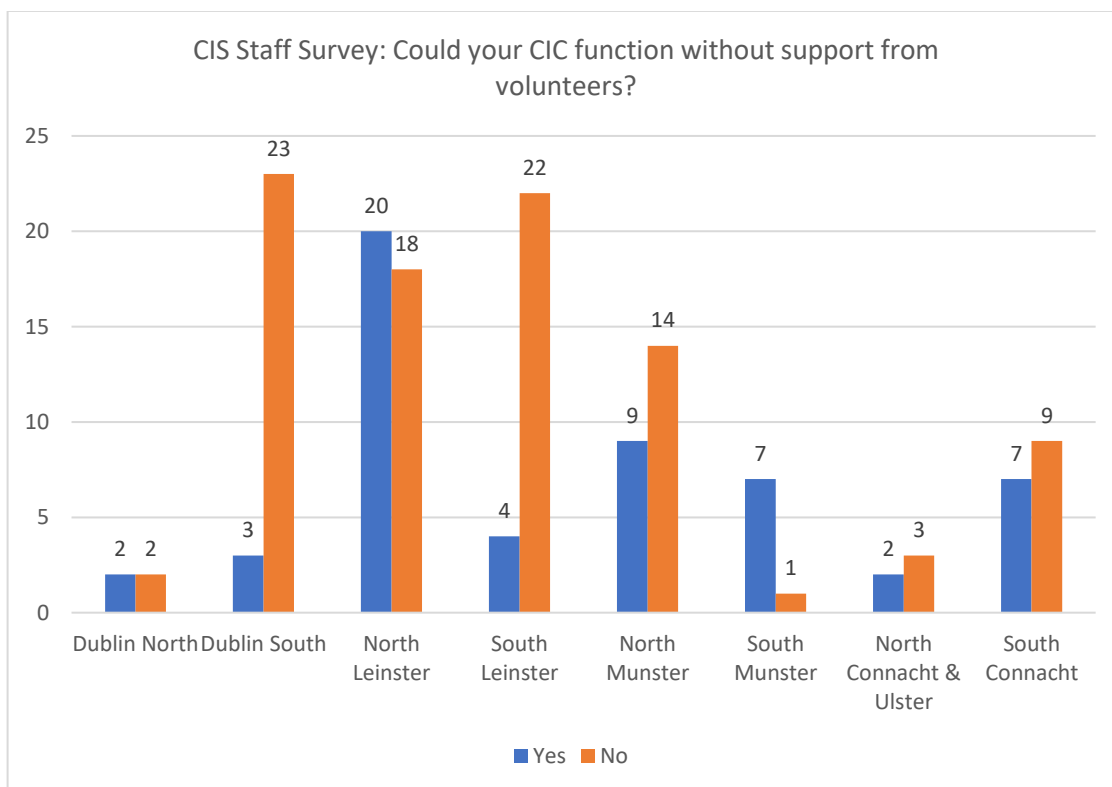

Figure 22 - Impact of Volunteers by Region

Delivery of Volunteer Training

Regional and local training is organised and delivered by DMs or IOs. Anecdotally, some IOs have no spare time or bandwidth to participate in training volunteers on top of the day-to-day activities in their CIC.

Quality risk

Some IOs noted that having volunteers in a CIC can make their job as an IOs more complex as often volunteers do not have the knowledge required to answer complicated queries or navigate more complex client needs. IOs highlighted volunteers' lack of availability for regular training as a reason for knowledge gaps.

There are regional disparities in terms of value versus costs of volunteers within the CIS. In localities where IO numbers are small in comparison to volunteer numbers, IOs highlighted some concern regarding the reintroduction of large numbers of volunteers without the necessary supports or resources to support and train volunteers. Other IOs felt that once the required training and support was provided, volunteers were experienced and knowledgeable enough to provide quality information to the public.

6 Reintroduction Training

Training is a key element to ensure consistent high-quality information, advice and advocacy is provided to the public. A focus for reintroduction training is to ensure volunteers have the required skills to meet the information needs of the public.

The section outlines the reintroduction training requirements for volunteers. The review has noted that while each region holds a training budget for staff, community scheme and volunteers there isn't consistency in terms of training approaches, management, and planning across regions.

6.1.1   Training needs

The review has noted that specific training needs vary by region and even locality. Currently, a training needs analysis is carried out in regions by RMs or DMs and where needs are identified, regional training is arranged.

The below section provides an overview of required skills and volunteer training needs identified from the volunteer stakeholder consultation.

Volunteers require a range of skills to provide advice and information within a CIC. Different skill types are required in a CIC dependent on the role performed by the volunteer. The following section outlines the general skills required by volunteers:

- Organisational skills, especially for those volunteers undertaking public/ customer facing roles.
- Verbal communication skills to communicate effectively with the public.
- Active listening skills, where volunteers can listen attentively, understand what the client is saying, and respond and reflect on what's being said.
- Accuracy skills, to support the public when completing complicated forms or performing calculations.
- Capacity and a desire to learn.
- Problem solving skills.
- Language skills to support people from other countries.
- IT skills are a critical skill to support the following activities:
    - Access relevant information on www.citizensinformation.ie and other government websites;
    - Support the public to complete online forms;
    - Utilise CIS organisations intranet;
    - Access and use Oyster which is the CIS query management system which tracks CIS interactions.

When volunteers were surveyed, over two thirds recognised the need for additional training.

As outlined in the following graph, the training needs identified by volunteers, focused on social welfare, refresher training, taxation and

The main skill gap mentioned during the stakeholder consultation was the need to develop the IT skills of some volunteers.

Citizens Information Services

immigration training requirements.Training on GDPR and cybersecurity was selected by a small number of respondents. This may be as a result of the inclusion of these topics in the Essential Training for Information Providers (ETIP) which all volunteers must complete.
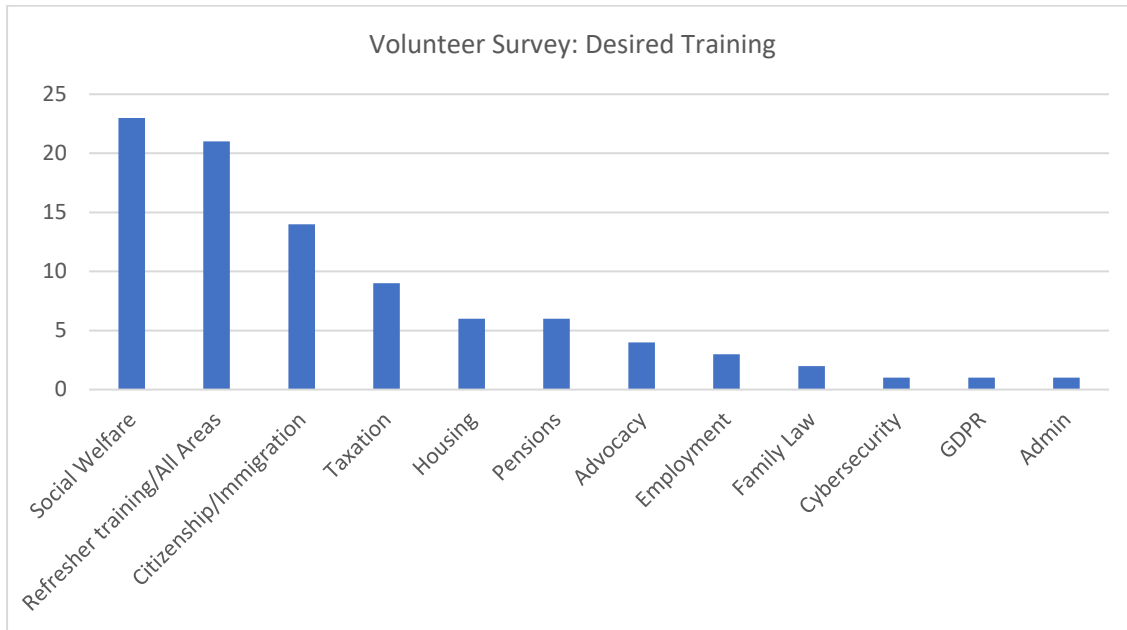

Figure 23 - Desired Training, Volunteer Survey, October 2022, 70 Responses

When asked how confident a volunteer felt about supporting the public to complete a range of tasks, volunteers responded they were very confident or somewhat confident as outlined in the following graph:
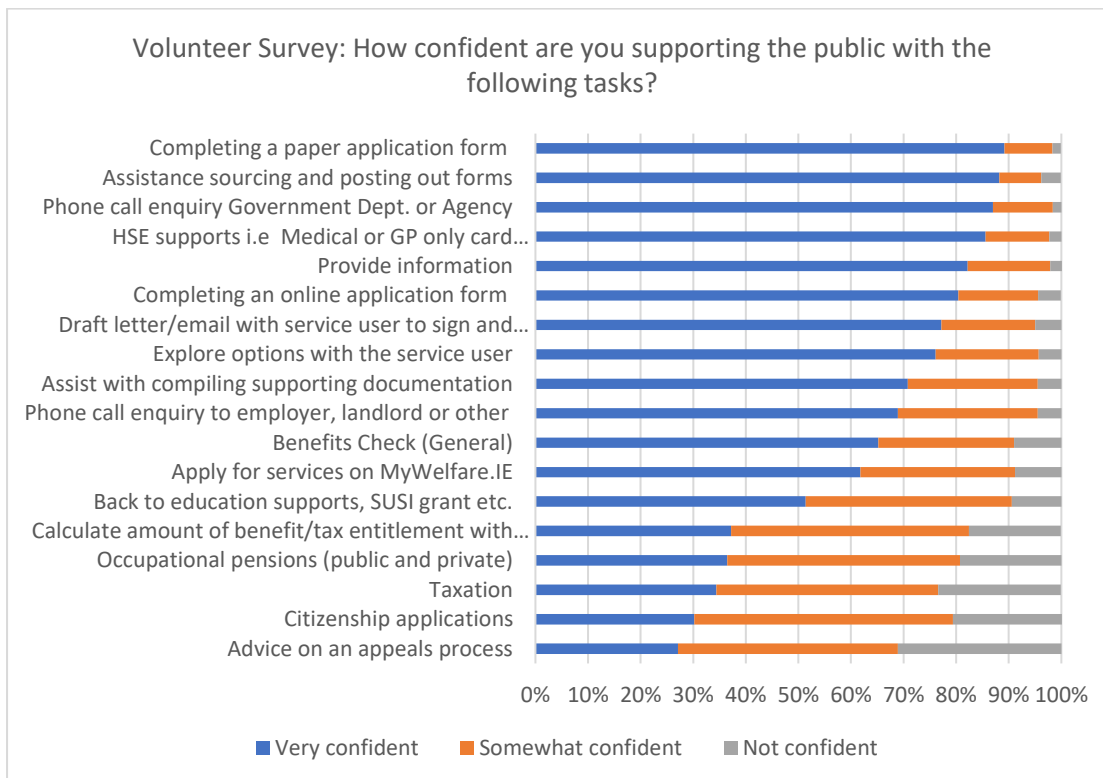

Figure 24 - Confidence in tasks, Volunteer Survey, October 2022

The following table details the top five number of CIS queries received in Q3 2022 across high-level category areas.[12]

Query Category	# of Queries	% of all Queries
Social Welfare Top five queries relating to single payments or scheme**s**, include: - Fuel Allowance - State Pension - Disability Allowance - Carer's Allowance	105,074	48.2%
Housing	21,234	9.7%
Health - Medical Card	15,481	7.1%
Local	14,215	6.5%
Employment	12,711	5.8%

Table 2 - CIS Query Profile Q3 2022 High-level

Refresher Reintroduction Training Approach

65% of queries received by CICs related to three different areas. The reintroduction training should focus on topics which see the highest demand levels from the public. The quality of services offered to the public is a priority for all CISs and matching the training scope to the public need is key.

From the survey analysis and the above CIS query data, the review has identified three main topics for reintroduction refresher training for volunteers returning to CICs. These include:

1. Social Welfare

    o Fuel Allowance

    o State Pension

    o Disability Allowance

    o Carer's Allowance

2. Housing

3. Health

    o Medical Card

This refresher training, will build upon the areas volunteers identified that they are most confident in. Focusing on these areas will also ensure the maximum benefit from training is realised.

Reintroduction training should be implemented for all volunteers returning to CICs in a structured approach. The following is the suggested approach for the reintegration training of volunteers to CICs:

1. Completion of ITIP and/ or ETIP modules depending on role

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[12] CIS Quarterly Statistical Reports, Q3 (July 1st to September 30th)

Citizens Information Services

2. Refresher training on relevant topics such as social welfare, housing and health

3. Refresher training on service delivery tasks, especially key service charges since COVID-19

'The review has noted that increased consistency in terms of training approaches, management, and planning across regions is required to support the reintegration of volunteers.

7 National Volunteering Strategy

Although there is no defined Volunteer Programme in CISs, the current volunteer model does align with the National Volunteering Strategy. As a result of the National Volunteering Strategy[13], an existing partnership and relationship between the government and the voluntary sector has been strengthened. This partnership gives CIS organisations an opportunity to build on their existing volunteer model to align to the strategic objectives of the National Volunteering Strategy.

Further details on the Strategic Objectives and a RAG (Red, Amber and Green) status of CIS's alignment with the objectives can be found in Appendix E.

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[13] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3cba6-national-volunteering-strategy/

8 Recommendations

This section presents recommendations regarding the immediate reintegration of volunteers into the CIS and the sustainability of the volunteer model.

8.1 Reintegration of Volunteers to the CIS

The purpose of the following section is to offer practical steps to support the reintegration of volunteers in an efficient manner. These short-term initiatives will support the return of volunteers into the service. The reintegration of volunteers to the CIS has commenced in some CISs while others are engaging with volunteers to welcome them back. Given the regional differences and the disparity of IO and volunteer numbers, each CIS must determine the most appropriate approach to support volunteers and staff to reintroduce volunteers into their service within an agreed national reintegration framework.

A number of stakeholder groups must be carefully considered during the reintegration of volunteers:

- Communication and collaboration with volunteers so they feel valued and welcomed back into the service.

- CIS Boards who govern and manage each CIS organisation.

- Regional Managers and Development Managers who will manage the reintegration of volunteers into their organisations.

- Paid Information Officer staff have limited capacity. The reintroduction of volunteers will provide needed support to the service but in some locations, it will add complexity to Information Officers where IOs take time to support and supervise volunteers. There may be disruption to services to allow for training and upskilling of volunteers.

- CIB management and staff who oversee and support CIS organisations.

- The public who utilise CIS services throughout the country.

Reference	Recommendations
1	Volunteers to be supported to return as Information Providers into the CISs.
2	Volunteer duties should be reviewed as volunteers are essential to the service provision of many CICs to support the provision of information and advice services to the public.
3	A reintegration communication plan should be developed to support the reintegration of volunteers and to ensure consistent information is provided in a timely manner.
4	Returning volunteers to CICs should be supported by refresher training.

Reference	Recommendations
5	Best practice sharing should be encouraged between CISs where those who have already reintroduced volunteers to the service, share their approach and insights on supporting volunteers, Development Managers and Information Officers.
6	A consistent national Volunteer Handbook should be adopted to support volunteers.
7	Development of a CIB and CIS Engagement Model should be supported to improve communication and ways of working.

Table 3 - Reintegration of volunteers to the CIS

8.2   Sustainability of the CIS Volunteer Model

The CIS volunteer model is sustainable in the short term once there is an agreed national vision and approach of how volunteers can support the CIS. However, the review cannot make a judgement of the long-term sustainability of the model given the unknown number of volunteers who may commit to volunteer in the future.

Taking the learnings from the pandemic CIB and some CIS organisations do not wish to return to a CIS model that is almost entirely reliant on volunteers to function and open their doors. The preferred model is an employee led service which volunteers support. The Volunteer Strategy Working group was provided the brief 'that *volunteers should not be replacing or substituting paid staff's work, however volunteer support in the information process is essential to the delivery of services.'*

In some locations the loss of volunteers has reduced CIC opening hours, impacted the amount of advocacy work, and reduced face to face clinics. Ultimately, the public have been impacted by this change. For this volunteer model to work, there is a requirement for the CIS staffing model to be sufficient to support it. In some regions there are insufficient IOs to implement an employee led service to the same levels as pre-pandemic levels.

The below recommendations will support the CIS in the long term and enable the eight CIS regions to implement a national, consistent approach to support the volunteer model.

Reference	Recommendations
8	Explore a new approach to engaging and sourcing a broad range of volunteers.
9	National Standards for volunteer Information Providers should be defined.
10	CIS Volunteering Strategy and vision should be developed to set out long-term aspirations for CIS volunteers in Ireland.
11	CIS Resource Planning should be undertaken to analyse staffing needs of services.
12	National CIS approach to Employment Scheme Staff should be developed to support CIC scheme staff decisions.

Reference	Recommendations
13	A National Communication and Consultation Strategy should be developed to support coordination communication across CISs.
14	Volunteer Database to be put in place by CIS regional companies to enable more efficient communication with volunteers.

Table 4 - Sustainability of the CIS Volunteer Model

This review has not assigned owners to the report items as ownership of any actions associated to the recommendations will need to be assessed and agreed with the CIS organisations and the CIB. It has been noted that action responsibility may not relate to CIB's role as funder. The above recommendations should be reviewed by CISs and CIB to support the implementation.

Appendix A Volunteer Review Timelines
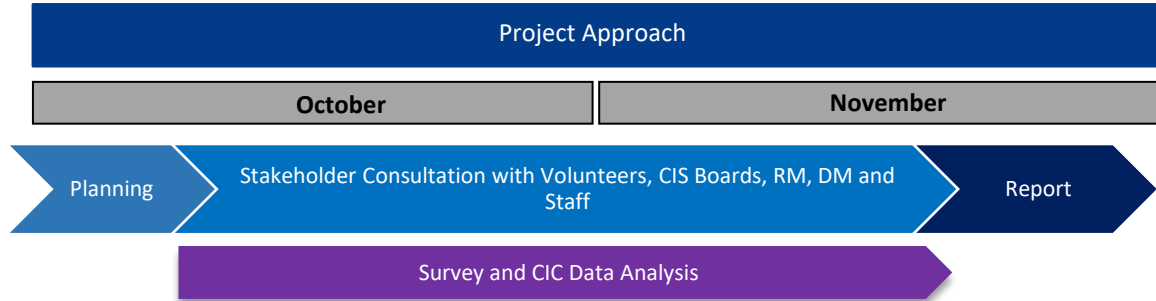
Figure 15 - The Volunteer Review Timeline

Key Milestones/ Deliverables	Date
Terms of Reference Received	5th October
Interviews	18th October – 21st November
Workshops	8th November – 15th November
Report drafting	16th November – 30th November
Draft Report	1st December
Board Meeting	10th February
Board sign-off	24th March

Table 5 - Key Milestones of the Review

Appendix B Stakeholder Interviews & Focus Groups

Chairpersons, Regional Manager, Development Manager Interviews

CIS REGION	Attendees	Interview
South Munster	Chair	27th October 9:00am
	Acting RM	27th October 10:30am
	DM West Cork	1st November 9:30am
	DM Kerry	20th October 2pm
North Leinster	Chair	26th October 3:30pm
	RM	27th October 9.30am
	DM Louth	19th October 2pm
	DM Kildare	20th October 12.30pm
N. Connacht & Ulster	Chair	27th October 3:30pm
	RM	21st November 9am
South Connacht	Chair	26th October 12pm
	RM	26th October 9:30am
	DM Galway	25th October 11am
	DM Mayo	18th October 3:30pm
North Munster	Chair	2nd November 2pm
	RM	26th October 1:45pm
	DM Clare	2nd November 11am
	DM Tipperary	1st November 3pm
	DM Waterford	28th October 10am
South Leinster	Chair	26th October 11am
	RM	19th October 10:30am
	DM Laois/Offaly	25th Oct 3:15pm
	DM Carlow and Kilkenny	19th October 3pm
North Dublin	Chair	27th October 3pm
	RM	18th October 9.30am
	DM	4th November 11:30am
Dublin South	Chair	18th October 2:30pm
	RM	25th October 4:40pm
	DM DS West	10th November 2pm

Table 6 - Interview Schedule

Citizens Information Services

BearingPoint.

Focus Groups

Date	Location	Type	Time	Audience	Regions
8/11/2022	Hilton, Kilmainham, Dublin	In person (2.5hrs)	11am-1.30pm	Volunteers	North Dublin Citizens Information Service (CIS) Dublin South Citizens Information Service (CIS) North Leinster Citizens Information Service (CIS)
8/11/2022	Hilton, Kilmainham, Dublin	In person (2.5hrs)	2.30pm-5pm	Volunteers	South Leinster Citizens Information Service (CIS) North Connacht & Ulster Citizens Information Service (CIS) South Connacht Citizens Information Service (CIS)
9/11/2022	Hilton, Kilmainham, Dublin	In person (2.5hrs)	11am-1.30pm	CIS Staff - Group 1	North Dublin Citizens Information Service (CIS) Dublin South Citizens Information Service (CIS) South Leinster Citizens Information Service (CIS)
9/11/2022	Virtual	Virtual (1.5 hrs)	2.30pm-4pm	CIS Staff - Group 2	North Leinster Citizens Information Service (CIS) North Connacht & Ulster Citizens Information Service (CIS) South Connacht Citizens Information Service (CIS)
10/11/2022	Virtual	Virtual (1.5hrs)	2.30pm-4pm	Volunteer	All regions
15/11/2022	The Address Hotel, Cork	In person (2.5hrs)	10.30am-1pm	Volunteers	North Munster Citizens Information Service (CIS) South Munster Citizens Information Service (CIS)
15/11/2022	The Address Hotel, Cork	In person (2.5hrs)	2pm-4.30pm	CIS Staff	North Munster Citizens Information Service (CIS) South Munster Citizens Information Service (CIS)

Table 7 - Focus Group Schedule

Citizens Information Services

Tier Two Company Interviews

Company	Interview
Threshold	16th November 4pm
Immigrant Council	21stNovember 2pm
FLAC	17th November 11am 29th November 4pm

Table 8 - Tier two interviews

Organisations	Interview
DSP	27th October 11:30am
CIB	16th November 10:00am

Table 9 - DSP & CIB Interviews

Appendix C Survey Response Rates

Volunteer Survey Response Rates

CIS REGION	Volunteers Jan 2020	Survey Responses from Volunteers	Response Rate
South Munster	192	62	32%
North Leinster	72	20	28%
N. Connacht & Ulster	12	0	0%
South Connacht	20	10	50%
North Munster	137	34	25%
South Leinster	169	39	23%
North Dublin	96	31	32%
Dublin South	88	36	41%
Total	**786**	**232**	**29%***

Table 10 - Survey Response Rate of Former and Current Volunteers

*The volunteer response rate from former and current volunteers was 29%. The review team acknowledges that the response rate represents a subset of the volunteer group, but the overall regional distribution of the responses provides a fair reflection of the national picture. Unfortunately, there isn't a national database of volunteer data which would have enabled the volunteer review team to contact all volunteers directly. Communications to volunteers were via Regional Managers and Development Managers. Regional Managers and Development Managers confirmed current and former volunteers were sent information on participating in the survey.

Staff Survey (Paid IO and staff employed via a scheme) Response Rate

Staff Numbers	Survey Responses from Staff	Response Rate
306	166	54%

Table 11 - Survey Response Rate of CIS Paid IOs and Staff employed through a scheme

Development Management Survey Response Rate

Development Manager Numbers	Survey Responses from Development Managers	Response Rate
36	23	64%**

Table 12 - Survey Response Rate of Development Managers

** Unfortunately, there were a number of Development Managers on annual leave or sick leave who were unavailable to complete the Development Manager Survey within the review's timeframe.

Appendix D Document Review

- Volunteering in Citizens Information Services, the role and contribution of volunteers, 2010
- Digital Exclusion and E-government in Ireland, A Citizens Information Perspective,2022
- National Profile of CIS Volunteers, 2019
- CIS Clients Processes and Outcomes, 2015
- CIS Making an Impact: The Public Value of Citizens Information Services in Ireland, 2017
- Working together: Research on the role and contribution of employment programmes in CIS service delivery, 2014
- National Strategy on Volunteers: In Citizens Information Services, 2012 - 2015
- Volunteer Handbook, 2022
- Volunteer Strategy Working Group, Report and Recommendations, 2022
- National Volunteering Strategy CIB Response, 2019
- Consultation on Working Draft of Volunteering Strategy 2020 –2025, Submission by the Citizens Information Board, January 2020
- National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025
- CIS Volunteering Strategy, 2018
- Comhairle Act, 2000
- Community Employment Procedures Manual, 2022

Appendix E National Volunteering Strategy

The goal of the National Volunteer strategy is to strengthen the volunteer role and promote volunteering as a way to create thriving communities. It includes five high level objectives and fifty-six related activities to support communities, their representative organisations, and the community and volunteer sector. For the purpose of this review, we have taken the relevant objectives and actions to CIS and created a RAG table to denote the status of the action.

Objective	Action	RAG	Comment
Strategic Objective 1 - *To increase participation and diversity in volunteering including embracing new trends and innovation.*	Introducing flexible volunteering options through delivery of a time and needs match programme.	🟧	
	Promotion of awareness programmes to enable people to volunteer from marginalised communities, from ethnic minorities and for people with disabilities.	🟥	
	Deliver engagement programme aimed specifically at potential volunteers reaching retirement and those over 55.	🟥	
	National Survey on Volunteering to provide baseline data on volunteers	🟧	
	Promote/Fund a volunteer recruitment awareness campaign using existing structures and networks – National and Local campaigns	🟧	Recruitment campaign from previous years available in some regions
	Undertake a pilot project for professional mentoring as a support to volunteers and smaller Volunteer Involving Organisation	🟥	
Strategic Objective 2 - *To facilitate, develop and support the Volunteering Environment so that it contributes to vibrant and sustainable communities*	Delivery of the National Volunteering Strategy	🟧	
	Invest in capacity building in VIOs through the delivery of a suite of training to Volunteer Managers	🟥	
	Provide a shared "volunteer manager" service to Volunteer Involving Organisations	🟥	
	Supporting the ongoing development of the national volunteering database	🟥	
	Developing the potential for further volunteering partnerships between the corporate sector and community organisations	🟧	Potential for ongoing engagement with Tier 2 companies

Objective	Action	RAG	Comment
	Introduce a standard tiered code of conduct(s) for Volunteer Involving Organisations, to offer protection and clarity on expectations of the volunteer and the VIO	🟧	Code of conduct in place in some regions
Strategic Objective 3 - *To recognise, celebrate and communicate the value and impact of volunteers and volunteering in all its forms.*	To explore the potential for the introduction of a formal qualification in recognition of the skills, knowledge and competencies acquired from volunteering		Previously in place
	Support Local and National Awards ceremonies that recognise the contribution and impact our volunteers, VIOs, community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises are making to society	🟧	Previously in place
	Develop a national communications strategy to include information campaigns at national, regional and local levels communicating the value, benefits and impact of volunteering to include targeted media campaigns focusing on specific areas of volunteering e.g. benefits for the unemployed, health benefits, community benefits, young people, older people	🟥	
Strategic Objective 4 - *To promote ethical and skills-based international volunteering to deliver results for beneficiaries and to enhance Global Citizenship in Ireland*	Participate actively in their community and collaborate with others to advance the Sustainable Development Goals of global equality, justice, and sustainability.	🟧	Alignment with SDGs is present, currently without any strategic direction
Strategic Objective 5 - *To improve policy coherence on volunteering across Government both nationally and locally*	To promote greater understanding among public representatives, policy makers and decision makers of the impact of volunteering	🟥	
	Through Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities 2019-2024: Support and develop a sustainable model to support the community and voluntary sector, through: • A multi-annual funding approach • An appropriate cost-recovery model for programmes delivered by the C&V sector Core funding for autonomous community and local development	🟥	

Table 13 - National Volunteering Strategy Objectives and Actions relevant to CIS