

National Strategy on Volunteers

In Citizens Information Services

2012-2015



**National Strategy on Volunteers
in Citizens Information Services
2012-2015**

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1. Context

This Volunteer Strategy is the first strategy document on volunteering aimed at giving a framework and direction to volunteer involvement in the Citizens Information Service (CIS), so volunteers can continue to contribute to the provision and development of a national citizens information service of the highest standard. It has been developed following the research and related recommendations presented in the 2010 Citizens Information Board Research Report, *Volunteering in Citizens Information Services; the role and contribution of volunteers*.

Volunteers have been a cornerstone of the CIS network since the first community information centre opened in the 1960's. From a volunteer lead service, the CIS has developed into a national network of 42 CISs delivering a service from 269 locations nationwide with 1200 volunteers, 271 paid staff and 204 scheme staff. Together they provided a service to 657,653 people in 2011. The volunteer contribution, both in terms of time and expertise, can be measured by how much services rely on volunteer involvement for service delivery and outreach services. Of equal value and importance is the immeasurable impact volunteer involvement has on the ethos and culture of a community based service from which those volunteers are drawn.

While the structures and resources supporting the CIS network have grown to meet the expansion, there has been no national strategy aimed at giving a framework to the contribution, development and management of volunteers in the delivering of service to the public. An infrastructure that supports and facilitates the development of volunteering is essential so that the service itself is not only maintained and sustained but is allowed to develop¹. The purpose of the Volunteer Strategy is to set out how the role of volunteers will be strengthened, so that volunteers can continue to contribute to an ever changing and expanding service, and be supported to do so.

It incorporates many of the practices currently operating in services and sets out to validate those good practices by promoting them at a national level. It also includes new initiatives aimed at ensuring that volunteers are supported through training and support measures to deliver the consistent and high standards demanded in the complex environment in which we work. It is recognised that implementing the strategy may pose certain challenges for some CISs with large numbers of volunteers.

The strategy document was developed by a Joint Working Group Project Team, with representation from the national network of CIS (volunteers, paid staff and board

¹ Nua Research Services 2001, Comhairle/CIC 2004, Comhairle/Citizens Information Board 2006. As referenced in *Volunteering in Citizens Information Services: The role and contribution of volunteers 2010 page 24*.

members) and Citizens Information Board (CIB) staff. It is the first CIS Volunteer Strategy and an implementation plan will be developed to support its delivery.

1.2 The aim

The aim of this National Volunteer Strategy is to

shape the development of the role and functioning of volunteers in the Citizens Information Service so that they can continue to contribute to the provision and development of a national citizens' information, advice and advocacy service of the highest standard.

In doing so, it is intended also that the national profile of the CIS volunteer will be enhanced and recognised as that of a volunteer service provider operating to the highest professional standard.

1.3 Who is the Volunteer Strategy for?

The Volunteer Strategy is for everyone interested and involved in decisions affecting volunteer involvement in the CIS network. This includes volunteers, paid staff and boards of the CIS network and the staff and Board of CIB.

1.4 How is the Volunteer Strategy to be used?

The strategy is the reference point for future developments and decisions regarding volunteer involvement locally and nationally. It formalises much of the current practices around volunteering and introduces new practices based on a combination of research, consultation with services and accepted good practice.

The implementation plan, which will be developed, will support this document and describe how the strategy can be applied at local level.

1.5 Why now?

There are two key factors which have prompted the timing of the Volunteer Strategy. Firstly in the new CIB Strategic Plan (2012-2015) '*Meeting the changing information, advice, advocacy and money advice and budgeting needs of citizens*', one of the key strategic priorities is the implementation of consistent, high quality services by CIB and all its delivery partners. This means building a culture across the network of service delivery partners that values the ongoing development of knowledge, expertise and skill, with volunteers and staff being supported to do so. In the Plan, CIB states its commitment to supporting the delivery of the National Strategy on Volunteers in CIS. CIB strategy refers to 'developing potential to ensure that the work of the staff and

volunteers....is satisfying, meaningful and makes the best use of their commitment to our service'. The Volunteer Strategy sets out how this is to be achieved.

Secondly, a number of factors outlined in the research report *Volunteering in Citizens Information, the Role and Contribution of Volunteers (2010)*, describe the challenges ahead while at the same time showing a commitment to overcoming these challenges.

- A deep commitment on the part of the volunteers and staff of the CISs, and of the staff of CIB, to the provision of a national quality information, advice and advocacy service.
- Given that some 30% of the face-to-face service is currently provided by volunteers, the contribution of volunteer input in a national service is key. However, there is broad recognition that information, advice and advocacy provision is becoming increasingly complex and varied and that the demand for quality services is increasing. Under these conditions, the present approach to volunteer recruitment, development, and role performance will require review and more support to ensure that volunteers are adequately skilled and supported to fulfil the demands the role requires.
- A shared concern across the CIS network and CIB with the quality and consistency of service provision and how best to achieve and maintain improvements in service provision.
- A clear and articulated commitment by CIB to the importance of the volunteer contribution in the local delivery of Citizens Information advice and advocacy services.
- Volunteers currently comprise of 75% of the total staff cohort while providing one third of service delivery nationally. While indicative of the strength of volunteer involvement, these figures also highlight the significant resource implications for management and training².

2. Volunteering trends in Ireland

Volunteering in Ireland and internationally is changing bringing with it challenges and benefits. Below are some of the emerging trends relevant to the CIS:

- Research carried out by Volunteer Ireland in advance of the National Day of Volunteering (September 2011) found that being affected by the economic

² Variations exist across the network on the number of volunteers involved and the extent of their time commitment.

downturn makes people more likely to volunteer. Among respondents who were either not working or working less as a result of the recession, 69% said that the change in their employment had made them more likely to volunteer.

The implication for CISs is that there is an increase in the potential number of volunteers to fill both existing volunteer roles and in the introduction of relevant new roles (as appropriate) which reflect the short term availability of many job seekers.

- Finding the right volunteers for the right roles continues to be a challenge for the CIS, particularly when recruiting for information providers which requires additional time commitment and skills. A comprehensive recruitment strategy will ensure that the investment in volunteer recruitment has the desired outcome.
- Many of today's volunteers are dynamic, educated and experienced and are very keen to fit volunteering into their busy schedule but they are discerning about how they spend their free time³. They are selective about who can offer them the best volunteer experience. They also bring new ways of working and are willing to work virtually⁴ or on short projects.

Volunteers have always been attracted to the CIS because it offers a well managed volunteer programme where volunteers can both contribute and learn. With changes in work practices and environment, CIS has to remain open and flexible to the changing expectations and opportunities which new volunteers bring.

- Volunteers want to be involved in organisations which reflect their values and aspirations. They want to make a difference and be a valued team member. These expectations need to be met if volunteers are firstly to join and then remain.
- CISs have a strong track record in volunteer retention⁵. To ensure this continues every CIS needs to ensure that the contribution of each volunteer is supported and valued.

³ Study on Volunteering in the European Union, Educational, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EAC-EA), Final report Feb 2010. And Yvonne McKenna, CEO, Volunteering Ireland September 2010 speaking at Civic Buildings Dublin.

⁴ For example, designing or updating websites, researching and writing reports etc.

⁵ Research Series 2010, Volunteering in Citizens Information Services – The role and contribution of volunteers.

3. Volunteering in the Citizens Information Service

CIS volunteers are valuable and essential members of the CIS, whether in support or front line roles. This section of the strategy makes explicit the commitment CIS and CIB have to the continued involvement of volunteers.

3.1 Defining Volunteering in the CIS

CIS volunteers give their time, skills, knowledge and commitment freely to the local service in return for a quality volunteering experience, the opportunity to make a difference and be part of a team providing a high quality service.

3.2 Principles and values

These are the principles that guide and underpin the engagement of CIS with volunteers.

- The CIS places the needs and concerns of the citizen as 'client' at the heart of the organisational effort and recognises also the citizen as 'volunteer' within the service.
- The volunteering experience must be beneficial to the volunteer and the service provided by the CIS.
- Volunteers link the service to the community and the community to the service.
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in a service which benefits them and their local community.
- Volunteering is a personal choice, motivated by a range of factors.
- Volunteers will be offered the highest quality training and volunteering experience in return for their time, skills and commitment.
- CIS will actively invite sections of the community which are underrepresented to join the service.
- Volunteering is unpaid.
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work nor should it replace paid work.
- Each CIS and its volunteers acknowledge the importance of the provision of a quality service.

3.3 Benefits of volunteering

Volunteering brings benefits to the individual volunteer, the team they work with and the service they provide. Knowing what these benefits are and maintaining a balance between them is key to success. Examples of the benefits include:

For the volunteer	For the team	For the service
Provides an opportunity to make a difference	Enables the team to achieve more	Helps link the service with the local community
Meets personal and social needs	Allows the team to expand its range of services and outreaches	Raises the profile of the service
Develops new knowledge and skills and builds on existing ones	Brings a unique perspective	Helps the service to meet the demands of the public

3.4 Building a shared vision

The on-going development and implementation of a national volunteer strategy requires a shared understanding of the strategy by all service delivery partners in order to promote the essential unity of the service. This will then clarify the operational steps needed to deliver on a shared strategy. This is important in promoting the essential unity of the national network while maintaining the importance of the local identity. It is intended to ensure that:

- Volunteers can expect the same quality experience throughout the network and
- The public can expect a consistent quality service regardless of whether they meet a volunteer or paid staff member and regardless of location.

The following measures are to be implemented:

- Providing each Citizens Information Service with the up-to-date *CIS Volunteer Management Handbook*, *CIS Volunteer Information Handbook* and *CIS Volunteer Welcome Pack*. (See Appendix I)
- Bringing volunteers together for various regional and national events.

4. Strategic Priorities

Four strategic priorities have been identified for 2012-15:

4.1 Introducing quality standards

4.2 Developing new volunteer roles

4.3 Recruitment & Selection

4.4 Managing Volunteers⁶

4.1 Introducing quality standards

We will identify clear standards and build a culture in CIS and CIB and across the network of delivery partners that values ongoing development of knowledge, expertise and skill.⁷

Assuring quality of our services is a key priority for CIB and its delivery partners including CISs. This ensures that the citizen is at the centre and that consistently good quality services are delivered to the customer across all CIS services nationally. Quality standards apply to all staff, paid and volunteer, ensuring that the public can expect the same high quality service regardless of who they meet or where.

CIB is currently putting in place a process to identify and implement a suitable quality assurance system. This system will provide opportunities to measure continuous improvement in the service standards provided throughout the network. This will lead to the award of a recognised quality accreditation for the services provided by the network of CIS. A nationally recognised quality award will be a testimony of the standard of work and dedication of all staff and boards as well as an assurance to the public of the quality they can expect.

In order to advance the quality standards required and in recognition of the increasing complexity of information provision, it is recommended that a number of initiatives be introduced which apply to new volunteer information providers. These support the recommendations outlined in the 2010 research on volunteering in the CIS.

In order to work to achieve consistent quality standards across the service, it is recommended that:

⁶ For further information see *Managing Volunteers: A good practice guide*. 2008. (3rd Edition) – On www.citizensinformationboard.ie

⁷ CIB Strategy 2012-2015 *Meeting the changing information, advice, advocacy and money advice and budgeting needs of citizens*

- All new volunteers should participate in an induction programme.
- New volunteer information providers aim to commit to an average of 7 hours each week in a CIS, consistent with the implementation of the agreed national Quality Standards and the Strategic Plan 2012-2015. This 7 hours would include contact with clients, and also any research and reading to maintain/update knowledge, attendance at training (including the accredited Information Advice and Advocacy Programme, IAAP) and other meetings and support and supervision meetings with managers. *This 7 hour recommendation would not apply to new volunteers delivering a specialist service in relevant areas.*
- Those existing volunteers who are already committed to less than 7 hours per week but are not in a position to increase their hours to 7, may continue as agreed with the Development Manager, who will continue to ensure a high quality service delivery.
- New volunteer information providers undertake at least year one of the Information Advice and Advocacy Programme⁸ (FETAC accredited).
- Internal quality control measures are implemented such as sitting in on client interactions, sampling, testing the training undertaken, in-house quality check systems, on-line checks and self- assessment.
- Volunteer reviews are carried out by Development Managers, or their designated other/s (e.g. the Volunteer Co-ordinator/s), in agreed formats⁹. Existing data management systems are developed or modified to allow volunteer records to be maintained in a comprehensive fashion which tracks their skills, competencies, training undertaken, years of involvement etc. in accordance with data protection legislation. This would only be used locally but held centrally.

4.2 Developing new volunteer roles

There are a number of ways in which volunteer roles can be expanded to suit the changing needs of the service and the various abilities and availability of the volunteers.

The main current volunteer roles are: Information Provider; Receptionist / Administrator; Board Member).

Proposed new roles could include: Volunteer Co-ordinator¹⁰; Specialised Outreach Worker; IT Support Worker; Advocacy Worker; Social Policy Worker; Project Worker.

⁸ Year one currently comprises four modules of the FETAC accredited IAAP. These four modules can be undertaken over a one to two year period.

⁹ See Volunteer Review Guide, Volunteer Self-progress Review form and Volunteer Review Record Forms which are available in the Volunteer Management Handbook. Training and support will be provided in carrying out these reviews.

¹⁰ Note that a Role description for Volunteer Co-ordinator has been drawn up and is part of the revised Volunteer Handbook. See also Appendix III of this document.

While volunteer co-ordinator roles already exist in some services, there is scope to expand these roles to services with large numbers of volunteers. This would devolve some of the workload from the Development Manager and provide opportunities for volunteers to work in management roles.

While role descriptions are currently in place for the positions of Information Provider and Receptionist/Administrator, other roles require detailed role descriptions including identification of necessary skills and potential training needs. In addition, how current roles may be enriched or broadened needs to be considered. As part of the work of the Project Team some initial work on role enrichment/expansion was conducted with Development Managers (See Appendix III)

The following points arise from the survey:

- The outlines of the proposed new roles should be developed by CIB and CISs in partnership and an agreed national set of role descriptors developed. Each role description should include:
 - Title
 - Location
 - Responsible to
 - Time Commitment
 - Purpose of the role
 - Tasks
 - Qualities required
 - Consult regularly with Development Managers on their needs in relation to specialist skills/range of roles/tasks that can be undertaken by volunteers.
 - Consider short-term project-based volunteering in the CIS. Guidelines can be drawn up for this type of volunteering. For example a short-term project team could be put together for the following types of once-off activity:
 - Marketing and promotion of the CIS – e.g. short-term campaigns on a topical issue
 - Translation or language support for a particular service/event
 - Information days
 - Hands on activities like repainting/decorating premises
 - Recruit external experts (e.g. graphic designers to help with posters and leaflets or people with expertise in a particular area or with language skills) in addition to long-term volunteers/members of staff for short-term projects.
 - Provide more opportunities for volunteers to work in social policy and advocacy.
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4.3. Recruitment & Selection

A Volunteer Recruitment and Selection strategy is being prepared to help CISs recruit the right volunteers for the right roles. This will be consistent with the values underlying volunteering in the service, the range of roles, the opportunities for service and skill development. In order to conduct a coherent national approach to recruitment and selection, it is recommended that CIB/CIS work together to:

- Promote a clear definition at a national level of ‘Citizens Information, Advice and Advocacy’ and ‘Volunteering’ to support recruitment at local level.
- Promote the CIS as an organisation of choice for volunteers.
- Design a template for assessing need and planning for new volunteers.
- Develop an approach to volunteering that is flexible, project based and with short term opportunities that can work in conjunction with the traditional long-term commitment to information provision.
- Target particular groups that may have expertise that is needed by a service or that represent the community in which services are based.
- Be proactive in inviting people to join who are under-represented as volunteers e.g. immigrants, people with disabilities, members of the travelling community, marginalised groups.
- Promote volunteering on CIB website
- Strengthen links with Volunteer Ireland and local volunteer centres and use their expertise to support local recruitment and selection.

4.4 Managing Volunteers¹¹

Good volunteer management ensures that the expectations of both the individual volunteer and the service are met. Maintaining this balance is essential if the relationship is to be a mutually beneficial one. The following components are core to good volunteer management:

4.4.1 Training

The development of additional roles for volunteers, the increased demands on the service, expectations in relation to quality and complexity of service provision, all call for a strengthened and targeted training programme. In order to promote best practice in these areas, this strategy recommends that:

- Training requirements for different roles are set out in all role descriptions so that volunteers are fully informed regarding the training commitment required of them before they commit to the service.
- All volunteers should have Induction Training appropriate to the role.

¹¹ Managing Volunteers: A Good Practice Guide 2008. (3rd Edition) – On www.citizensinformationboard.ie

- The Training Service of CIB respond to the annual Training Needs Analysis with relevant training responses for all those involved in the service. A training needs analysis should be carried out with all new volunteers and annually thereafter.
- Audit at local level the range of skills available throughout the volunteer cohort. Volunteers' skills can then be matched with particular roles. Where there are gaps, services can look to CIB training service or other relevant training providers.
- New volunteer information providers undertake at least year one of the Information Advice and Advocacy Programme (FETAC accredited).
- Provide ongoing training/supports to volunteers including, training to keep up to date new developments in changing information/services/on new challenges and provide more opportunities as appropriate.
- Services create sufficient opportunities for volunteers to attend training.
- Specific training developed and provided for new roles (e.g. Volunteer Co-ordinator, IT, PR/Marketing and Social Policy/Advocacy roles) and on-going training provided.
- Promote the range of supports available to volunteers: e.g. peer support, supervision, training, Employee Assistance Programme.

4.4.2 Support & supervision

All staff whether paid or volunteer, do their jobs well if they are committed and enthusiastic about what they do, know what they are supposed to be doing and how to do it, feel valued and get recognition for their contribution and can learn from their mistakes. Support and supervision meetings provide an opportunity for an individual volunteer and their manager to do this. It is therefore recommended that:

- All volunteers have planned support and supervision meetings appropriate to the role, the volunteer's needs and the service needs.
- Training and resources are available to staff providing support and supervision.
- Regular team support meetings are held, that can provide an opportunity for volunteers to connect with team members and increase their understanding of how their role fits within the wider team.

4.4.3 Recognising and valuing volunteers

Acknowledgement and recognition of the work being carried out by volunteers is very important. Some of the ways in which this is and can be done include:

- The ongoing informal recognition which takes many forms such as being greeted and thanked, being thanked for doing a specific task, getting a card for a birthday or special occasion.
- Hold regional/national events annually to recognise the range of service achievements of volunteers.
- Develop a means of acknowledging and supporting the Volunteer Co-ordinator role and the contribution a volunteer co-ordinator makes to their local service and nationally to the network.
- Recognise the skills and expertise of volunteers by inviting them to share their expertise with others.
- Having a central mechanism for volunteers to share experience, ideas and feedback.
- Acknowledge volunteer achievements at local level in CIS annual reports and at national level in CIB publications.
- Acknowledge initiatives/achievements in CIS in relation to volunteering.
- Provide more opportunities for volunteers to avail of training and other meetings/events so that volunteers can meet volunteers and other staff from other centres.
- Nominate volunteers for nationally recognised volunteer awards.

5. Communicating the message

The development and implementation of a communications strategy between-CIB and the CISs is required in relation to the commitment to supporting volunteerism and the establishing of a national volunteer strategy including a national volunteer recruitment strategy. Furthermore it is required in developing a range of volunteer roles and the provision of an enhanced training programme for volunteers and for the management of volunteers. These messages could be shared by:

- Highlighting the role and achievements of volunteers in the service and the supports available to them in relevant CIB publications
- The channels of communication need to be open between Development Managers, Volunteer Co-ordinators and volunteers in agreed formats and in more informal settings. They provide a key link in communicating the national picture to volunteers and the issues of volunteers to CIB or externally.
- The proposed CIB/CIS infonet which is being planned at present will provide an opportunity to build in more detailed resources for volunteers and thereby help to create a stronger national identity for volunteers.
- The induction programme for all staff including volunteers should clarify and emphasise the role of CIB and CIS in the provision of a national service, delivered locally.

Volunteer Database

A database of volunteers would have two functions, one at local level, the other national.

- i) Locally: the local database would be a basic management information tool for individual CIS' to store information related to all their volunteer activity. The type of information appropriate to such a database could include items such as name, gender, number of years volunteering, date started, education levels, service locations, hours volunteered, roles performed, skills held, training completed, training requested, role development interests, particular expertise,.
- ii) Nationally: this database could be managed and maintained by CIB for the purpose of holding information relevant to the national cohort of volunteers. It would be used for gathering statistics, identifying trends, and planning for the future. The type of information appropriate to such a database could include numbers volunteering in each centre, gender, age, education level, number of hours and length of service, roles performed, training undertaken and specialist expertise.

In both cases the information could be maintained and accessed at a local level for the benefits to be realised, subject to data protection legislation.

6. Responsibility for the Volunteer Strategy

A national volunteer strategy cannot be formed and directed exclusively at regional or local level. This Strategy aims at the integration of the volunteer cohort into the national service, for the delivery of a 3-strand service, and overall responsibility and accountability for this rests with CIB. It has been developed in partnership with the CIS and will be implemented in large measure through the CIS, supported by CIB. Hence responsibility is shared across CIB /CIS partnership.

a. At national level CIB will:

- Assign responsibility at a management level within CIB for this National Volunteer Strategy. This will be achieved within the current functional structures.
- Support the delivery of the National Strategy on Volunteers in CISs and monitor implementation including all the actions recommended in this strategy (KPI in CIB Strategic Plan)
- Deepen the processes of partnership between CIB and the CISs in relation to putting the volunteer strategy into practice.
- Implement clear policy and procedures in relation to volunteers, i.e. ensure continual updating the CIS Volunteer Management Handbook, CIS Volunteer Information Handbook and the CIS Welcome pack.
- Consider the possible further involvement of volunteers in the development of the advocacy services and in supporting the social policy role of CIB. This may

be best explored in pilot programmes with close CIB engagement in the first instance.

b. At service level CISs will:

Under the overall governance of the relevant CIS Board:

- Implement the actions recommended in this strategy as soon as possible with access to the relevant supports.
- Establish the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator at CIS or CIC level, where there are a sufficient number of volunteers to benefit from this.
- Work with CIB to develop a national approach to recruitment.
- Identify new volunteer roles and develop outlines of the new roles with CIB.

7. Implementation plan

While the Volunteer Strategy sets out how volunteer involvement is to be strengthened and developed, the implementation plan will describe how the strategy can be applied across the network and within individual services. It will include a template action plan which can be tailored for each individual service as well as details about resources and support available to assist services. It is recognised that there may be certain challenges for some CISs with large numbers of volunteers. These will be explored at the implementation phase and informed by the Action Learning Project¹².

8. Shaping the Strategy Delivery Process

In developing the volunteer strategy it is recognised by CIB and CIS that the implementation of the proposals will require consultation and the active participation of all concerned. There is recognition that this process may be incremental and that implementation may be at a different pace in different CISs. There is also recognition of the requirement for discussion about the changes in light of the variation in capacities within the network. However, the importance of ensuring in future that consistently high standards of service delivery are provided for the public is an overriding consideration that must inform timescales.

¹² Action Learning Project to explore the issues around two key aspects of the strategy; the volunteer coordinator role and recruiting volunteers for an average of 7 hours. This is due to be rolled out in January 2013 for 3 months.

Appendix I

Volunteer Strategy Supporting Documents

Three documents were prepared to support the National Strategy on Volunteers in Citizens Information Services. They are as follows: CIS Volunteer Management Handbook (for boards and managers of CIS); CIS Volunteer Information Handbook (to be available centrally in all CIS for consultation by volunteers); CIS Welcome Pack (to be given to each volunteer).

1. Citizens Information Service Volunteer Management Handbook

The CIS Volunteer Management Handbook contains a wide range of documents relating to CIS volunteers. It is aimed at Development Managers and Boards of Management in the CIS. It contains the information given to volunteers (CIS Volunteer Welcome Pack) and the information available to volunteers in each service (CIS Volunteer Information Handbook) and also documentation relating to the recruitment and selection of volunteers. It includes an extensive range of appendices including all CIS policies that relate to volunteers.

Main sections in Handbook:

- Introduction
- Reasons for a Volunteer Policy
- Planning for New Volunteers
- Recruitment and Selection
- What a Volunteer can expect from a CIS
- What a CIS can expect from a Volunteer
- Resolving Difficulties
- Leaving
- Resources

Appendices:

- Volunteer Policy Checklist
- Volunteer Audits
- Recruitment Materials
- Volunteer Role Descriptions
- Selection and Interviewing
- After the Interview
- Materials for new Volunteers
- Volunteer Induction
- Volunteer Records
- Policies
 - Health and Safety
 - Child Welfare and Protection
 - Dignity at Work including Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment
 - Policy on Grievances / Concerns / Discipline

- Security and Protection (including Information, Communications and Technology)
- Data Protection
- CIS and the requirements of the Freedom of Information legislation

2. Citizens Information Service Volunteer Information Handbook

The CIS Volunteer Information Handbook should be available in a central location in each CIS for volunteers to consult for detailed information on the policies and procedures in that CIS.

All the information in this pack is included in the CIS Volunteer Management Handbook.

The CIS Volunteer Information Handbook consists of the following:

1. Volunteer Welcome Pack Contents
 - 1.1 Welcome letter
 - 1.2 What a volunteer can expect from the CIS
 - 1.3 What a CIS can expect from a volunteer
 - 1.4 Volunteer Agreement
 - 1.5 Volunteer Role Description
 - 1.6 Volunteer Induction Checklist
 - 1.7 Background information on (Name) CIS
 - 1.8 Background information on CIB and the organisations it supports
2. Background on volunteering in CIS
3. Sample Role Description: Volunteer Co-ordinator
4. Blank volunteer record sheets (for information)
 - 4.1 Personnel record form – volunteer
 - 4.2 Trial period plan
 - 4.3 Volunteer Training Record
 - 4.4 Volunteer Review Guide
 - 4.5 Self-progress Review Form
 - 4.6 Volunteer Review Record
 - 4.7 Leave Record
5. Policies and procedures
 - 5.1 Health and Safety, taken from 2007 Staff Handbook
 - 5.2 Child Welfare and Protection Policy
 - 5.3 Dignity at Work Policy including Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment policies
 - 5.4 Policy on Grievances / Concerns / Discipline

- 5.5 Security and Protection (including Information, Communications and Technology)
- 5.6 Data Protection
- 5.7 Citizens Information Services and the Requirements of the Freedom of Information legislation

3. Citizens Information Service Volunteer Welcome Pack

This Pack is to be given to all CIS volunteers once they have been offered and have accepted a volunteer position in a CIS.

All the information in this pack is included in both the CIS Volunteer Information Handbook and the CIS Volunteer Management Handbook.

The CIS Volunteer Welcome Pack consists of the following:

1. Volunteer Welcome Letter
2. What a volunteer can expect from the CIS
3. What a CIS can expect from a volunteer
4. Volunteer Agreement
5. Volunteer Role Description
6. Volunteer Induction Checklist
7. Background information on (Name) CIS
8. Background information on Citizens Information Board and the organisation it supports
9. List of Contents of Volunteer Information Handbook

Appendix II

Brief report on the survey of Development Managers about the roles of Volunteers in their CIS (October 2011)

The Project Team for this strategy contacted all Development Managers in CISs in relation to volunteer roles.

Development Managers responded by saying that many of their current volunteers have taken on tasks in addition to their normal role.

1) Additional Tasks

These tasks included:

- Volunteer co-ordinator
- Delivering training
- Drafting newsletters
- Preparing monthly information bulletins
- Drafting health & safety statements
- Marketing plan implementation
- Query research
- Advocacy workers/Supporting advocacy
- Organising events
- Updating publications
- Organising Information days

Suggestions

Brief support documents and checklists for particular tasks currently carried out by volunteers in services should be drawn up as they might be useful for other services. For example: giving talks, delivering training, marketing, writing newsletters, planning an information day, how to run evening clinics etc.

2) Short Term Projects

The Project Team also asked Development Managers of Citizens Information Services if they would be interested in volunteers for short-term projects. Many services already avail of the competencies of existing volunteers for short-term projects. Services could also recruit volunteers specifically for short-term projects, particularly if the CIS does not have access to certain skills. The Development Managers made the following suggestions for short term projects:

- Producing directories
- Giving talks and presentations
- Preparation of advocacy files
- Event management

- Administering client satisfaction surveys
- Engaging in community health and safety initiatives
- Providing evening clinics
- Advocacy project research

Suggestions

The Project Team agrees that there is a role for short-term projects and that the scope of the projects needs to be defined. Some of the tasks identified above also fall under the heading of extra tasks that a current volunteer could do rather than a specific short-term project that a volunteer could be recruited to do.

Appendix III

(Sample) Role Description – Volunteer Co-ordinator

The Development Manager has overall responsibility for the co-ordination, support, quality and performance of volunteers in a Citizens Information Service. However, in services with large numbers of volunteers*, the Development Manager may need to delegate some of this responsibility to a Volunteer Co-ordinator depending on the size, needs and preferences of the service. The role below sets out the comprehensive list of tasks involved in co-ordinating volunteers which may be delegated by the Development Manager.

Volunteer Co-ordinator

'Location'	Citizens Information Service
Role Title:	Volunteer Coordinator
Primary Location:	'Address'
Responsible to:	The Development Manager
Time Commitment:	Average 7 hours per week **

Purpose of the Role:

Within the ethos of 'Location' CIS Volunteer Policy, to assist the Development Manager in the co-ordination and support of the volunteers of the Citizens Information Service in the provision of Information, Advice and Advocacy to the public.

Tasks of the Volunteer Co-ordinator:

Communication:

- Liaise with the Development Manager on a regular basis on volunteer related issues
- Assist with publicity and promotional initiatives for the recruitment of new volunteers.

* 10 or more volunteers

** Depending on needs of the service and in agreement with the Development Manager

- Organise volunteer monthly meetings

- Keep volunteers informed of relevant organisational developments and relevant external developments in CIB
- Signpost new information relevant to information givers via the extranet or other media.
- Establish communication channels with volunteers, for example via e-mails, text messages, face book.
- Raise the awareness for volunteers that they are part of the national picture.

Organisational Skills and Rostering:

- Assist the Development Manager in assessing the organisation's needs and meet these needs through the recruitment, placement and retention of volunteers
- Assist in the assignment of roles for volunteers
- Organise and schedule the volunteer rosters.

Training and Quality:

- Assist in the orientation and induction of volunteers
- Assist in identifying training and development needs for volunteers annually and establishing targets to meet them
- Conduct informal check-ins and give feedback
- Attend training specifically related to the Volunteer Co-ordinator role
- Work as part of a team with paid staff
- Continually motivate volunteers to provide a quality service to the public and avail of supports to achieve this.

Supporting Volunteers:

- Provide support to volunteers as the need arises
- Create an environment whereby volunteers can 'debrief' following difficult interactions with clients

- Support volunteers in their development and advancement of their own volunteer biography or 'career path' within the organisation
- Assist the Development Manager in assigning Supervisors to Information Providers participating on the Information Providers Programme
- Organise social events for volunteers including the volunteer recognition awards event.

Represent the Organisation:

- Represent the CIS at formal or informal meetings for volunteers as requested
- Liaise with other Volunteer Co-ordinators as the need arises and in approved joint initiatives from time to time
- Carry out such duties as may be agreed from time to time with the Development Manager.

▲ Please note that the volunteer co-ordinator should have experience in information provision, however, during their time as Volunteer Co-ordinator they should focus primarily on co-ordinator tasks and may or may not continue with information provision.

Tasks added:

You can add your own tasks here to fit the particular needs of your service.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____