

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter 2021 for Volunteers

SNAPSHOT

Training and Workshops
Annual Lecture
Good Causes Finalist
What 2021 will bring
Volunteer Ireland Winner
Survey Results
Mindfulness

Training and Workshop Opportunities

COVID-19 restrictions have had some positives, and gave our team a little space to be creative and look to the future. We are planning a range of training opportunities, workshops and guest speakers throughout the year speaking on topics to enhance your volunteer role, bring some fun and provide skills for life beyond your volunteer role.

Save the Date: Friday 23rd April 12.30pm

Communication Skills for Children with Additional Support Needs

More coming soon including: The Impact of Play on a Child's Recovery and Paediatric First Aid. Keep an eye on your inboxes for more details!

Social Media Training Workshop: Wednesday 10th March, 9-12.30p.m.



Children in Hospital Ireland, and the Network of Childhood Illness Organisations, are running a series of trainings as part of the Training Links programme. Different trainings will focus on different topics and target different groups, including staff, volunteers, parents and others interested in supporting children in hospitals. Our first topic, **Social Media**, is aimed at staff and volunteers who have a role in using social media for their organisation. While this may not be of direct relevance to you in your volunteer role in the hospitals, you're more than welcome to attend if you're interested

[You can register to attend here.](#)

Annual Lecture 2021: Wednesday 31st March, 1 p.m.

The wider impacts of childhood illness and hospitalisation on families

As the lecture will be held remotely, we have changed the format for this event to **a lunchtime lecture**. The topic for our lecture is drawn from some of the wider issues which were raised during our research into the financial implications of having a child in hospital. We will focus on the far reaching implications for a family of having a child in hospital and the challenges this brings. Please save the date and keep an eye on your in-box for full registration details.



Finalist: Good Causes Award

Children in Hospital Ireland are absolutely thrilled to be a finalist for the National Lottery Good Causes Awards! We are 1 of 6 finalists in the health and wellbeing category. This award celebrates our incredible volunteers all across the country and the impact you have through providing play and support for children and families in your local communities.

It is no surprise that the pure joy and laughter on the faces of Suzanne and Jacinta in our photo was chosen as the category link photo!

www.lottery.ie/good-causes-awards/finalists

The National Lottery's Good Causes Awards celebrate and honour the inspirational work carried out by hundreds of volunteers, coaches, care givers and other individuals across Ireland, and the organisations they represent. Since 1987, National Lottery players have raised over €5.8 billion for Good Causes like these across every corner of Ireland. This year there are 36 finalists across the categories of Health & Wellness, Sport, Arts & Culture, Heritage, Community and Youth.

What will volunteering look like in 2021?

Hospital play continues to be significantly restricted by COVID-19 precautions. Most playrooms remain closed, however a few including Tallaght, Temple St and Galway, have been able to open in a limited way over the past few months. Individual single use toys and craft materials are the priority for nurses and play specialists to keep play available to children and families across the country.

Children in Hospital Ireland will continue to support hospitals, including those where we do not have active volunteers, with individually packaged play materials for children in 2021 as COVID-19 restrictions continue. 1,630 toys and craft packs were sent to 15 hospitals this February.

Under level 5 restrictions both CHI at Crumlin and CHI at Temple St have returned to virtual outpatient appointments wherever possible in order to reduce footfall in the hospitals. In response, we have also paused our modified JustAsk/out-patients support roles in these hospitals. A small team of volunteers continue to be able to facilitate play for a limited number of children most in need of play support in Crumlin Hospital. We hope to see the scope of this well received role increase as restrictions ease.

With some hope growing as the numbers of infections decrease and the vaccine rolls out nationally, we are making plans and putting processes in place with the hope that we will be able to return to near full volunteering in the autumn. This will include a refresher training and ensuring that all volunteers are up to date on child protection, Garda vetting and infection control procedures. It will be our top priority that all volunteers will be able to return confidently and safely as soon as hospitals can accommodate volunteers again. Steps to get you started will be coming to your inbox early this Spring.

“I am just reaching out to you with our heartfelt thanks on behalf of the CASATS team, our patients and their families. Small gestures like this are so important in raising moral and helping to alleviate some of the stress our patients might harbour.”
*Dr Joanne Nelson Clinical Director
 Child and Adolescent Sexual
 Assault Treatment Service,
 Galway*

Volunteer Ireland Award Winner Karen Byrne

This past autumn we received top secret word that one of our incredible team leaders had been peer nominated for the Volunteer Ireland Awards in the Children and Youth Category. All of our volunteers and team leaders are definitely award worthy, but it was really heart-warming to see volunteers lift each other up for celebration!



“

She assists parents, nurses, fellow volunteers and all hospital staff with the same enthusiasm and inspires her team with her positivity

Congratulations to Karen for not only being nominated, but for winning the very competitive Volunteer Ireland Award 2020!

Karen has been a volunteer since 2017 in CHI at Crumlin on Saturday mornings. She is a team leader for the Saturday team and is dedicated to welcoming and settling volunteers and creating a sense of community through team coffees, WhatsApps and plenty of support. [Volunteer Awards.](#)

Successful Pre-Christmas Campaigns

Our office was a whirlwind of activity at the end of 2020 with the overwhelming response to the sale of Children in Hospital Ireland Christmas cards and the Lighthouse Storybook. We received a great deal of support – particularly from volunteers across the country – in helping to make these holiday fundraisers a rousing success.

We were also blown away by the interest in the Lighthouse Storybook, a lovely picture book published by Irish Lights featuring stories from children across the country.

Finally, we were thrilled to receive many unsolicited volunteer donations of single use new toys and activities for distribution to children in hospital as COVID safe play packs. These gifts will help to make hospital a happier place for children throughout Ireland. We would like to extend a sincere thank you to all of the volunteers who, through fundraising efforts and unwavering support, helped make the holiday season at Children in Hospital Ireland a very happy one.



"Books are where we go when we have to stay where we are"

World Book Day is 4th March this year. As you know, for children in hospital, books and stories are particularly important - they provide distraction, entertainment and can transport a child to another world.

We are launching a fundraising campaign, with the support of some publishers, book sellers and children's books authors to encourage people who can to "donate to buy a book" for a child in hospital throughout the month of March. By donating, we will then be able to select the most appropriate books and ensure that there are books available for all ages and abilities which we can distribute to all children's units.

While we cannot replace what our volunteers do - we know that these books will be a very welcome diversion for children at the moment. We hope that you can get behind this fundraiser and **Love, Like & Share** it. We will post the campaign details on our social media channels early next week when the campaign goes live.

thank you



Volunteer Survey Feedback

There was an excellent response to the 2020 volunteer survey of over 37%. We were honoured by your continued commitment to volunteering with Children in Hospital. Your hopeful anticipation of returning to volunteering shone through in the open feedback section, and we are looking forward to welcoming you back.

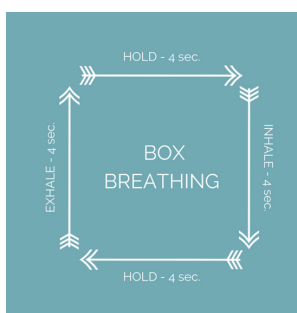
For those volunteers who actively volunteered during COVID-19 in CHI at Crumlin or CHI at Temple St, there was a positive response to the modified roles. 85% noted high or very high enjoyment of their roles and 88% noted their roles were highly or very highly useful for children and families. Understandably these roles were not the ideal for the volunteers and we do hear and acknowledge that volunteers are eager to return to pre-COVID-19 roles. However, volunteers did feel that their safety and that of the families and children in hospital were cared for well, that training was appropriate and helpful, and that children and families benefitted from their presence and time volunteering.

All training topics included in the survey as possibilities for 2021 were highly responded to. Volunteers are keen to participate in training opportunities online and in person when possible, in particular around topics increasing their ability to support a wider diversity of children and families. We are prioritising this for 2021, as we gradually reengage our volunteers back into the hospitals.

Lastly, as in past years, the value that the volunteers gain from their interaction with and support of each other as peers shone through strongly. Volunteers appreciated the opportunity for social zoom get togethers in the autumn and communication with team leaders and volunteer partners throughout the restrictions. Volunteers also shared how much they missed the connection with fellow volunteers from pre-COVID times.

2021 Membership

In accordance with the Constitution of Children in Hospital Ireland, all volunteers must be current members of the organisation. With your €10.00 membership fee, you will be entitled to contribute to the direction of the organisation through participation in trainings, working groups and the Annual General Meeting. Your membership will also cover insurance costs, vetting costs, and volunteer materials for when services hopefully resume in the coming months. **Your continued support as members of Children in Hospital Ireland will help ensure that the organisation remains strong and continues to provide a voice for children and their families.** If you have any questions regarding membership or payment options, please don't hesitate to contact us.



Mindfulness

It's great to take a moment of calm during your day and doing a breathing exercise is an accessible way to reset anywhere you are. Box breathing is easy and only takes a few minutes of your time. Why not give it a go and see how you feel afterwards – maybe you were holding more tension than you realised!

Method: Take a deep breath in while counting to 4 – hold your breath for 4 seconds – slowly breath out for 4 seconds – hold your empty breath for 4 seconds – and repeat as many times as you like.

Top tip: try this before you eat so you can relax and enjoy your food!