

## PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021

### Hundreds of Irish charities join forces to drive post-pandemic community recovery

Irish charities and community groups are joining forces today (27.10.2021) to launch We Act, a national campaign that will build on the huge upswell of community activity during the Covid-19 pandemic and help drive the post-pandemic recovery.

Highlighting the size and diversity of Ireland's charity and community sector – there are 34,000 organisations in the sector, employing almost 165,000 people and with a further 1 million volunteers – We Act spokesperson Sarah Monaghan said:

“The Covid-19 crisis brought a renewed public focus on the work of our sector. From support lines for older people to laptops for children in emergency accommodation, when we saw a need in our communities, we responded to it. The pandemic demonstrated that – in times of real need – charities and community groups are at the forefront of our national response.

“We saw a shift in values towards equality, justice and supports for the most vulnerable in our communities and across the globe. Now, there needs to be a concentrated effort to ensure the innovation, goodwill and community cohesion continues as we recover from the pandemic.”

#### Public Survey

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

- **70 per cent** of people believe the lives of people in their communities would be impacted if charities disappeared overnight but just **8 per cent** believe they interacted with a charity or community group in the past year.
- **63 per cent** of people have given to a charity or community group in the last three months.
- **62 per cent** think charities are more likely to be responsive in their services than the public sector, but only **54 per cent** think staff in the charity sector should be paid similarly to those in the public sector.
- Despite the fact that board members in both large and small charities are unpaid volunteers, over **40 per cent** of people believe those who serve on charity boards are paid a salary.
- **70 per cent** believe a homelessness organisation is a charity while only **8 per cent** think an arts organisation is a charity. Both can be charities.

A goal of the We Act campaign is to bridge the gap between some of the views raised in the research and create awareness of the value and impact of charities and community groups in Ireland.

Commenting on the findings, Ms. Monaghan said: “We know from the incredible support during the pandemic that people in Ireland have a huge affinity for good causes and we can see from the research that they understand the role some charities have in providing vital services. However, a majority of the public feel that charity is for someone else – and this campaign wants to celebrate the wide breadth of groups who have an impact on our lives every single day – even if we don't realise it.

“Think of your local tidy towns association, fun run, Men's Shed, community gardens, youth club, cancer or dementia supports, or animal rescue. All of these have a positive impact on both our lives and the wider community. We hope that a better understanding of the benefits of charitable work

and volunteering will drive community and voluntary action in communities across Ireland, which will help drive the post-pandemic recovery.”

### **Next Steps for We Act**

The We Act campaign will run over the next three years with a view to addressing the challenges uncovered in the research. The campaign aims to:

- Support the growth of vibrant and sustainable community life.
- Strengthen the charity and community sector so it can continue to provide quality services, supports, and advocacy.
- Encourage more members of the public to engage and participate in the sector by volunteering, working, and donating.

The campaign is funded through a grant from RTÉ Does Comic Relief that is distributed by The Community Foundation for Ireland.

Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland, said, “The Community Foundation for Ireland works with and supports more than 5,000 voluntary, community and charitable organisations. There are a million stories of the positive impact they have on families, homes and individuals across Ireland, often out of public view. We want to see more people working and staying in the sector, more people volunteering and engaging at a community level, more people knowing what services are out there should they need them, and more people feeling part of something positive and bigger than themselves.”

### **ENDS**

**Contact:** Maisie Lynch / Nicola Foxe, Alice PR & Events, Tel: 086-8966298 / 086-0878876, Email: [media@alicepr.com](mailto:media@alicepr.com)

### **Notes to Editors**

**About We Act:** We Act is a public awareness campaign to promote the value and impact of the charity and community sector in Ireland. The campaign is being managed by a coalition of charities and community groups, led by Boardmatch, Charities Institute Ireland, the Disability Federation of Ireland, Dóchas, The Wheel and Volunteer Ireland. The campaign is funded through a grant from RTÉ Does Comic Relief that is distributed by The Community Foundation for Ireland.

#WeAct

Find out more at [www.weact.ie](http://www.weact.ie)

Follow on Twitter ([@WeActIreland](https://twitter.com/WeActIreland)), Instagram ([WeActIreland](https://www.instagram.com/WeActIreland)) and Facebook ([WeActIreland](https://www.facebook.com/WeActIreland))

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

**Spokespeople:** Volunteers, trustees and workers from the charity and community sector have offered to share their story of why they do what they do. We Act spokespeople Sarah Monaghan and Amy Woods are available for interview / comment. Sarah is Campaigns Manager at The Wheel and Amy Woods is Communications and Advocacy Manager / Acting CEO at Volunteer Ireland.

### **Note to Photo Editors**

Photographer Naoise Culhane was commissioned to cover this launch event and will be issuing photos to photo desks – for reproduction free of charge – at approximately 2pm on Wednesday, 27th October.