# INVEST IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION: IT IS ESSENTIAL TO SURVIVING THE RECESSION





#### Why Invest in Community Education?

Community education is a progressive, inclusive and effective form of education that happens in the community. It empowers adults, has a beneficial impact on their families and community and reaches people who wouldn't otherwise engage in education. Community education ensures equality of opportunity for marginalised groups and also contributes to the economic regeneration of communities.

We call on all political parties to support community education by supporting the outlined solution to the current funding mechanism crisis facing the learners and practitioners.

## Who Provides Community Education?

Community education generally takes place outside institutions and responds to the needs of the community. It is education in the community, with the community and by the community. Community education groups are local, self-managed, voluntary organisations and are supported by a range of agencies and government departments for their education and social inclusion work. Community education is a vital part of community development.

# Why is Community Education Essential?

- It builds the capacity of a person to have choices regarding learning and employment opportunities.
- It has an effective role in ensuring *access* to learning, *transfer* to other learning opportunities and *progression* across all areas of the education system (non-formal to formal and up the national framework of qualifications).

#### How Does it Work?

- Has a proven track record for successfully engaging the most hard-to-reach learners.
- It is the most learner-centred part of the education system, which facilitates responsive, flexible and innovative learning opportunities for learners on a needs basis.

<sup>1(2011)</sup> AONTAS Community Education: More than just a course.' Exploring the outcomes and impact of Department of Education and Skills (DES) funded community education.

#### Challenge: An Ineffective Funding Model!

In general different funding streams for community education support various aspects of the work of a community education organisation for example VEC funding for tutor hours only covers one aspect of community education provision. However, in order to create a full source of funding for community education a number of funding streams must be accessed, which is both time consuming, ineffective (in terms of time taken) and also does not lend itself to a sustainable sector as long term planning is thwarted due to the short term nature of funding schemes. See the position paper for a full outline at www.aontas.com

#### Solution: Creating a new mechanism for funding community education

Step 1: What needs to be funded



#### Step 2: Guidelines for effective funding mechanism

- 1. Funding will cover the true costs of community education
- 2. Multi-annual funding scheme for community education groups
- 3. Education provision that will be covered by the fund will include: vocational and non-vocational learning
- 4. Education provision that will be covered by the fund will include accredited and non-accredited learning
- 5. Funding mechanism will be locally managed
- 6. Funding will not be target-led but community-led
- 7. Funding administrators will have specific expertise in community education
- 8. Effective and authentic evaluation for the funding process

#### Solution

#### As an Election Candidate I will support community education by ensuring:

The Department of Education and Skills must exercise its responsibility to support community education by providing ring-fenced funding that covers its true cost.

### If you are a Councillor, support community education by ensuring:

County councils should fund and support community education under each development board's social inclusion measure. Be aware of the funding obstacles that your local community education group faces.

#### About this Manifesto

This manifesto was created by the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) and reflects the views and challenges as expressed by its members. The CEN is a platform for community education groups within the AONTAS membership and it serves as a space for promoting community education and as a political platform for shaping policy. It is the only network at national level dedicated to community education and its membership comprises over 120 organisations and local networks. For more information, contact: AONTAS (National Adult Learning Organisation), 2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, Ranelagh, D6 Ph: +353 1 4068220/1 Fax: +353 1 4068227 www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen