



# WILL YOU BE A CHAMPION FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION?

## Community Education - We're doing it....

Community education is a progressive, inclusive and effective form of education that happens in the community.<sup>1</sup> It empowers adults, has a beneficial effect on their families and community and reaches people who wouldn't otherwise engage in education.

## Why invest in community education?

Community education has a proven track record for creating a supportive environment that encourages learners back into education, enables individuals to develop their skillset and competencies, and is the bridge to further learning and employment.

Given the current economic crisis, finding approaches to expanding participation by adults in education and training is essential. Community education grew in an environment of economic difficulties, the 1980s; it developed effective methods for addressing social issues by helping communities tackle unemployment, social problems and low civic participation. Community education assists individuals to reach their potential; to empower the individual and build confidence; it also creates a method for giving back to their communities.

To withdraw or reduce funding for community education would be a regressive step; the detrimental effects of such actions may result in a reduced rate of participation in education, an increase in welfare dependency, and the loss of the current community structural framework which supports so many families: both parents and children. We cannot afford ignore community education, we must invest in creating sustainable learning communities.

## Who delivers 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 through a range of agencies and government departments for their education and social inclusion work.

<sup>1</sup> Community education is a process of personal and community transformation, empowerment, challenge, social change and collective responsiveness. It is community-led reflecting and valuing the lived experiences of individuals and their community. Through its ethos and holistic approach community education builds the capacity of groups to engage in developing a social teaching and learning process that is creative, participative and needs-based. Community education is grounded on principles of justice, equality and inclusiveness. It differs from general adult education provision due to its political and radical methodologies.



## Who benefits?

### Case Study

Vivienne's involvement in community education began when she undertook a personal development course in a local women's group. After her confidence grew she benefitted from the accessible, flexible approach that community education afforded her and she started a Certificate course in Women's Studies in 1999. Vivienne she has just completed her Masters and is currently Co-ordinator of Ronanstown Community Development Project.

*"My educational progression opportunity arose from strong passionate women who acknowledged the need to support non-traditional students to access third level opportunities in their community with supports build around their needs. I didn't realise I had a brain or academic abilities until I was allowed the space to find it!"*

See full Community Education Network briefing document for more information.

## We call on Local Election Candidates to support the following demands:

### Vocational Education Committee (VEC)

1. Support the proposal to earmark one specific space on the VEC Committee for a community education representative.

### Local Authority

2. Expand the remit of the Social Inclusion Officer in the Local Authority to promote community education as a tool in tackling the cause and effect of social exclusion in communities.
3. Recognise and promote community education as a means of fulfilling the aims of the local authority development plan.

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