

AONTAS RESPONSE

KEY HIGHLIGHTS IN THE
PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT
"OUR SHARED FUTURE"



Wednesday, 17th June 2020

Key highlights in the Programme for Government

Programme for Government Statement	AONTAS Initial Comment
Community Education	
Recognise the role of community education and its vital role in our communities by supporting its schemes and initiatives post COVID-19.	Welcome this statement but we need to see a commitment to increasing funding of community education in the next budget.
Lifelong Learning	
Further promote a culture of lifelong learning within the workforce, focusing on increasing the lifelong learning rate from 9% currently to 18% by 2025.	Welcome the increased target from 15% to 18% by 2025. There should also be a target for those without upper secondary education, currently a third of the current LLL rate e.g. 2.5%.
Apprenticeships	
We will publish an updated Apprenticeship Action Plan to look at new ways of structuring, funding and promoting apprenticeships. It will have specific targets for the uptake of apprenticeships by women, people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups.	Welcome the focus of addressing the underparticipation in apprenticeships by women, people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups.
Reskilling	
Work with Further and Higher Education institutions to put in place a strategy to develop new fast track mid-career educational models that can meet the rapidly evolving needs of our new economy.	Welcome focus on adults returning to education.
Education and training for people recovering from addiction.	

Create a path for people in rehabilitation from drug addiction to access education and training facilities in their local areas.	Essential that people in addiction are a specific focus, community education is a proven pathway e.g. SAOL, RADE.
Education for sustainability	
Ensure an increased emphasis through our agricultural colleges on education in the areas of sustainability, agroecology, climate action and biodiversity and the link to land use, soil health and agriculture.	AONTAS supports education for sustainability but would like to see this as part of community education also.
Education for women returning to work	
Introduce returnships in partnership with employers, to support women who have taken time out of work to raise their families or care for loved ones, to re-enter the labour market through new education, training and personal development programmes.	Women returners make up a significant part of community education participants.
FET for people with disabilities	
Conduct an audit of equity of access to further education and training (FET) for those with disabilities.	Vital to act upon the recommendations of the audit to improve accessibility.
Access to FET and HE	
Further develop access programmes to Higher and Further Education for students from disadvantaged groups, including members of the Traveller Community, those in direct provision and those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.	Essential that access programmes are expanded and the focus on FET is welcomed as it requires further attention.

<p>Continue and expand the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education and develop a National Traveller Education Strategy, including a plan to improve access to Higher Education for members of the Traveller Community.</p>	<p>Essential that the Access Plan is continued and expanded with ethnic identifiers to monitor progress of Traveller participation.</p>
<p>Support access routes and inclusive education initiatives to learners with intellectual disabilities.</p>	<p>Essential inclusive approaches run across the education system and equally through tertiary education.</p>
<p>Adult Literacy</p>	
<p>Develop and implement a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills within the first year of the government.</p>	<p>We support NALA in their advocacy work to ensure development and implementation of a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy.</p>
<p>An Inclusive Vision for Education</p>	
<p>Provide additional supports for students who are homeless, resident in family hubs, or in direct provision. Further develop access programmes to Higher and Further Education for students from disadvantaged groups, including members of the Traveller Community, those in direct provision and those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.</p>	<p>Welcome the focus on learners and students who are homeless and in direct provision. This makes up a significant cohort of community education learners.</p>
<p>Preparing for Post-COVID Education</p>	
<p>The Government will ensure that as it develops reopening plans, students and parents are included, that schools have the time to implement required changes, and that students transitioning between education levels are supported.</p>	<p>Welcome supportive transitions for all students into tertiary education with specific regard to vulnerable learner cohorts.</p>
<p>Springboard</p>	

<p>Expand Springboard throughout Further and Higher Education, offering upskilling in areas of skills shortages to those who want to upskill, to those who are re-entering the workforce, or to those who have been made redundant.</p>	<p>We welcome a tertiary approach to springboard and therefore the inclusion of community education within this. A point which was part of previous AONTAS higher education access submissions.</p>
<p>Human Capital Initiative</p>	
<p>Use the Human Capital initiative to deliver a wide range of education and training programmes for jobseekers in tertiary education, including fast turnaround specific-skills training, conversion courses into areas of skills shortage, and emerging technology</p>	<p>We welcome a tertiary approach to the Human Capital Initiative and therefore the inclusion of community education within this.</p>
<p>National Training Fund</p>	
<p>In consultation with stakeholders, seek to utilise the surplus from the National Training Fund to implement an upskilling and reskilling programme, along with the additional funding for Further and Higher Education institutions.</p>	<p>We welcome the increase in funding for tertiary education from the National Training Fund.</p>
<p>Community Development Projects (CDPs)</p>	
<p>Introduce, on a phased basis, a number of projects similar in approach to Community Development Projects (CDPs).</p>	<p>We welcome a community based approach to social inclusion and see community education playing a large part in such projects.</p>
<p>Capital grant for community centres</p>	
<p>Commit to the introduction of an annual small capital grants programme administered through local authorities</p>	<p>We welcome the introduction of a grant to support community centres, many of which will have a community education remit.</p>

for the maintenance, improvement, and upkeep of community centres.	
Social Innovation Fund Ireland	
Support and enhance the Social Innovation Fund Ireland programme to help secure additional philanthropic funding sources specifically for community-based programmes and projects in the areas of climate justice, rural and community development.	We welcome the enhancement of the Social Innovation Fund Ireland which funds a number of community education groups.
Sheds	
Ensure that Men’s and Women’s Sheds are properly resourced.	We welcome funding of community education projects such as the sheds and women’s community education organisations.
SICAP	
Refine and build on a range of programmes to support communities including CLÁR, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).	SICAP funds a number of community education groups and would welcome improvements and expansion to the programme.
SUSI Grants	
Review SUSI eligibility and adjacency rates. Conduct a review of the SUSI scheme in 2020, following the impact of COVID-19. Address the gap in postgraduate grants.	We call for a broadening of the SUSI eligibility and an increase to reflect the true costs of participation in tertiary education.
Mental health	
Ensure that mental health supports are available for students in Higher and Further Education.	We welcome mental health supports especially within the Covid-19 learning context.

Period Poverty	
Provide a range of free, adequate, safe, and suitable period products in all educational publicly-funded settings (including schools, colleges and HEIs), to ensure that no students are disadvantaged in their education by period poverty.	We welcome the introduction of this measure for tertiary education settings.
Universities of Sanctuary	
Recognise the vital work of the Universities of Sanctuary project and commit that the State will further increase the supports for people in direct provision to access third level education.	We welcome a recognition and note tertiary education, in particular community education, enables people in direct provision to engage in education.
Government Departments	
Government departments will be reconfigured, as agreed by the Party Leaders, to ensure greater policy coherence, programme implementation and a fair division of labour and responsibilities.	AONTAS would question the benefit of a reconfiguration of the Department of Education and Skills. More information on AONTAS' response to this point is available here .
Recognition of Prior Learning	
Develop and implement a standardised system of accreditation of prior learning, taking account of previous education, skills, work experience and engagement in society.	We welcome the focus on recognition of prior learning (RPL) and its role in support educational access.
Striving for Excellence in Education	
Establish a Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Education ensuring that the	We support the creation of a Citizen's Assembly on the future of education. It is



voices of young people and those being educated are central

important that a Citizen's Assembly include a diverse range of voices including adults in education and adults from traditionally disadvantaged or excluded social and economic populations.



**The Voice of
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