

AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival Policy Day - Agenda

Community education 20 years since publication of *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (2000-2020)

Date: Friday, 6th March 2020

Time: 9.30am - 1.45pm

Location: The Richmond Education and Events Centre, 1
Brunswick St N, Smithfield, Dublin, D07 TH76

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#LearningForLife
#Community Education

Context and Focus

Aim

The Policy Day will mark the 20 year anniversary of the publication of *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (2000).

About AONTAS

AONTAS is Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation for adult and community education providers and adult learners. It promotes the value and benefits of adult learning, and advocates on behalf of the sector. As part of the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival, we are hosting our annual policy day.

Focus of the Day

To bring policy makers, community education learners, educators and academics together to listen first-hand to the impact of independently managed community education and chart its evolution since 2000. A specific focus will centre on factors which have helped or impeded the ability of community education to respond to the needs of local communities and learners. The ultimate aim is to re-visit the potential of independently managed and non-statutory community education to meet current national policy priorities (specifically within the remit of the Department of Education and Skills) so that it is empowered to widen participation in adult education.

What We Hope to Achieve

In 2019 the Policy Day proposed a new national strategy for community education as community education meets national policy objectives across a range of government departments. The goal was to create conversations across departments who fund independently managed community education and benefit from the outcomes of community education. This year we want to discuss the future of community education and how we can ensure its future through the creation of a sustainable multi-annual funding model.

Agenda

9:30 Registration, networking, and coffee, tea, and pastries

10.00 Welcome from AONTAS Chairperson Tara Farrell

10.10 **Learner Panel Discussion:** Listen to an inspiring discussion among four community education learners talking about the impact of community education on their lives.

- **Winnie Coakley,**
Dublin Adult Learning Centre
- **Cathal Scott Reynolds,**
Blue Teapot Theatre Company
- **Brendan Carr,**
Blayney Blades
- **Rosemary Kunene,**
An Cosán

10.40 **Community Education across Ireland as seen from the Richmond Event Centre:** See the diversity of community education first hand through a video highlighting the work of 5 organisational members of the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN)

10.55 **Presentation:** AONTAS CEO Niamh O'Reilly will discuss the role of community education in meeting national policy objectives, and the web of funding for independently managed community education organisations

11:10 **Presentation:** Professor Tom Collins, special government adviser in the development and publication of *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (2000), Ireland's only white paper on adult education, will speak about the development of the white paper and reflect on its influence 20 years later.

11:40 **Comfort Break**

11:55 Table Discussion: Participants will discuss issues important to the future of community education, including funding, learners' supports, and the value of 'learning for life'. These discussions will be facilitated and the discussion outcomes used to inform the afternoon panel discussion.

12:30 Panel Discussion: 20 Years after the White Paper's publication, what is the future of community education? Panellists include policy makers, academics, and community education practitioners reflecting on the presentations and table discussions from the day.

- **William Beausang,**
*Head of the Higher and Further Education and Training Division,
Department of Education and Skills*
- **Professor Tom Collins,**
Chairperson, National Water Forum
- **Andrew Brownlee,**
CEO, SOLAS
- **Martina Ní Cheallaigh,**
Senior Expert, European Commission
- **Tara Farrell,**
AONTAS Chairperson, Deputy CEO of Longford Women's Link (LWL)
- **Mary Maher,**
Director, Dublin Adult Learning Centre
- **Liz O'Sullivan,**
Adult Education Officer, City of Dublin Education and Training Board

13.35 Reflection and close by AONTAS Chairperson Tara Farrell

13:45 Lunch

Speakers

William Beausang - Department of Education and Skills

William Beausang leads the Department of Education and Skills' Higher and Further Education and Training Division. Previously he worked in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with responsibility for Central Expenditure Policy and prior to that was Head of the Government Reform Unit in DPER with responsibility for the delivery of the government's openness, transparency and accountability agenda. Between April 2005 and June 2011 William was an Assistant Secretary in the Banking and Financial Services Division of the Department of Finance. He has a Masters in Economic Science from UCD and completed the Graduate Programme in Economics at the University of Tilburg.

Martina Ní Cheallaigh - European Commission

Martina Ní Cheallaigh is a Senior expert in Unit E3 dealing with Vocational Education and Training (VET), Apprenticeships and Adult Learning. She is Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning and the national coordinator for its implementation. Martina has specific responsibility for the follow up to the recommendation "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults", which focuses on facilitating access to basic skills. In the context of updating the skills agenda, she is currently looking at upskilling and reskilling the workforce, skills for life, and increasing investment to meet the cost of inclusive provision of skills to adults over the life course.

Andrew Brownlee - SOLAS

Andrew Brownlee is CEO at SOLAS, having previously served as Executive Director for Strategy and Knowledge there since January 2018. At SOLAS, he has played a key role in putting in place a strategic performance framework for the further education and training (FET) system, in implementing reforms to support a more integrated system and in developing a new 5-year FET strategy which will set out an ambitious new vision for its next critical phase of development. He joined SOLAS from the Higher Education

Authority, where he was Head of System Funding and led the establishment of a comprehensive governance framework and the reform of higher education funding. Prior to joining the public sector he had a long and distinguished career in management consultancy, working for PwC, PA Consulting and Fitzpatrick Associates, developing strategy and managing change for a diverse range of clients, with a particular focus on the education and skills sector.

Mary Maher - Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC)

Mary Maher is Director of the Dublin Adult Learning Centre (since 1993). She has over 30 years experience in adult and community education. She started her career working with the Travelling community and spent 5 years working with early school leavers and has been working in the north inner city for 26 years in her current position. She was chairperson of NALA for 6 years (1997-2003). She is passionate about adult and community education and its role in combatting inequalities and exclusion. She believes it has a huge role to play in breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. DALC strives to put the learner at the centre of all its work, which is underpinned by values of inclusion, social justice and transformation. Lifelong learning for sustainability is a central theme of DALC's current Strategic Plan.

Professor Tom Collins - National Water Forum

Professor Tom Collins is currently Chairperson of the National Water Forum. He is the former Chairperson of the first governing body of the Technological University Dublin and was also joint Chairperson of the governing bodies of DIT, IT Blanchardstown and IT Tallaght prior to their merger (2013-2019). He is the former Head of Education at Maynooth University (2006-2011); former Dean of Teaching and Learning there (2008-2011) and interim President there (2010- 2011). Between 2011 and 2013, he was President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, Medical University of Bahrain. In 2016, he led the development on a national framework of student engagement in Irish higher education institutions on behalf of the Higher Education Authority. Professor Collins has been an

active player in the evolution of Irish education policy for the past two decades. He was special government advisor in the development and publication of Ireland's only White Paper on lifelong learning – Learning for Life, in 2000. Between 2006 and 2012, he was Chairperson of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the statutory advisory body on all curriculum matters in Ireland from birth to eighteen. His scholarship, publications and other professional work throughout his career has focused on the links between educational underachievement and background disadvantage and he has led multiple initiatives in enhancing educational access and participation in Ireland.

Liz O'Sullivan - City of Dublin Education and Training Board

Liz O'Sullivan is an Adult Education Officer (AEO) working with the City of Dublin ETB. She has responsibility for adult community education provision in an area covering Crumlin, Drimnagh, Rialto, Inchicore, Ballyfermot and surrounding areas. Liz is currently the president of the Adult Education Officer's Association (AEOA) and represents the AEOA on the National Advisory Committee on Adult Literacy and Numeracy. She has been involved in adult education for over 30 years. She began her teaching career with the then VEC, teaching literacy in Mountjoy Prison Education Unit. She has had a life-long interest in the power of adult community education to transform lives. She is a qualified Group Analyst with a particular interest in organisational culture and team dynamics.

Tara Farrell - Longford Women's Link (LWL)

Tara Farrell is the Deputy CEO of Longford Women's Link (LWL). Tara has over 20 years' experience in the Community & Voluntary and Education sectors, working in a variety of areas including Project Management, Social Economy, Gender Equality, Conflict resolution and engaging in Broadcast/Social Media. She holds an LLM in International Human Rights Law and has also lectured in Political Science in UL and Management Development at DCU.

Tara is the Chairperson of AONTAS (The National Adult Learning Organisation) and is also a Director of Irish Rural Link and Roscommon Women's Network. Tara also lectures in Human Rights and Equality at St. Angela's College (NUIG). LWL is a dynamic social enterprise founded in 2005. Over the past 25 years LWL has diversified and expanded to become a substantial organisation that advocates effectively both locally and nationally on issues impacting women and their families.

Winnie Coakley - Dublin Adult Learning Centre

Winnie Coakley left school at age 12 and struggled with reading and writing. As an adult Winnie has gone back and studied at Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC). Having felt uncomfortable in other settings she found the staff in DALC kind, friendly, and welcoming. DALC was somewhere where Winnie belongs. Winnie has completed a number of different modules and programmes at DALC where her confidence has grown. She is currently performing in a play in the Projects Arts Centre in Temple Bar.

Cathal Scott Reynolds - Blue Teapot Theatre Company

Cathal Scott Reynolds completed a three year course in the Performing Arts School, with Blue Teapot Theatre Company, Galway City, from 2016 to 2019. Cathal's personal interests and achievements from this course were learning how a sewing machine works, and performing on stage in a production of OLIVER TWISTS...as oppose to OLIVER TWIST. Performing in OLIVER TWISTS was the proudest moment of his life because it was the first time he performed in front of the public. This made him realise that he can achieve anything once he puts his mind to it. His confidence and self belief has increased as a result. Cathal looks back on that time as being his beginning to becoming the confident and independent person he is today.

Brendan Carr - Blayney Blades

Brendan completed the Moving On sport and recreation programme through Blayney Blades in Castleblayney. Since the economic crash Brendan had been unemployed with the exception of odd jobs now and then. Brendan knew most work these days involves some kind of paperwork and felt the course at Blayney Blades was perfect for creating the stepping stone to better things. Brendan is now the evening manager of the Lontas Arts, Theatre and community centre.

Rosemary Kunene - An Cosán

Rosemary Kunene is a social justice activist and social entrepreneur. Rosemary is a 3rd year student in BA in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development at An Cosán. Rosemary is a single mother of three children and lived in Direct Provision for four and half years before receiving refugee status. Rosemary is passionate about social change, and social enterprise.



The Voice of Adult Learning

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