

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

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

13.35 Reflection and close by AONTAS Chairperson Tara Farrell

13:45 Lunch

Speakers

William Beausang - Department of Education and Skills

William Beausang joined the Department of Education and Skills as Head of the 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 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.

Tara Farrell - Longford Women's Link (LWL)

Tara Farrell is AONTAS Chairperson and Deputy CEO of Longford Women's Link. Tara has over 17 years' experience in the Community & Voluntary and Education sectors. LWL is a Community organisation and Social Enterprise based in Longford Town that provides education and training opportunities for women who have experienced difficulty accessing formal education. LWL supports the development of collective approaches to achieving equality, addressing disadvantage, working in solidarity and making relevant the connections between local and national development.



The Voice of Adult Learning

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