

AONTAS

Annual Report 2018



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“Education helped me with my self-worth and that has a positive impact on every aspect of my life”

— Thomas, Adult Learner

Foreword

Liz Waters / Outgoing AONTAS President

2018 was an exciting year to be a part of AONTAS as we collectively worked together to strengthen the AONTAS governance structure.

In the last number of years AONTAS has undergone an organisational review process. The review was carried out to ensure that, at a time of significant change, resources are organised and structured in an optimal way to ensure successful implementation of the AONTAS Strategic Plan and fulfil its obligations as a professional non-governmental organisation.

As part of this work the AONTAS governance structures, processes and procedures also underwent a review. AONTAS undertook this review with the aim of placing the organisation in the best possible position to modernise and meet current best practice corporate governance standards. This review was completed in autumn 2018 with the adoption of the new AONTAS Constitution by members at our Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). The progress of this undertaking was reflected in our being shortlisted for a Good Governance Initiative Award in October 2018 – a fantastic achievement that we are very proud of.

With AONTAS in such a strong position for the future as the organisation celebrates its fifty year anniversary, this is perhaps the optimal moment for me to step down as Chairperson and pass on the baton.

Firstly, I would like to thank all of the Board Members for their dedication, the time they have put in, and the contribution they have made. It has been a privilege to get to work with former CEO Berni Brady and current CEO Niamh O'Reilly.

Since her appointment in 2016, Niamh has led AONTAS through significant changes, working towards the most efficient, responsive and transparent running of the organisation to date. These structural changes will ensure that AONTAS is able to carry out the most important work of listening to, representing and acting upon the views of its members. More than ever, AONTAS is focusing on community education, listening to the needs of learners and community providers, which is crucial at a time when community education is facing huge challenges.

Secondly, I extend a very warm welcome to Tara Farrell who succeeds me in the new role of Chairperson of the AONTAS Board. I commend her on the work she has already contributed to the role since her appointment in November in 2018 and have no doubt that she will continue to bring the organisation forward in 2019.

Thank you once again to all members of the AONTAS Board, staff and all the membership with whom I have had the pleasure to work over the years. It has truly been a privilege and I have loved the work.





Staff



AONTAS Staff

- Niamh O'Reilly, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Katie O'Rourke, Communications Lead
- Benjamin Hendriksen, Advocacy Lead
- Emma Byrne, Finance Lead
- Suzanne Kyle, Community Education Network (CEN) Coordinator
- Leah Dowdall, Learner Advocacy Officer
- John Ryan, Office Manager
- Steph Keane, Administrative Assistant
- Dearbháil Lawless, European Projects Officer (started in March 2018)
- Edel Sheerin, National FET Learner Forum Administration and Events Officer (started in July 2018)
- Sam O'Brien Olinger, Information and Policy Officer (started in August 2018)
- Marta Feragalli, Finance and Administration Officer (started in October 2018)
- Theresa Sweeney, Quality Assurance Support Officer (started in October 2018)
- Barry Dolan, Communications and Events Officer (started in November 2018)
- Anna D'Alton, Communications and Events Assistant (started in December 2018)

We would like to thank the people who worked with us in 2018: Bríd Greenan (until August 2018), Madeline Pattin (until August 2018) and Claire Sheeran (until August 2018).

AONTAS Board Members

- Ms Tara Farrell, Chairperson, Longford Women's Link (elected November 2018)
- Ms Liz Waters, President, An Cosán
- Mr James Prior, Vice-President, Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN)
- Mr Colm Kilgallon, Hon Treasurer, All Hallows College
- Mr Liam Ahearn, Tipperary ETB
- Dr Brian Dooney, Age and Opportunity
- Dr Camilla Fitzsimons, Maynooth University (resigned in April 2018)
- Ms Grace Finlay, AEGAI (Adult Education Guidance Association of Ireland) (resigned in March 2018)
- Mr Gabriel Keating, Education and Training Boards Ireland
- Ms Moira Leydon, ASTI
- Mr Chris O'Ralaigh, Individual Member
- Ms Liz O'Sullivan, AEOA (Adult Education Officers' Association)
- Ms Alice McDonnell, Transformative Recovery College (elected November 2018)
- Dr Tom O'Brien, South County Dublin Partnership (elected November 2018)
- Ms Joy-Tendai Kangere, Adult Learner Representative (elected November 2018)
- Mr Alan Hand, Adult Learner Representative (elected November 2018)

In Reflection

Niamh O'Reilly / AONTAS CEO

I am happy to present the AONTAS Annual Report for 2018, a year where we sought to continue to grow and develop the organisation as we strive to make lifelong learning a reality for all.

Although the lifelong learning participation rate in Ireland has increased in recent years, standing at 8.9% in 2017¹, persistent educational inequality for adults remains an urgent issue that must be addressed. In 2018, the CSO published the Adult Education Survey (AES)² highlighting the stark differentials across lifelong learning participation, particularly for people who have gained lower levels of accreditation (OECD, 2019). The survey noted that the most educationally disadvantaged are least likely to engage in adult learning, those with less than the Leaving Certificate are a staggering seven times less likely to participate in accredited learning than those who hold a Degree (2% compared to 14%). Adult learners are telling AONTAS that a wide range of learning options are needed, not only specific vocationally-orientated courses but also non-accredited courses where they can build confidence, gain 'learning to learn' skills and take time to decide which area of learning to focus on. Learners cite the key factors for access and retention as learner supports (childcare, transport, funding and guidance), learning methodology (dialogical, respectful and supportive) and collegiality (peer support and peer learning). Underpinning all the points raised by learners is the need to support people to increase their confidence, which takes time to nurture and requires the right learning

environment and autonomy in course choice. This backdrop of inequality and the needs of learners were the basis for our work in 2018.

In 2018, we focused on completing the AONTAS Strategic Plan (2015—2018) through meaningful, high quality advocacy and communications activities. Authenticity and impact were the hallmark of our communications work in 2018, reaching a record number of people through our media coverage as we continued to promote the broader purpose of adult learning. AONTAS achieved an impressive 154 media opportunities (106 print articles, 39 online articles and 9 radio interviews), across 21 counties with a combined reach of over 4 million people, an increase of 56% from 2017. Together with 21 EPALÉ blogs, articles in *Education Matters* (2018—2019) and excellent social media engagement our online presence further raised the profile of not only our organisation, but the work of our members, the achievements of learners and the transformative potential of adult learning. In March, the Adult Learners' Festival and STAR awards grew in impact and numbers as we established a new collaborative partnership with the Belfast Festival of Learning to create an all-Island week-long event. We supported our members to host events aimed at widening adult learning participation and through the

1 The percentage of persons aged 25-64 who received formal and/or non-formal education and training in the 4 weeks prior to the survey.

2 Based on data for 2017.

increasingly competitive and high profile STAR awards, shone a light on models of excellence in adult learning. Our policy event, 'Lifelong Learning for All' closing the Festival debated how we can create a more equitable system of lifelong learning in Ireland based on a series of policy papers and contributions from a learner panel (Lee Carroll, Kathleen Dowd and Sharon Conlon), Stephen Evans, CEO of Learning and Work Institute, UK and Dr Aideen Quilty of UCD.

Advocating and promoting the value of community education was central to our advocacy work in 2018. As part of our broader advocacy work, the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) continued to grow with engaged participation by members at three national meetings in Dublin and Limerick. To address the cited need to support QQI Reengagement, advocacy aimed at securing a waiver for QQI fees continued and practical support via the development of a toolkit with Women's Community Projects Mullingar (WCPM) was initiated with a new, CEN designated member of staff. Issues of concern for community education members were central to over 20 policy submissions, a comprehensive range of representations at national and EU level together with collaborative events including with IDEA (to highlight the role of community education in SDG 4.7) and with the N. Ireland Impact Forum for the first '5 nations' adult learning event in Belfast entitled *Borders, Boundaries & Learning with our Neighbours*. Particularly memorable was the launch of the Adult Learner Journal at Warrenmount Community Education Centre, which aimed to democratise academic work by hosting a discussion of the Journal articles between practitioners, policy makers, academics and contributing authors. We expanded the editorial board, including our first International member, David Mallows from UCL, and with our new editor from the University of Ulster, Dr Rosemary Moreland, we have increased the status and relevance of the *Adult Learner* as Ireland's premier peer-reviewed journal for adult learning.

Another highlight for 2018 was the inaugural AONTAS International Lifelong Learning Advocacy Summer School, which was held in partnership with the Department of Adult and Community education at Maynooth University. With luminaries from the adult learning world, such as Sir Alan Tuckett, Helen Keogh, Dr Luke Murtagh, Dr Aideen Quilty and Berni Brady together with Brian Mooney, adult learners and award-winning community education projects participants from 5 countries enjoyed an immersive experience with its co-convenors, myself and Dr Brid Connolly. Aiming to create a community of lifelong learning advocates and promoting adult learning, a photo of the launch featured on the front-page of the Irish Times thereby fully cementing the success of the week.

AONTAS continued to further develop its expertise in meaningful learner voice for change. The sharing of learner stories, involvement of learners across our events, practical support for learners to engage in our ERASMUS+ mobilities project further built adult learners' capacity to inspire others to return to learning and to put forward policy recommendations. Our learner voice work also included leading the delivery of the National FET Learner Forum. With the regionalisation of the Forum enabling a 130% increase in the number of learners reached through 9 regional meetings and one national event, almost 600 learners spanning FET programmes strengthened this mechanism to support future improvements in FET at local and national level. The advisory group, international academic expert group and mid-term review report provided a solid practical and theoretical basis for the continued expansion of the Forum. We were delighted with the continued support for learner voice from the then Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton TD, who closed the National FET Learner Forum.

AONTAS continued to expand our activity at European level and engage in strategically significant projects that further our mission for educational equality. In 2018, AONTAS supported continuous professional development and international exchange for our members

by coordinating two Erasmus+ KA1 projects; to engage in research and innovation we were partners in three ERASMUS+ KA2 projects FinALE, REVEAL and FutureLabs; and to lead policy development AONTAS leads the ERASMUS+ KA3 as the designated National Coordinator of EAAL (European Agenda for Adult Learning). To further promote Irish expertise in adult learning, we were delighted to host 4 study visits (Italy, Germany, Norway, Denmark), to present at the European Commission conferences such as the *Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth* and to lead workshops at the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) General Assembly.

Building a strong membership organisation

In 2018, AONTAS completed the most extensive governance review of the organisation since its establishment in 1969. The AONTAS Board and management demonstrated commitment to seeing this governance review process to completion via significant time and effort through eight Board and seven Governance Subcommittee meetings over the course of the process. Culminating in our newly adopted Constitution at the EGM in November, our efforts were reflected in our being shortlisted for a Good Governance Initiative Award.

In order to keep abreast of our members' issues and work, AONTAS was active across Ireland in 2018, with staff presenting and participating at member events and conferences, having stands at events and conferences, sharing information about our work and the educational opportunities available to learners the length and breadth of the country. Membership engagement was important, over 120 members participated in our AGM and EGM with regional meetings in Galway, Dundalk and Cork we reached a further 100 members from 54 organisations across 20 counties enabling us to stay up to speed with the issues on the ground as we develop our next strategic plan.

In closing

I wish to sincerely thank the exceptional, dynamic, passionate, hard-working AONTAS staff team who have delivered above and beyond for the AONTAS membership. We are especially grateful to adult learners and our membership who generously share their knowledge and expertise thereby enabling us to deliver on our Strategic Plan.

2018 closed with the stepping down of Liz Waters from the AONTAS Board who has served as our inspiring President for over her 3 terms. Liz has generously shared her immense knowledge and undeniable passion for community education. The AONTAS Board, staff team and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Liz for the enormous contribution she has made in providing expert leadership for the organisation. Her commitment to the organisation is broad, from attending over 50 Board and subcommittee meetings, chairing tens of AONTAS national meetings and conference to steering extensive organisational and board reviews. She has left a legacy of good governance with an unparalleled commitment and passion for social justice which has left an indelible mark on the organisation. I look forward to building on these achievements with our newly elected and highly experienced chairperson Tara Farrell as AONTAS marks the 50th anniversary of the organisation in 2019.

"At the heart of adult learning within the adult and community education sector is a general agreement that education has four pillars: learning to be, learning to do, learning to know and learning to live together."

– AONTAS CEO Niamh O'Reilly at an Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) event in June 2018



Communications Highlights in 2018

COMMUNICATIONS

6.5 Million

People reached through our extensive communications work in 2018, which includes our online platforms and media coverage

NATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

2.4 Million

People reached through 21 national media articles across 12 national media outlets

PROMOTING THE WORK OF OUR MEMBERS

1.9 Million

AONTAS highlighted the work of our members in 81% of media coverage (125 articles)

SOCIAL MEDIA

OVER

2.3 Million

People reached through AONTAS Twitter and Facebook platforms in 2018.

AONTAS EVENTS

OVER

1000

AONTAS members and learners at AONTAS events in 2018 including our inaugural Summer School, the National FET Learner Forum regional events and regional membership events

LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE

OVER

1.7 Million

People through 134 articles in 63 local/regional media outlets in 21 counties – specifically promoting 15 ETB areas

A year in photos





A year in dialogue

Adult Learner Journal Launch

“Adult education is about much more than equipping people with skills for employment.”

— David Mallows, Adult Learner Journal Launch December 2018

Community Education

“Community education is successful because it embraces all three domains of learning: intellectual, physical and emotional (thinking, doing and feeling). It is a holistic approach to education that requires patience, commitment and enthusiasm. Learners who participate in this process will have a greater realisation of their potential and commitment to their families, their communities and to improving the quality of their lives.”

— AONTAS CEN Members Access 2000, Wexford share their challenges and successes, AONTAS blog July 2018

European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL)

“The most important thing regarding Self Care for Educators is to remember we cannot pour from an empty cup.”

— Dr Eddie Murphy addresses the Self Care for Educators joint event with EPALE, November 2018

Erasmus+

“It’s been fantastic, I could have been walking into any shed in Ireland. The atmosphere, the energy and the spirit of sharing and learning are exactly the same. There’s been a huge reaction here in Iceland, and the Icelandic Red Cross are hoping this is the first of many sheds. Our presence here today also underscores the potential for the IMSA to play a leading role in the development of men’s sheds in Europe.”

— Barry Sheridan from The Irish Men’s Sheds Association discusses the impact of his Erasmus+ mobility, May 2018

“The best thing about this conference was whilst I was among academics much more qualified than myself in terms of research and analysis, I really fitted into the group and I was able to give my own experience and receive very valuable feedback from others during the discussion sessions.”

— Jacqueline Sheehy from The Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme (CASP), discusses the impact of her Erasmus+ mobility, May 2018

“In Ireland, as in most European countries, we have a tendency to focus on the things that we are not getting right or the areas that we are not doing so well in and in the process lose sight of what we are doing well. This trip provided a timely opportunity to be reminded of that and to discuss our successes, our achievements and our advancements.”

— Lindsey Liston, from the Family Resource Centre Southill Limerick discusses the impact of her Erasmus+ mobility, Feb 2018

Learner Voice

“Education helped me with my self-worth and that has a positive impact on every aspect of my life.”

— AONTAS shared Thomas’s inspiring learner story as part of our #ChooseYourPath campaign, August 2018

“I’m really excited about this opportunity to advocate and be a voice for adults returning to education. I have the chance to change things like policy through sharing people’s stories. I think for non-nationals education is one of the best ways to integrate into a country. Education has given me the chance to learn important insights about life in Ireland.”

— Joy-Tendai Kangere on her nomination to the AONTAS Board, December 2018

STAR Awards 2018

“Our learners really got behind the STAR Awards and took ownership – being allowed to tell their stories to the judges and see how far they had already come was an amazing experience”

— STAR Award Winner 2018

Summer School

“AONTAS’ Summer School is an exciting opportunity to learn best practice skills in advocating for adult education and lifelong learning. Coming from Turkey, and having spent many years working in various education roles, I have encountered many challenges in putting adult education on the agenda. With the current uncertain European climate and in particular the Syrian refugee crisis, the value of adult education and lifelong learning cannot be underestimated.”

— Summer School participant Esra Yalcin, European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) in Turkey

“Every student benefits when there is a diverse student body”

– Dr Aideen Quilty of UCD discussing the need to widen participation in Higher Education, ALF Policy Event, March 2018

About AONTAS

AONTAS is the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation. As an umbrella body committed to advocating and lobbying for the development of a quality service for adult learners and promoting the value and benefits of lifelong learning, AONTAS works on behalf of its almost 400 strong membership, regarding the membership as a key resource which provides the organisation with a grassroots, authentic understanding of adult and community education practice and learner perspective. The membership profile comprises a rich mix of statutory, voluntary and community organisations involved in the provision of further education and training, as well as individuals who are deeply involved in and committed to the concept and practice of lifelong learning.

Since its foundation in 1969 AONTAS has a long track record of support for adult learners, practitioners and providers. It has played a pivotal role in advocating for the recognition of adult learning as a key pillar of the education service and lifelong learning as a whole, contributing to policy development and making a case for sustainable funding. Since the establishment of SOLAS, AONTAS has actively contributed to the development and implementation of the Further Education and Training Strategy (2014—2019), not only taking a lead role in the establishment of the National FET Learner Forum (NFLF) but also as a supportive, critical ally, continually advocating to keep community education, the broader purpose of learning and the learner voice on the policy agenda.

AONTAS is active at European level, has a wide network with other European NGOs through long-term board representation on the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), hosts numerous study visits and is designated National Co-ordinator of EAAL (European Agenda for Adult Learning). This ERASMUS+ KA3 is a significant project delivering a programme in partnership with other key stakeholders in the sector aimed at promoting the benefits of adult learning with a particular focus on people with low levels of education and qualifications. The programme is co-financed by SOLAS. AONTAS has also received approval from the Department of Education and Skills to continue as designated National Coordinator for 2020—2021, which will engage with learners, policy makers, employers and communities. Additionally, AONTAS is a partner in two ERASMUS+ KA2 projects, REVEAL and FutureLabs, is partner in an EaSI EU funded project, and extends opportunities to members through 1 KA1 project. AONTAS is also involved in a range of cross-border activities with the Learning and Work Institute (UK), which allows us to support and also learn from the development of adult learning policy in Northern Ireland and the UK more broadly.

Our work centres our vision of lifelong learning as being truly life long and takes account of the myriad benefits of learning to health, personal development, social engagement and community development. These outcomes are of equal importance to skills development, and providing evidence for and promoting their value is a key goal of AONTAS's work. AONTAS advocates for an inclusive, learner-centred lifelong learning system that offers supports which enable adults to have a meaningful learning experience.

Our Purpose

The current AONTAS Strategic Plan centres on: Advocating and lobbying for the development of a quality service for adult learners; promoting the value and benefits of adult learning and building organisational capacity. With particular emphasis on those who did not benefit from education initially or who are under-represented in learning, AONTAS' work is aimed at:

Widening participation in lifelong learning;
Ensuring community education is supported to offer quality learning opportunities to the most educationally disadvantaged; Ensuring adult learners are central to local, regional, national, European and International adult learning policy; promoting quality adult learning.

As Ireland's national adult learning organisation, AONTAS draws on the strength and knowledge of our vibrant membership base. This puts us in a unique position to meaningfully advocate for the right of all adults in Ireland to quality learning throughout their lives, based on a grassroots, authentic understanding of lifelong learning that benefits the social, personal and skills development of adults, their families and communities.



AONTAS Services

1. Policy, Research and Representation

AONTAS responds to member issues, makes policy submissions, publishes evidence-based policy papers and hosts policy events with stakeholders, policy makers and politicians. AONTAS represents member issues on national steering groups and committees (FET Strategy Strategic Implementation Advisory Committee (SIAC), Programme and Learner Support Systems Steering Group (PLSS), National Plan for Equity of Access Steering Group, RPL Practitioner Network, QQI Consultative Forum) and at European level through European Commission EAAL national coordinator meetings and peer learning groups, EAEA as board member and internationally through the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).

2. Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal

AONTAS provides a secretariat, chairs the editorial board, and publishes *The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: The Adult Learner*.

3. Community Education Support, Advocacy and Continuous Professional Development

Supports community education for more than 10 years through the 100+ member strong, nationally recognised structure – the AONTAS Community Education Network.

4. Promotion and Recognition

Organises the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival: promotes lifelong learning nationally, supports member events, recognises excellence in adult learning provision through the STAR awards and hosting of an annual policy event that focuses on a specific policy issue facing adult and community education policy development or implementation.

5. Builds a National Lifelong Learning Network

AONTAS hosts membership meetings, informs members through social media, member letters, and the bi-weekly e-bulletin.

6. European Activities

AONTAS leads and participates in strategically significant ERASMUS+ programmes and extends opportunities to members. AONTAS participates in all three types of ERASMUS+ Key Action (KA) projects (KA1, K2, and K3). In all cases AONTAS includes members and key stakeholders in our work to make sure that Ireland is represented in discussions regarding adult education in Europe.

7. Learner Voice

AONTAS supports learners to engage in self-directed-advocacy. This is done by sharing issues through AONTAS events or through the National FET Learner Forum held as part of the FET Strategy. This is also done by giving a space for learners to publish stories, participate in or speak at events, and advocate to policy makers and politicians at national and EU level.

8. Information for Prospective Learners

AONTAS offers a One Step Up Information Referral Service: freephone, website and through publication of One Step Up Booklet, open day campaigns and through participation at regional fairs.



AONTAS Strategic Plan Goal 1

Advocating
and Lobbying
for the Development
of a Quality Service
for Adult Learners



Objective 1:

Support adult learners to effectively contribute to the development and improvement of adult learning provision through meaningful local and national representation.

Objective 2:

Critique the quality and delivery of services to adult learners in the current changing context with a view to influencing and improving both policy and practice.

Objective 3:

Ensure that the role and value of Community Education is recognised and that it is resourced to serve the needs of its learners as a key provider within both the FET strategy and the overall lifelong learning agenda.

At AONTAS, our purpose is to highlight the voice of adult learners, and their institutional and societal stakeholder allies during the development of national and European lifelong learning and adult education policy. AONTAS perform this role by working to highlight policy and practice within adult and community education that creates barriers to participation, or which makes it difficult for learners to effectively engage with learning once they have already begun to participate. While a primary focus of our work is on supporting the community education sector, as it is requires the greatest amplification of voice within the policy conversations across Ireland considering the size and political influence of individual organisations, we also ensure that adult providers and learners at all levels and regardless of institutions have the chance to have their voices heard. By engaging with community providers, all 16 Education and Training Boards, Education and Training Boards Ireland, and institutions of higher education to name a few, we are advocating nationwide for the creation of a quality education service that is accessible by everyone.

AONTAS spends significant time and energy advocating for a quality adult and community education service within our policy and advocacy work. We respond to policy developments, proposals, and requests for consultation, while also bringing new ideas and points of view to the policy conversation. Our work is founded on the ideas of creating an adult and lifelong learning service that accounts for the wider-benefits of learning beyond the benefits to employment (including but not limited to health benefits, social inclusion, and democratic participation). In order to be successful at this work we work to create relationships with stakeholders internal and external to government who have influence to shape policy now and in the future., while also developing materials that summarises the policy research and best-practices available from around the world. In this vein AONTAS published 6 one-page information paper in 2018 that focused on highlighting the wider benefits of lifelong learning.

Objective 1: Support adult learners to effectively contribute to the development and improvement of adult learning provision through meaningful local and national representation.

In 2018 AONTAS continued and expanded our work as the lead organisation for the implementation of the National Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Forum. The National FET Learner Forum was created in 2016 as part of the implementation of the national FET Strategy. 2018 saw the expansion of the forum, significantly increasing engagement from learners and ETBs: **AONTAS increased the number of regional meetings to nine over the course of the year, three times the 2017 number and comprising over half of the total ETBs in Ireland. 595 Learners participated in these regional events compared to 254 in 2017.** The work of the National FET Forum will expand even further in 2019, aiming to hold regional meetings with all 16 ETBs as well as the national event, engaging 1,000 FET learners from around Ireland.

"The work of the National FET Learner forum has been important in articulating a learner voice and has been targeting a wider base of FET learners."

— Andrew Brownlee, Executive Director Strategy & Knowledge at SOLAS
comments on the value of the FET Learner Forum, November 2018

National Event

The third National Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Forum event took place at Croke Park on 13th April 2018. 86 learners attended from a range of SOLAS-funded programmes, and all sixteen ETBs were represented at the event. Learners were nominated to attend the National FET Learner Forum by ETBs and community education providers across Ireland with the purpose of speaking about their own experiences in further education and training. The event was also attended by 50 invited guests. Speakers included Minister for Department of Education and Skills Richard Bruton; SOLAS CEO Paul O'Toole FET Learner Imani Tutu; Fiona Maloney of ETBI, Dr Stephen O'Brien of UCC; motivational speaker John Lonergan; and FET Learner Jamie O'Reilly also provided musical entertainment. Two policy discussions took place between academic expert group members (Prof Toni Fazaeli, Prof Koen DePryck, Prof Ted Fleming, Prof Fergal Finnegan, and Professor Stephen O'Brien) and policy makers from SOLAS, DES, QQI, ETBI and HEA.

Regional Meetings

In addition to this national event, nine regional fora were held in partnership with the following ETBs: Carlow and Kilkenny; City of Dublin; Longford and Westmeath; Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim; Dublin and Dun Laoghaire; Donegal; Kerry; Waterford and Wexford; Galway and Roscommon. These events ranged in size from 30 to 85 participating learners. AONTAS would like to all of these ETBs for their support in the organisation of these events.

The events asked learners to speak about their experiences entering further education and training, as well as how their courses are meeting their needs. These conversations highlighted numerous challenges and barriers that learners face when trying to succeed in their courses. The discussions also highlighted

a fact that is well known to AONTAS members: learners seek education for a host of reasons in addition to the national and European economic policy goal of maximising employability. These reasons include but are not limited to being able to help their children with homework, having a reason to engage with their community, learn a new skill they have always wanted to learn, or to use education as a pathway back into participating in their community after years of social exclusion. AONTAS embraces this important opportunity to lead out on this SOLAS-funded work as it provides the chance to highlight learner voice in a forum that is supported by the government. We are always seeking to inform policy makers about the positive and wide-ranging benefits of education and to provide a platform for learners to join the discussion and share their experiences.

Reporting

All feedback gathered from learners at these events was turned into reports that were to be provided to SOLAS and ETBs for the purposes of ensuring FET policy is responding to learner needs. The feedback collected at regional events formed the core basis of the research data for this project. An internal report summarising findings was developed for each of these events that was shared with SOLAS who then share it with the participating ETB. Additionally, two public reports were developed to share findings from 2017. This work is supported by a project advisory group and an academic expert group. A 2017 Learner Report was developed and launched on 13 April 2018 at the national NFLF event held in Croke Park 2018 also included a research tender on the progress of the project to date. 2019 will see a continuation and further increase of this learner engagement work under the FET Strategy and AONTAS will continue advocating that this important work is extended beyond 2019 and the end of this current FET strategy cycle.

Project Advisory Group

The NFLF Advisory Group is comprised of key stakeholders and SOLAS identified partners in the FET Strategy 2014—2019. Its function is to advise AONTAS on the most effective ways to expand NFLF work. In 2018 the group expanded from 8 to 11 members to include an additional learner representative, a representative from QQI, and a FET Director. The group in 2018 comprised of the following members: Una Buckley, Learner; Eileen Condon, FET Director; Liz Farrelly, DEASP; Alan Hand/Rowena Watters, Learner; Niamh Lenehan/Ross Woods, QQI; Fiona Moloney/ Siobhan McEntee, ETBI; Tony Maloney, Learner; Elaine Moore/Jenny O'Connor, Tara O'Brien/Ivica Milicevic, SOLAS; Madge Phelan, DES. Four advisory group meetings were held during the year.

The Academic Expert Group

The Academic Expert Group is a panel of Irish and international academics, with an expertise in learner voice. They serve in an advisory capacity on this project, offering key guidance on NFLF practices and procedures. They ensure the NFLF has a solid intellectual framework and that NFLF is maximising its impact. Prof. Dr. Koen DePryck, Vrije Universiteit Brussel; Dr. Stephen O'Brien, University College Cork; Prof. Ted Fleming, Columbia University; Prof. Peter Lavender, University of Wolverhampton; Prof. John Field, University of Warwick/DCU; Dr. Toni Fazaeli, University of Wolverhampton and the Institute for Learning; Dr Fergal Finnegan Maynooth University (Dec, 18); Dr Paula Flynn, Dublin City University (Dec, 18). There were four meetings of the Academic Expert Group in 2018.

The Research Tender

The research tender was a review of the 2016 and 2017 NFLF events. The purpose of this review was to provide an impartial assessment of the project development and offer key recommendations on how to improve the NFLF moving forward. This research was undertaken by Dr Fergal Finnegan and Dr Jerry O'Neill, both of Maynooth University. Dr Fergal Finnegan and Dr Jerry O'Neill finalised this research in June 2018. Recommendations were reviewed by AONTAS and an action plan developed on how to address these goals moving forward.

FET Forum Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement around the FET Forum took place on a national and international level during the year. The purpose of each activity was to promote the value of the Forum and highlight the methods used to employ this learner voice work. Learners are also key stakeholders in this project. They receive a quarterly newsletter from AONTAS that outlines the progress of the Forum and any relevant updates on information from FET. CEO Niamh O'Reilly and Learner Advocacy Officer Leah Dowdall gave presentations on learner voice and the National FET Learner Forum at four national and one European event. These were: Donegal FET Fair (26 January 2018), TUI Annual Congress (3—5 April 2018), EU Validation Festival (14—15 June 2018), ETBI Annual Conference (26 September 2018), QQI Best Practice in Student-Centred Approaches in Education and Training (20 November 2018).

Objective 2: Critique the quality and delivery of services to adult learners in the current changing context with a view to influencing and improving both policy and practice.

In 2018 AONTAS responded to several public calls for consultation and advocated on behalf of membership. **AONTAS has engaged with Irish government and European partners through consultation responses. AONTAS submitted a total of 19 written/online submissions to:**

- Department of Education and Skills (9)
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) (3)
- Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills (2)
- Department of Finance (2)
- Irish Aid, European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), UNESCO and CEDEFOP (3)

The submissions were made via different forms including letters, online submissions, and formal consultation reports.

Submissions responding to calls for consultation mentioned above, as well as proactive policy engagement, as well were made with regard to the following areas:

- SOLAS FET Strategy Mid-Term Review in February 2018
- National Policy Day held at Buswells hotel during the Adult Learners' Festival week of events in March 2018
- Resource centre on VET policies for labour market integration and social inclusion telephone interview in April 2018

- Youthreach Review following consultation workshop in April 2018
- Europass Consultation online submission in April 2018
- European Association for the Education of Adults County Report 2018 in May 2018
- Independent Review of the National Training Fund submission in May 2018
- AONTAS Submission on the Career Guidance Review in May 2018
- Delivering on the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation through Sustainability of Accredited Community Education Provision in May 2018
- UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report online submission in May 2018
- Upskilling Pathways Recommendation reaching Target Groups through Community Education in June 2018
- Future of vocational education and training in Europe online submission in June 2018
- Position Paper on the impact of Adult Community Education on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Ireland in June 2018
- AONTAS Pre-Budget 2019 Submission in August 2018
- European Association for the Education of Adults 'Learning Today for a Better Tomorrow' Report (2015—2017) in August 2018
- Higher Education Authority Act Review - Response to Consultation in August 2018
- National Access Plan mid-term Review, Online submission in October 2018

- QQI Strategic Planning 2019—2021 Strategy Consultation online submission in August 2018
- Irish Aid White Paper on new International Development policy in August 2018
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance Amendment Bill 2018 in October 2018
- Qualification and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018 in October 2018
- AONTAS Response to Budget 2019 in October 2018
- National Access Plan mid-term Review in October 2018
- AONTAS Response to the Department of Education and Skills Statement of Strategy 2019—2021 in December 2018
- Response to the QQI Green Paper on Assessment in December 2018
- Submission on Apprenticeships/Pre-Apprenticeships, and Community Education in December 2018
- Issues that impact on the potential take-up and participation of apprenticeships and traineeships

All documents can be found at:
www.aontas.com/knowledge/resources/

Representation

AONTAS has a strong track record of cooperatively, effectively and meaningfully engaging in representative work that ensures adult learners, and the adult and community education sector are at the heart of lifelong learning policy development. In 2018 AONTAS represented member issues on national steering groups and committees including:

National

- FET Strategy Strategic Implementation Advisory Committee (SIAC)
- FET Strategy Mid-term Review SIAC Subcommittee
- Programme and Learner Support Systems (PLSS) Steering Group
- National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015—2019 Steering Group
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) RPL Practitioner Network
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Consultative Forum
- Steering Committee for the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy awareness-raising campaign

Cross-Border Development

AONTAS actively continued to build and strengthen connections with our counterparts and practitioners in Northern Ireland, seeking to create a collective all-island voice for adult and community education by our participation in the Northern Ireland Impact Forum. AONTAS recognises the importance of sharing practice on key areas of expertise we have developed with our counterparts in Northern Ireland in order to build resilient communities in uncertain times. This cross-border focus included the *Borders, Boundaries & Bridges: Learning with our Neighbours* Conference held in October 2018 in Belfast, which was co-hosted by AONTAS. The conference was an opportunity for adult and community education leaders from the Five Nations (5Ns) of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to collaborate and exchange ideas and was centred around a shared set of values and beliefs around education

as a form of empowerment and the need to continue to address educational inequalities.

The European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL), which is implemented through ERASMUS+ KA3, has resulted in a wide range of increased cross-border collaboration: participation at mutual project advisory committees; a joint conference on the challenges of diversity with EPALE UK/EAAL in Newry on 27th September; CEOs of the Irish and the UK's National Coordinators organisations are carrying out reciprocal visits.

- We ran the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival in March 2018 in conjunction with the Belfast Festival of Learning for the first time, with reciprocal visits and speeches at award ceremonies
- The new editor (2018) of our peer-reviewed all-island academic journal on adult and community education, *The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: The Adult Learner* is Dr Rosemary Moreland, Faculty Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator and Senior Lecturer in Community Development at Ulster University
- Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCNNI) and the Open University are sponsoring our Adult Learning awards, STAR awards, in 2019. Over the last seven years, 35 initiatives and local groups from Northern Ireland were nominated for the annual STAR Awards. The STAR Awards have resulted in a variety of all-island activities
- AONTAS Members based in Northern Ireland have reached an all-time high with individuals and organisations benefiting from AONTAS membership and contributing to the future of lifelong learning on the entire island

European/International

- European Commission European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) national coordinator meetings and peer learning groups
- European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) as board member (Liz Waters, AONTAS President until November 2018)
- AONTAS is also a member of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)

AONTAS CEO made presentations at the following stakeholder and member events:

- EU Commission EQF- AONTAS CEO film re: adult learners in February 2018
- ETBI – CEO workshop presentation on NFLF at FET conference in March 2018
- Skills for Work/DDLETB - CEO Panel presentation in April 2018
- EU Commission – CEO speaker EU Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth in April 2018
- Presentation at a joint IDEA/AONTAS Joint Conference discussing the Sustainable Development Goals
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions Friday Briefing presentation in June 2018
- EAEA AGM CEO/Advocacy Lead Conference workshops in June 2018
- QQI Best Practice in Student Centred Approaches in Education Workshop in November 2018

AONTAS CEO attended and contributed at the following stakeholder and member events:

- Open University Graduation Ceremony in April 2018
- All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit Event in April 2018
- Participation in the UCD Access Forum in May 2018

Members of AONTAS staff presented at the following stakeholder and member events:

As part of our commitment to support and promote the work of our members, the AONTAS staff team attended almost 80 member events in 2018 across the country and abroad. This included representing the voice and issues of our members at key seminars, consultations and steering groups, as well as delivering information on adult learning options at 10 local events, across 5 counties with an estimated reach of 2,500 people. As part of our extensive work at EU level AONTAS also travelled to Europe to share examples of Irish best practice with our colleagues.

The Adult Learner

The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: The Adult Learner has been published annually by AONTAS since 1985. This Journal aims to serve the needs of the adult education community in Ireland by providing a forum for critical reflection on the practices of teaching and learning. To serve this purpose of providing a forum for critical reflection, the Journal has a long established practice of publishing subject matter that addresses disadvantage, social exclusion, equality, workplace learning and the study of the teacher/learner relationship.

In 2018, Editorial Board of the Journal expanded to include an international expert (David Mallows, University College London) and new members from across the island a range of institutions (University College Dublin), Waterford Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Queens University) – members of the Editorial Board existing before the expansion also represent (Maynooth University, University College Dublin, the Adult Education Officers Association, and Ulster University).

The 2018 edition of the Journal focused on “Taking the Temperature of Adult Education” and featured articles that discussed the changing adult education policy context in Ireland over the past several years. As part of AONTAS’ commitment to increase the profile, value and reach of the Journal AONTAS hosted a launch event on 17th December 2018 at Warrenmount Community Education Centre that was attended by 40 people including participants from the Department of Education and Skills, academia, community education providers, and Education and Training Boards.

Looking forward to the 2019 edition of the Journal, AONTAS have tendered an article for publication that will review the contributions of the previous 35 Journal editions. This article and the 2019 edition of the Journal more broadly will mark a milestone for AONTAS as an organisation celebrating 50 years since our founding in 1969.



Objective 3: Ensure that the role and value of Community Education is recognised and that it is resourced to serve the needs of its learners as a key provider within both the FET strategy and the overall lifelong learning agenda.

The CEN is comprised of a 100+ member strong, nationally recognised structure. Collectively the CEN have provided, and supported membership organisations that provide community based learning opportunities to 1000s of learners across Ireland.

AONTAS is committed to supporting the community education sector through the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) (est. 2007). The AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) comprises 100+ organisations nationwide and is critically necessary as the only national network that is dedicated to community education, supporting Continual Professional Development and sharing best practice in community education.

The AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) was created in 2007 because of a need to highlight and support for the need of community education provision in Ireland. More than a decade later, the network is a unique national platform of community education organisations each committed to creating lasting social change and improving the lives of individuals and their communities.

Through the CEN, members engage in Continuous Professional Development activities, join innovative European education projects, and lobby for increased support for an often under-resourced and under-funded area of the education sector, including through campaigns during local, national and European elections and extensive policy and budget submissions.

The AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) continued to prosper in its eleventh year, its national and regional meetings and engagement with stakeholders supported our Advocacy work concerning QQI Reengagement, learner concerns regarding the PLSS system, the need for sustainable funding and principally how we can develop and support a social action model of community education. In 2018, the CEN also made a commitment to develop a practical resource for community education providers undertaking the QQI Reengagement process.

A number of activities took place in 2018 with the aim of supporting the development of the CEN and its members. AONTAS continued to host CEN steering group meetings. Three National CEN meetings were held in 2018, two in Dublin and one in Limerick, all of which foregrounded discussion about barriers to education, future needs of the community education sector and learners. The meeting in Limerick City allowed for local community education groups to showcase a cross community art project they had developed and carried out, thus promoting the Limerick Community Education Network and providing ideas for other groups across the country.

In addition, AONTAS created a subgroup of the CEN in order to focus on the development of QQI Reengagement support tools, and to organize advocacy concerning the waiving of QQI fees for community education providers seeking to reengage with QQI. The CEN held three CEN subgroup meetings during 2018. The development of a QQI Reengagement resource for community education providers began development in 2018 and was launched at the International Women's Day Policy event in March 2019. This toolkit draws on the experience of a CEN member, Women's Community Projects Mullingar (WCPM) who participated in the QQI reengagement pilot process and was put together with the support of QQI. Along with this work the CEN also created a community of practice working groups, working to support the first group of CEN members who are Reengaging with QQI in 2019.

European Impact

AONTAS is active at European level, has a strong network with NGOs through long-term board representation on the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), hosts numerous study visits and is designated National Co-ordinator of EAAL (European Agenda for Adult Learning). This ERASMUS+ KA3 is a significant project delivering a programme in partnership with other key stakeholders in the sector aimed at promoting the benefits of adult learning with a particular focus on people with low levels of education and skills. The programme is co-financed by SOLAS. AONTAS has also received approval as designated National Coordinator for 2020—2021, and which will engage with learners, policy makers, employers and communities. Additionally, AONTAS is a partner in two ERASMUS+ KA2 projects, REVEAL and FutureLabs, is partner in an EaSI EU funded project, and extends opportunities to members through 1 KA1 projects. AONTAS is also involved in a range of cross-border activities with the Learning and Work Institute (UK).

AONTAS is currently coordinating the Increasing Pathways, Increasing Participation (2017—2019) project in Ireland, in collaboration with key national partners, stakeholders, and learners. Building upon the momentum of preceding EAAL project cycles (2012—2014, 2014—2015 and 2015—2017), the 2017—2019 project cycle is making important progress in building new relationships across the education, and employment sector, strengthening current connections, and identifying new methods for engaging potential adult learners. AONTAS, through its membership capacity as a representative NGO works with a grassroots approach to engaging learners, civil society, the private sector, education professionals, policy makers, and Government bodies.

As an EU Member State, Ireland has access to EU funding programmes like Erasmus+ which support people to acquire new work skills, contributing to active citizenship, and personal development. Such programmes allow AONTAS

to support our members to promote and profile the work of adult learning in Ireland. It also provides our members with an opportunity to learn from our EU neighbours and bring new ideas back to Ireland.

AONTAS utilises our role as National Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) and our work on Erasmus+ projects as a platform and learning space to expand the reach of our members and engage in international best practice. We realise the value of collaborating with partners across Europe in areas such as research, policy, conferences, and study visits in our continued effort of promoting and building the adult learning sector in Ireland.

In 2018 AONTAS engaged in KA1, KA2 and KA3 Erasmus+ programmes. This means as a representative body, AONTAS is engaged in each of the Erasmus+ categories and on the forefront of international education activities in Europe, including working directly with the European Commission.

This includes co-ordinating and sending members on study visits and to conferences. Participating and presenting at National Coordinator Meetings as part of the EAAL with the European Commission in Brussels. Engaging with adult education organisations across Europe with the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and speaking at international conferences.

AONTAS is committed to representing the issues of our members on key fora at National, European and International level including the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), the European Basic Skills Network (EBSN) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).



Erasmus+ KA1

“The learning I gained from the experience will both enhance and inform my current and future work in Southill FRC. It has also opened doors for future cross-country collaboration between our two countries but perhaps the biggest advantage of participating in the ERASMUS + programme was the opportunity to identify and be reminded of what we are excelling at as well as how we can improve here in our own country.”

— Lindsey Liston, from the Family Resource Centre Southill Limerick travelled to Malta to meet key policy-makers involved in devising the free childcare scheme at the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta.

In 2018, AONTAS coordinated two Erasmus+ KA1 projects: ‘Making an Impact at European Level’ (2016—2018) and ‘Adult Education Leaders, Learning in Europe’ (2017—2019). These programmes offer ‘mobility’ opportunities between member States for the purpose of continuous professional development. In addition, they build European Identity and offer participants a shared understanding of our European culture and heritage. Adult educators engaging in KA1 can undertake specific opportunities attending conferences, job shadowing and short courses.

Nine Mobilities took place in 2018 within two overlapping Erasmus+ projects; involving representatives of eight adult and community education organisations traveling to eight European countries for conferences, training courses and job shadowing experiences. Promotion of project reached 472,234 people.

AONTAS offers these opportunities to our members and STAR Award winners by taking on the role of coordination, management, and administration by leading these projects through a consortium approach. This means our members can avail of these opportunities without sending in their own proposals and undertaking associated reporting.

KA1 mobilities are an excellent opportunity to build professional expertise, share Irish best practice, engage in mutual learning and extend the network and reach of the Irish adult learning sector.

In 2018, six AONTAS members and Star Award Winners participated in KA1 mobilities across Europe.

Organisation	Activity	Destination and hosting Institution
Southill Family Resource Centre	Job Shadowing	Malta, Ministry for Education and Employment
Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme	Job Shadowing	United Kingdom, Scottish Recovery Consortium
St. Catherine’s Community Services Centre	Job Shadowing	United Kingdom, the National Learning and Work Institute
Blayney Blades	Course	Netherlands, Euro Football Tours and Tournaments
Business in the Community	Course	Italy, DOREA Educational Institute
Killucan Area Services	Course	Portugal, Eekhout Academy

Erasmus+ KA2

Under this project stream organisations develop and share best practice and collaborate on innovative approaches in the field of adult education, training and youth.

AONTAS, as a project partner, worked on a number of KA2 projects in 2018. FinALE was completed in March 2018, REVEAL is an ongoing project, and FutureLabs was approved in November 2018.

FinALE lead by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) analysed funding streams, funding policies, and mechanisms in the adult learning sector. In 2018 AONTAS along with the consortium of partners from Belgium, Denmark, the UK, Portugal, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, published the ‘Where to Invest’ research report. Academics from Maynooth University carried out this research on behalf of AONTAS, following a successful tender process, engaging with 50 Community Education Network (CEN) members, and non-formal education providers from other European countries.

In addition, an Advocacy Toolkit was also produced under the FinALE project. The toolkit aims to enable adult education practitioners and policy-makers to identify key issues when it comes to the financing of adult education, and to take action to improve the situation. For more information on this project, the ‘Where to Invest’ report, and the Toolkit, check out the project website: <https://eaea.org/project/financing-adult-learning-in-europe-finale/>

REVEAL Reconstructing an Environment for continuing professional development and Validation for Educators in Adult Learning.

This projects seeks to address the gap on identifying the quality of learning opportunities in KA1 programmes across Europe through the recognition and validation of competences developed during these programmes with the specifically designed ‘Level 5 Framework’

In addition, it offers to make KA1 courses more visible and comparable through a shared platform which will offer to publicise and disseminate programmes available for a KA1 mobility.

In May 2018 Bríd Greenan Information Officer, travelled to Palermo, Italy for a project meeting and worked with colleagues on the project platform and the Level 5 Framework.

Dearbháil Lawless EU Projects Officer and Sam O’Brien Olinger Information and Policy Officer completed the REVEAL short-term training

in Bilzen, Belgium working with partners in developing assessment frameworks through Moodle, and they participated in the REVEAL Network Conference. For more information on this project, check out: <https://reveal-eu.org/>

Erasmus+ KA3 Support for Policy Reform

‘Increasing Pathways, Increasing Participation’ 2017–2019 is the current project under the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) in Ireland.

AONTAS is the Irish National Coordinator for the EAAL. This is a position designated by the Department of Education and Skills and co-funded by SOLAS the Further Education Authority. We are one of only three NGO’s with this role across Europe. AONTAS works with the European Commission and a network of Coordinators to promote adult learning across Europe.

The EAAL priorities 2015 – 2020:

- Governance
- Supply and take up
- Flexibility and access
- Quality

The Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways is the key policy within the EAAL, it seeks to provide a ‘skills guarantee’ with opportunities for up to 70 million Europeans through three key steps:

- Step 1 – Skills assessment
- Step 2 – Learning Offer
- Step 3 – Validation and recognition

In 2018, AONTAS celebrated key achievements with the EAAL including:

Expanding the Project Advisory Group

The group has built upon its reputation as a trusted resource on adult learning in Ireland with a network that includes the Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS The Further Education Authority, Quality Qualifications Ireland, representation from several Irish universities, and Education and Training Board Ireland, and NGO representation.

- Three PAG meetings were held in 2018
- Submission from PAG to the Upskilling Pathways Steering Group in 2018
- Guest presentations have been a valuable resource to the knowledge building and sharing within the PAG including the Adult Learner Survey 2017 presented by the Central Statistics Office, and the status of RPL presented by Quality Qualifications Ireland

Promotional Strategy and Communication Campaigns

AONTAS media has achieved extensive media coverage during the EAAL Project. A specific focused campaign on the European Agenda for Adult Learning key messages in August 2018 reached 883,650 – an increase of 71% from a similar project campaign in August 2017, this included 7 national media articles and 2 local media articles highlighting the range of lifelong learning options available for adults.

In 2018 AONTAS attended eight local information events promoting one of the EAAL key activities; the One Step Up Information Referral Service:

- The Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB) Fair, local event, January
- Information session in Nenagh library, local event, Tipperary, March
- DEASP Fair, Dublin, national event, August
- National Ploughing Championships, national event, September
- ETBI Conference, national event, September
- Intreo Career Fair, Loughlinstown Training Centre, local event, September
- YouthFest 2018, Dublin 15, national event, October
- Better Options 2018, Dublin 2, national event, November

Continuous Professional Development Blended Learning Programme with CEN Members

‘Collaborative Training for Community Education’ a 5-week blended learning programme that included both online and face-to-face sessions with learning objectives developed specifically from the needs assessment completed by CEN members.

This was designed for providers planning to reengage with QQI and continue offering accredited courses. This learning was funded through the EAAL Increasing Pathways, Increasing Participation project.

The collaboration between AONTAS and An Cosán Virtual Community College included

two workshops in Dublin, the second of which included training provided by QQI. The online element of the programme allowed CEN members to participate either in a local community hub or from their own home or office.

Partnership Event with EPALE Ireland and EPALE UK

‘Cultural Heritage: The Challenges of Diversity’ was held on September 27th 2018 and brought EPALE Ireland, EPALE UK, and AONTAS as the National Coordinator together for a partnership seminar in Newry, Northern Ireland. This event created a platform for speaking openly on the current political climate and raised awareness for the need to understand and respect diversity between communities and nations. It was held in Newry in order to facilitate attendance from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Our partner EPALE UK was represented from both Northern Ireland and British staff at the event.

A collaborative seminar with EPALE Ireland took place on 25th November and focused on Self Care for Educators. This event received Irish Times coverage.

Learners as Mobilisers Training Phase One

Phase one of the Learners as Mobilisers Training took place on October 9th 2018. Adult learners came together to and undertook training with AlicePR improving their public speaking and communication skills. These participants are leading the way for the adult learning sector by promoting adult education and speaking at events about their education journey.

One of the participants Alan Hand is now a member and learner representative for the Board of AONTAS.

More EU Highlights

- AONTAS CEO, Niamh O’Reilly presented on the work of the EAAL in Ireland, focusing on the Upskilling Pathways, at the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth in Brussels, April 2018
- AONTAS attended the third European Vocational Skills Week in Vienna from the 5th–9th November to represent all adult learners in Ireland. AONTAS CEO Niamh O’Reilly had the amazing opportunity to share five fantastic FET learner stories with the world
- Jacqueline Sheehy from Dublin works in The Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme (CASP), a community service for drug users over 18 years of age and their families. In October 2017, Jacqueline took part in an ERASMUS+ ‘Making an Impact at European Level’ project and visited Tallinn in Estonia where she attended an international conference on active citizenship, democracy and participation, and met with other adult learning professionals from across Europe

"I really fitted into the group and I was able to give my own experience and receive very valuable feedback from others during the sessions and conference."

— Jacqueline Sheehy from the Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme (CASP) on her visit to Tallinn, Estonia for an international conference as part of the ERASMUS+ ‘Making an Impact at European Level’ project

- Education practitioners from NGOs and ministries from as far afield as Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey together with Irish participants descended upon Maynooth to learn new skills and techniques to advocate for adult learning in their respective countries and contexts
- Leah Dowdall and Dearbháil Lawless participated in the European Validation

Festival June 2018. Leah presented results from the National FET Learner Forum on the Recognition of Prior Learning Network from learner's perspectives

- Dearbháil Lawless, EU Projects Officer participated in and presented at the 'Unlocking the Power of 4.7' conference in Brussels. This focused on the Sustainable Development Goal 4.7
- Niamh O'Reilly, AONTAS CEO, Ben Hendriksen, Advocacy Lead and Liz Waters, AONTAS President attended and hosted workshops at the EAEA General Assembly and Annual Conference in 2018 under the theme of partnerships and cooperations in Estonia
- AONTAS hosted 4 study visits in 2018 (Italy, Germany, Norway, Denmark), promoting FET in Ireland to our European colleagues

KA1 AONTAS Lifelong Learning Advocacy Summer School

AONTAS held a highly successful ERASMUS+ KA1 training Programme: 18th–22nd June in partnership with Maynooth University. The Summer School consisted of a 5 day residential programme. Including 12 participants from 5 European countries (Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey). Prominent speakers included Prof Sir Alan Tuckett, Dr Luke Murtagh, Dr Aideen Quilty, Brian Mooney, Berni Brady, Helen Keogh, Dr Brid Connolly. It also involved site visits at Warrenmount Community Education Centre where participants met over 50 learners and engaged with Irish FET providers to promote ERASMUS+ with Leargas. The Summer school received national media coverage when it was featured on front page of The Irish Times (19th June).

The Summer School was held as part of the KA1 *Making an Impact at European Level* (2016–2018) project. Nine Mobilities were completed in 2018 within two overlapping Erasmus+ projects, involving representatives of eight adult and community education organisations traveling to eight European countries for conferences, training courses and job shadowing experiences. Promotion of project reached 472,234 people (media, social media, and events).

"A fantastic opportunity to share best practice around advocacy for lifelong learning."

— AONTAS Summer School participant, June 2018

"From the first morning the sense of inclusion, of being part of something great was palpable."

— AONTAS Summer School attendee, June 2018





AONTAS Strategic Plan Goal 2

Promoting the
value and benefits
of adult learning



Objective 1:

Develop a broad, wide-ranging strategy for promoting the value and benefits of adult learning including both its economic and social outcomes.

Objective 2:

Promote access and participation in adult learning across a range of services, both formal and non-formal, including further education and training.

AONTAS has a unique position as the national voice of adult learning. In 2018 we capitalised on our existing body of knowledge and with our members, and other stakeholders, we promoted a broad understanding of the benefits and value of lifelong learning particularly in the current change context. As an overarching umbrella body we are in a position to explain how the public can avail of learning opportunities in the new restructured system. In our role as promoter AONTAS has identified two key objectives accompanied by key actions.

AONTAS believes that building the profile and status of adult and community education is a priority and has developed a communications strategy to support this work in order to ensure our message is clear and reaches the widest possible audience. Part of this work includes the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival and the Information Referral Service. We have built strong relationships with public representatives, public servants and other key stakeholders with a view to ensuring that they are fully informed about the importance of supporting adult and community education.

In 2018 AONTAS focused our work on: widening the lifelong learning participation rate, the value of community education and the wider benefits of learning to the individual, families and communities.

Objective 1: Develop a broad, wide-ranging strategy for promoting the value and benefits of adult learning including both its economic and social outcomes.

National AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival

The AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival is a nationwide celebration of adult learning coordinated by AONTAS. Over the past twelve years, the Festival has become a firm fixture in the Irish adult learning calendar, showcasing the range of learning opportunities available across the country and encouraging adults to try something new. AONTAS supports and promotes hundreds of free events nationwide during the festival, including information and taster sessions, tours, lectures, walks, demonstrations and workshops, in a variety of locations including libraries, museums, colleges, community centres and workplaces.

AONTAS believes that all adults in Ireland should have equal access to learning opportunities. We believe that adult learning and community education have a hugely important role to play in the economic and social future of Ireland. We know that adult learners and adult learning centres do vital work on a daily basis. Therefore we developed a communication strategy to support this work in order to ensure that its messages and impacts reach the widest possible audience. The Festival is an integral part of this strategy.

The Festival provides a platform for interested parties across Ireland and Europe to come together and discuss policy and practice impacting the adult learning sector.

In 2018 The Festival focused on the theme 'Love Lifelong Learning' and was held in conjunction with Belfast Festival of Learning. It aimed to promote the value of lifelong learning in all its forms for individuals and communities and to encourage Irish adults to explore the local learning options available to them through a week-long programme of events and workshops throughout the country.

Benefits for Event Organisers

- Highlight their organisation's commitment to adult learning
- Highlight the importance of lifelong learning to public representatives
- Promote existing training opportunities in their area, or launch new initiatives
- Signpost adults in the community to further education and training opportunities
- Build new partnerships or strengthen existing ones
- Trail and develop new areas of work
- Attract new learners to their organisation

Support from AONTAS

AONTAS supported groups and organisations to hold events in 2018 through a variety of promotional resources and a nationwide promotional campaign including:

- Produced a communications toolkit which included event ideas
- AONTAS supported members to hold events with a €100 event contribution
- AONTAS issued over 50 local and national press releases

- We ran local and national print advertising campaigns
- Event listings on the Adult Learners' Festival website
- Social Media campaign
- A bi-monthly E-bulletin
- A free promotional 'Event in a Bag' with information booklets, posters, flyers, pens etc

STAR Awards 2018

The STAR Awards (Showcasing Teamwork, Awarding Recognition) are an awards initiative coordinated by AONTAS as part of the annual Adult Learners' Festival to acknowledge the fantastic work undertaken by adult learning initiatives throughout Ireland. The awards celebrate the positive contribution that these initiatives make to individual adult learners, local communities and wider society. Adult and community education is about more than receiving a qualification. From improved confidence to better health, the wider benefits are far-reaching and can have a hugely positive impact on a person's life, family and wider community.

The AONTAS STAR Awards 2018 took place in Number 6 Kildare Street on the 5th March. 125 people in attendance including representatives from DES, SOLAS and ETBI. 24 Groups shortlisted from across the country with 6 groups being awarded on the day. RTÉ Presenter and *Dancing with the Stars* star Marty Morrissey MC'd the event with inputs from Barry Sheridan, CEO of the Irish Men's Sheds and Dolores Atkinson of the Belfast Festival of Learning. Michael Moriarty, General Secretary of ETBI was given a special award for his outstanding contribution to the further education sector. Adult learner Noeleen Watson also shared a brilliant poem that she wrote in celebration of the event.

The awards recognise the use of innovative approaches in adult and community education. For 2018, nominations were invited under four categories – adult learning initiatives that promote wellbeing; social inclusion; digital inclusion and, the learner voice.

The winning initiatives received:

- Recognition: A hand-crafted award that symbolises the high level of recognition for their work
- Developing their practice: An opportunity to participate in continuous professional development in a European country through the ERASMUS+ mobility programme
- Promoting their work: a professional photography session to promote their organisation

Winners

Adult Learning Initiatives that Promote the Learner Voice

- **St Catherine's Community Service Centre, Carlow** were awarded for their '**Making Connections, Learning and Training**' initiative, which provides one-to-one training programmes in employability skills for people recovering from addiction and substance misuse.

Adult Learning Initiatives that Promote Digital Inclusion - Winner

- **An Cosán**, based in Tallaght, Dublin were awarded for their '**Digital Pathways Programme**'. This initiative supported 250 individuals from disadvantaged communities to access I.T. and employability workshops.

Adult Learning Initiatives that Promote Wellbeing, Large Organisation

- **Soilse**, based in Dublin 1 were awarded for their **programme working with those in recovery**. The programme, run by the HSE, provides group and one-to-one work workshops for learners which facilitates a personal learning journey, transforming attitudes, values, skills and purpose.

Adult Learning Initiatives that Promote Wellbeing, Small & Medium Organisation

- Monaghan-based **Blayney Blades** were awarded for their '**Moving On Sport and Recreation Programme**'. The initiative provides training to those with no formal qualifications, in health-related fitness, food and nutrition, work experience, communications, human biology, IT skills, word processing, computer applications and personal effectiveness.

Adult Learning Initiatives that Promote Social Inclusion, Large Organisation

- The National Learning Network's programme **Cara Outreach Support Service**, based in Waterford, won the award for their programme which provides specialised support to individuals with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, offering a highly proactive, structured and holistic service, in addition to ASD specific workshops addressing the unique needs of learners.

Adult Learning Initiatives that Promote Social Inclusion, Small & Medium Organisation

- Dublin 8's **RADE** were awarded for their programme which engages those with addiction issues in arts and therapeutic supports and provides a platform for their artistic expression.

Adult Learners' Festival Policy Event

AONTAS held a 'Lifelong Learning for All' Seminar in Buswells Hotel on the 9th of March as the closing event of the Adult Learners' Festival. The event was an opportunity to discuss and explore the possibilities for a more equitable system of lifelong learning in Ireland and was attended by policy makers, learners, education practitioners and academics. 45 people were in attendance including representatives from IBEC and DES. The event began with discussion from a panel of 3 learners (Lee Carroll, Access 2000 Wexford, Kathleen Dowd, Longford Women's Link, Sharon Conlon, Warrenmount CED and Maynooth University on the topic, *What Supports Greater Participation in Lifelong Learning?* This was followed by presentations from Stephen Evans, CEO of Learning and Work Institute, UK on *Widening Participation in Lifelong Learning for Workers* and Dr Aideen Quilty of UCD on *Higher Education Access and Community Education: Supporting Lifelong Learning*.

Adult Learners' Festival – Key Statistics

A week-long programme of 323 events and workshops took place the week of the festival from an array of organisations including universities, libraries and community groups and FET centres across 20 counties. All events highlighted the value of lifelong learning and showcased the learning opportunities available locally to adults, and AONTAS collaborated with the Belfast Festival of Learning to support an all-island approach. Attendance at Festival events ranged from 15 to 500 people with a conservative estimated reach of 15,000.

AONTAS issued a number of press releases to highlight the range of local activities taking place: 75 separate articles were published, 7 National, 68 local across 17 counties. The total combined reach of these was **1,674,408**.

Promoting the value of adult learning – Learner Voice

Through much of our communications work in 2018 AONTAS continued to highlight the voice of the adult learner. Many communications activities including social media campaigns, AONTAS events and media opportunities used the voice of the adult learner to promote the wider benefits of adult learning.

AONTAS Communications Impact in 2018

6,508,123 people were reached through our extensive communications work in 2018, which includes our online platforms and media coverage. AONTAS has achieved 154 media opportunities (106 print articles, 39 online articles and 9 radio interviews), across 21 counties with a combined reach of 4,112,120 people. This is an increase of 56% from 2017 (2,633,922 people reached).

Media Coverage

- **National Coverage:** Reach of 2.4 million through 21 national media articles in 12 national media outlets
- **Local/Regional Coverage:** Reach of 1.7 million people through 134 articles in 63 local/regional media outlets in 21 counties – specifically promoting 15 ETB areas
- **Coverage for members:** AONTAS highlighted the work of our members in 81% of media coverage (125 articles) with a total reach of **1,975,479**. This included STAR Award winners, learner stories, ETBs taking part in the National FET Learner Forum, and the work of community education groups.
 - 20% of media coverage highlighted community education organisations
 - 53% of media specifically highlighted the work of ETBs

- **Coverage for AONTAS:** 16% of our media coverage (29 articles) specifically highlighted the work of AONTAS with a total reach of **2,154,641**.
- AONTAS specifically promoted 15 ETB areas:
 - **Cavan & Monaghan** ETB region (12 media articles reaching 156,500 people)
 - **Cork** ETB region (9 media articles reaching 69,632 people)
 - **City of Dublin** ETB region (8 media articles reaching 232,000 people)
 - **Donegal** ETB region (10 articles reaching 67,580 people)
 - **Dublin & Dun Laoghaire** ETB region (19 articles reaching 211,300 people)
 - **Galway & Roscommon** ETB region (3 articles reaching 36,956 people)
 - **Kerry** ETB region (7 articles reaching 68,200 people)
 - **Kildare & Wicklow** ETB region (10 articles reaching 100,000 people)
 - **Kilkenny & Carlow** ETB region (2 articles reaching 31,661 people)
 - **Laois & Offaly** ETB region (3 articles reaching 28,000 people)
 - **Limerick & Clare** ETB region (19 articles reaching 294,000 people)
 - **Longford & Westmeath** ETB region (10 articles reaching 81,510 people)
 - **Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim** ETB region (7 articles reaching 155,224 people)
 - **Tipperary** ETB region (10 articles reaching 75,736 people)
 - **Waterford & Wexford** ETB region (6 articles reaching 137,000 people)
- Highlights of media coverage included a front page of the Irish Times highlighting our inaugural Advocacy Summer School (19th June)
- Additional articles in national media highlighting adult learning, Imani Tutu in the News from the 'New to the Parish' Irish Times series promoting FET/Cavan ETB and the Irish Men's Shed's (STAR Award Winners) in The Times UK (Online Edition). Imani's online article has an estimated reach of 3 million viewers: <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/in-ireland-i-was-scared-to-say-hi-to-people-on-the-street-1.3547143>

Online Engagement

- **21** EPALE blogs – AONTAS and members produced highlighting Irish models of best practice in FET along with learner case studies and transnational work
- AONTAS CEO published **6** blogs in 2018 on key policy issues. Blogs included: Borders, Boundaries & Learning with our Neighbours, Adult Learning and Skills: a Key Contribution to the European Pillar of Social Rights, Lifelong Learning & Mobility and SDG 4.7 and community education
- Social media engagement has increased significantly in 2018. Over **2.3 million** people reached through AONTAS Twitter and Facebook platforms.
- We have gained **1,600** new followers on social media in 2018, this is an increase of 55% from 2017
- Facebook – engagement with AONTAS content has increased by 137% in 2018 – over **36,000** people engaged with our content compared to 15,000 in 2017
- We now have a total reach (number of followers) on social media is now over **10,000** people

- Our reach on Twitter has increased by 75%. Total Reach/impressions for 2018 is over 1 million (1,109,300 compared to 663,500 in 2017).
- **Website:** 50,000+ users have accessed the AONTAS website since January 2018
- **E-bulletins:** Members received the revamped fortnightly e-bulletin, and social media updates and adult learning updates (25 editions of AONTAS News to 600 contacts, 20 separate CEN Newsletters to 148 members, 4 learner newsletters 100 and a number of other targeted emails to 1,000 contacts regarding Summer School, One Step Up, the Adult Learners' Festival and GDPR changes. 2 member postal mailouts in 2018
- **Break down of Twitter reach by project 2018**
 - ALF/STAR Awards: 160,000 people reached
 - Learner Voice/NFLF: 90,000 people reached
 - Adult Learner Journal: 70,000 people reached
 - Lifelong Learning: 50,000 people reached
 - One Step Up: 130,000 people reached
 - EU Projects: 70,000 people reached
 - Summer School: 80,000 people reached
 - Community Education: 50,000 people reached

AONTAS and EU Vocational Skills Week

The third European Vocational Skills Week took place in Vienna from the 5th—9th November. As National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL), AONTAS shared five fantastic FET learner stories throughout the week.

These learner stories showcased how FET can support people to discover their talents. From Rodger, who returned to education to gain the qualifications he needed to progress into employment, to Donna who has become a strong advocate in the Travelling community for the value of education, these stories demonstrated how vocational education and training is a path that learners can take pride in, and pursue, in the knowledge that it is beneficial for their future. **Through our campaign we reached 50,000 people throughout the week, across our social media platforms, with over 1,000 people engaging with our content.**

AONTAS CEO Niamh O'Reilly travelled to Vienna to take part in the conference. An overview of her reflections are outlined in her blog available on www.aontas.com. As part of the OECD-EC Forum, Niamh raised points from the floor regarding the importance of community education in addressing educational inequality.



Objective 2: Promote access and participation in adult learning across a range of services both formal and non-formal including further education and training

As part of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL), AONTAS continues to manage the One Step Up website. The initiative which is funded by the Erasmus Plus programme of the European Union and co-financed by SOLAS supports a website www.onestepup.ie, a Freephone Helpline 1800 303 669 and online calendar of events. The overall objective of the project is to increase participation in adult learning, in particular targeting adults with basic skills. The initiative forms part of other activities taking place in Ireland to support the EAAL.

AONTAS promote access and participation in adult learning across a range of services both formal and non-formal including further education and training. AONTAS provide this access via an information referral service to assist potential learners to make appropriate learning choices through the website One Step Up (www.onestepup.ie) and Freephone Helpline. AONTAS also respond to information queries submitted via its online contact forms and social media platforms.

One Step Up has helped thousands of adults access their education and training options and has been described as a 'best practice' initiative at European level. One Step Up has helped thousands of adults access their education and training options and has been described as a 'best practice' initiative at European level. In 2018, approximately 7,300 people used the website and were directly supported, given information and referred to national and local services to support them into lifelong learning, education and training.

Highlights from One Step Up service

- There were **22,000** visits/hits to www.onestepup.ie in 2018
- The most popular feature of the website was the Wizard (approx **10,000** hits) followed by the Calendar (approx **7000** hits)
- The majority of people who visited the website were looking for information about what courses are available, followed by enquiries about general advice on their education and training options, and in third place was questions about financial support to return to education
- **2,000** downloads of the Information Booklet in 2018
- Learner's Stories videos were viewed almost **1,000** times
- Since its launch in 2017 almost **15,000** booklets have been distributed to target stakeholders.
- One Step Up Flier: **700** fliers distributed
- One Step Up Posters: **2,545** posters disseminated
- One Step Up Bookmarks: **3,780** posters disseminated
- Promotional elements included: press release to coincide with the Leaving Certificate, information blog posts, promotion of the One Step Up Information Booklet, sharing of quotes from One Step Up Info Service users, promoting local information events
- The Freephone service received over **200** phone calls during 2018



- Geographical Reach to the website included Dublin, Cork, Limerick Galway, Meath, Kildare Louth, Waterford and Westmeath
- 590 events were promoted on the One Step Up calendar in 2018
- The majority of events were open days and information events
- The data collection for the current project cycle shows that learners engaged with the service have come from every region in Ireland. Diagram shows user access of One Step Up by County for the current reporting period: (Pie Chart Image)

Key Achievements

- (22nd November 2017—22nd November 2018): 8,471 people used the One Step Up website. This is an 8% increase in the service engagement for the same time period in the year previous
- The Information Booklet was sent out to large employers in Ireland in the August 2018 campaign to directly target employers and employees in-line with the education policy context
- The One Step Up Information Referral Service has been disseminated at fairs and exhibitions across Ireland including the National Ploughing Championships that had over 291,500 visitors (see appendix 25)
- AONTAS media has achieved extensive media coverage during the first year of the EAAL Project 'Increasing Pathways, Increasing Participation (November 2017—November 2018). We have reached an estimated 3,876,089 people. This was an increase of 47% from the previous year.
- A campaign focused on the European Agenda for Adult Learning key messages in August 2018 reached 883,650 – an increase of 71% from a similar project campaign in August 2017 – this included 7 national media articles and 2 local media articles highlighting the range of lifelong learning options available for adults.

Information Campaigns – January and August/September 2018

Calendar of Events

AONTAS ran two information campaigns on our social media platforms in 2018 (January and August/September). The aim of both campaigns was to highlight Lifelong Learning opportunities for adults in Ireland by sharing learner stories, information on education and training options, and local information events taking place around the country. Almost 600,000 people reached through our campaigns on social media. We promoted 268 local information events on the One Step Up calendar during the two campaigns with the purpose of engaging learners from across the country. Events included information days and registration and drop in events, all highlighting local education and training options.

- 42% of events were hosted by Education and Training Boards
- 15% of events were hosted by community education groups
- 31% of events were hosted by Higher Education Institutes
- 10% of events were hosted by other organisations
- 2% of events were hosted by libraries

AONTAS attended 10 local information events in 2018 with an estimated reach of 2,500 people:

- The Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB) Fair, January
- Information session in Nenagh library, Tipperary, March
- DEASP Fair in Finglas, Dublin, August
- National Ploughing Championships, September;
- ETBI Conference (Information Stand), September
- Intreo Career Fair, Loughlinstown Training Centre, September
- YouthFest 30 years Celebration
- REVEAL WEEK; AHEAD Better Options 2018
- NCGE National Forum on Guidance 2018

At each event we showcased the range of lifelong learning options through our One Step Up Information Booklet, as well as promoting local service providers. AONTAS continued to work with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the One Step Up Information Booklet accurately reflects the range of lifelong learning options available for learners. Since its launch in August 2017 AONTAS has distributed almost 15,000 booklets to a range of stakeholders including DEASP staff, Adult Guidance services, Education and Training Board staff and learners.





AONTAS Strategic Plan Goal 3

**Building
Organisational
Capacity**

AONTAS Organisational Change Process

Governance

In 2018, AONTAS completed the most extensive governance review of the organisation since its establishment in 1969. The progress of work was reflected in our being shortlisted for a Good Governance Initiative Award in October 2018. As part of the AONTAS 2015—2018 Strategic Plan, Learning a Lifetime's Work, AONTAS was committed under Goal 3 to "Build the capacity of the Executive Committee to provide good governance for the organisation". To achieve this goal AONTAS undertook a governance review with the assistance of Better Boards. The purpose of this review was to place AONTAS in the best possible position to modernise and meet current best practice corporate governance standards. This review of the organisational governance structure followed a similar organisational review that took place in 2016, which resulted in new organisational structures and work processes. The AONTAS Board and management demonstrated commitment to seeing this governance review process to completion via significant time and effort through eight Board and seven Governance Subcommittee meetings over the course of the process.

Review of Key Documents

The review included a review of the following key documents: minutes and information pack for Board members; AONTAS Constitution; Strategic Plan; Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland. The review involved consulting best practice elsewhere as well as one-to-one discussions with Board Officers. The impact of the Board review resulted in a complete redrafting of the AONTAS constitution in line with the Revenue approved, CRA Template / Model Constitution for Company Limited by Guarantee. This root and branch review of governance was also a

collaborative process with AONTAS members, thus ensuring a robust, inclusive and thorough review process. AONTAS members were involved in the Board review and the drafting of the new Constitution via the following processes:

- AONTAS members were fully briefed on the Board review and its implications for the organisation at the Annual General Meeting on 23rd May 2018
- Facilitated discussions of member responses enabled feedback on the Board review and the approval of a new Constitution.
- AONTAS disseminated the draft Constitution for review by members (August 2018), comments were collated and the final Constitution was approved by Revenue and the CRA prior to its adoption at the Extraordinary General Meeting on 28th November 2018.

Board Restructure

As per the AONTAS Constitution, directors are voted onto the Board at the AONTAS AGM, the term for each director is 3 years, to a maximum of 2 terms for directors. Chairpersons can spend no more than a maximum of 9 years for position of Director then Chairperson. AONTAS specifically seeks HR/legal/Finance expertise, experiences of board representation, corporate governance and lifelong learning. AONTAS has a mix of academic, practice and learner perspective from across the field of lifelong learning across the Island of Ireland.

Currently the AONTAS Board comprises Directors from community education organisations, union, universities, Education and training Boards, Learner representatives (5 female, 8 males, across age ranges and across rural/urban/ethnic background). We are striving to create a Board that is reflective of the people we serve whilst having the skills and expertise to deliver our ambitious work plan within the highest of governance structures.

Actions and Outcomes of Board Review 2018

- New AONTAS Board structure was proposed and adopted following Board review recommendations in 2018
- Seven AONTAS Board meetings took place during 2018
- Five Governance subcommittee meetings – develop new Constitution and implement Board review
- Audit & Risk Sub-Committee met six times in 2018
- Proposed changes to AONTAS membership at AGM (May) for membership was discussed and agreed
- New AONTAS Constitution draft during the year and adopted in November 2018 in line with CRA/Charity Regulator/ Revenue recommendations

Compliance

- AONTAS secured expertise' for company secretarial services in 2018 as recommended in the governance review
- CRO return and CRA return submitted on time
- AONTAS continued the process of progressing from Governance Code type B to type C Organisation
- AONTAS completed the audit for 2017 with a newly appointed auditor LHM Casey McGrath, the audit received an unmodified audit opinion
- AONTAS are compliant with GDPR 2018 regulations: Data Protection Officer worked with Sytorus, Data Protection Auditors, who advised on the requirements of the new regulation
- Implemented GDPR audit and recommendations completed in advance of 25th May 2018
- AONTAS implemented Privacy Engine to monitor data protection compliance is ongoing
- Data Protection Officer continues to oversee and advise on data protection issues and staff have completed continuous professional development throughout 2018
- Published high quality AONTAS Annual Report 2017



Finance

Management accounts and supporting commentary were produced monthly during the year and were then presented to the Audit and Risk subcommittee and Board for review

* Indicates new board members elected to AONTAS Board at EGM 28th November 2018

Indicates a board member who resigned or whose term ended in 2018

Records of Attendance at Executive/Board Meetings in 2018

Name	27/01	16/02	24/03	17/05	20/7	16/10	13/12	Total Attendance	
Brian Dooney	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	5/7	83%
Camilla Fitzsimons#	N	N	Y	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1/3	33%
Chris O'Ralaigh	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	3/7	43%
Colm Kilgallon	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6/7	85%
Elizabeth Waters#	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a	6/6	100%
Gabriel Keating	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6/7	85%
James Prior#	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	n/a	4/7	57%
Grace Finlay#	Y	Y	Y	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3/3	100%
Liam Ahearn	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7/7	100%
Liz O'Sullivan	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	4/7	57%
Moira Leydon	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	5/7	85%
Tara Farrell	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7/7	100%
Alan Hand*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Y	1/1	100%
Joy Tendai-Kangere*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Y	1/1	100%
John D'Arcy*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	N	0/1	0%
Alice McDonnell*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Y	1/1	100%
Tom O'Brien*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Y	1/1	100%
Niamh O'Reilly	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7/7	100%

Grace Finlay came to the end of her two-year term on the 24th March 2018.

Camila Fitzsimons stepped down from the Executive in 4th April 2018.

Governance Sub-Committee meeting attendance 2018

Name	06/02	15/02	24/03	19/04	09/07			Total Attendance	
Elizabeth Waters	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			5/5	100%
Moira Leydon	Y	Y	Y	N	Y			4/5	80%
Tara Farrell	N	Y	Y	Y	Y			4/5	80%
Niamh O'Reilly	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			5/5	100%

Audit and Risk Subcommittee meeting attendance 2018

Name	14/02	20/03	24/04	13/07	26/09	13/12		Total Attendance	
Colm Kilgallon	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6/6	100%	
James Prior	Y	N	N	Y	Y	-	4/6	66%	
Liam Ahearn	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	4/6	66%	
Niamh O'Reilly	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	-	5/6	83%	

* John Ryan attended the meeting on the 26th of September 2018 in secretarial capacity.
 - Niamh O'Reilly left the Audit and Risk Subcommittee in December

Continuing to Build Organisational Capacity in 2018

In 2018 AONTAS continued to develop organisational capacity and maximise the efficiency of its staff, following on from the Staff restructure that took place in 2016—2017. 2018 saw the recruitment of several new staff members for existing vacancies as per the new organisational structure and the implementation of a performance management system and CPD for all staff. AONTAS worked to build the capacity of staff team through training and regular progress updates through support and supervision meetings, with the aim of delivering on the actions of the work plan to the highest standards of excellence. The capacity of the leadership team was also developed, with the purpose of maximising capacity of staff and facilitate an agile, responsive organisation.

Through a competitive recruitment process, seven new members of staff joined the AONTAS team in 2018, and a panel of 37 expert facilitators were also recruited during the year for work at NFLF forum events. All applications were reviewed by 2 staff, shortlisted and interviews conducted. A new AONTAS internship programme was successfully introduced with implementation of a new intern policy and agreement. Two interns completed the programme in 2018.

Training & Development

- Continued implementation of a performance management system, interim and final year appraisals for staff
- Continued staff support and supervision meetings during 2018
- AONTAS continue to support staff CPD and training throughout 2018
- Team lead development programme was completed in 2018
- Team building day and staff planning days took place in Q1 and Q4 2018
- Fire Warden Training completed three staff were awarded certification
- The AONTAS Human Resources Handbook was reviewed and updated for all statutory changes required for 2018
- AONTAS completed the office floor plan configuration for new staff and existing staff

AONTAS Members

As Ireland's national adult learning organisation, AONTAS draws on the strength and knowledge of our vibrant membership base. This puts us in a unique position to meaningfully advocate for the rights of all adults in Ireland to quality learning throughout their lives, based on a grassroots, authentic understanding of lifelong learning that benefits the social, personal and skills development of adults, their families and communities

All AONTAS work is ultimately done for the benefit of learners in any and all adult education and to strengthen the membership of AONTAS to deliver effective services especially to the most educationally disadvantaged.

AONTAS embarked on a thorough review of our membership which involved lapsing unpaid members, whilst the process reduced the membership to 381 (185 individuals and 196 organisations).

Membership Meetings

AONTAS hosted two national meetings for our members in 2018; The Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May and the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) in November. We also hosted a number of regional membership meetings in October 2018 focused on the AONTAS Strategic Plan Consultation.

Annual General Meeting

Over 50 AONTAS members came together at our 48th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the Ashling Hotel, Dublin on the 23rd May 2018.

This year's AGM focused on a recent review of AONTAS' governance structures and acted as a starting point for our new strategic plan consultation process.

The event also provided an opportunity for AONTAS to share the highlights of our work with members, and to get valuable feedback from members on a recent review of our governance structures.

Extraordinary General Meeting

AONTAS then held an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on 28th November at the Ashling hotel for the presentation and approval of the new constitution. The constitution was successfully approved by AONTAS membership and was followed by the election of new members to the AONTAS Board of Directors, including election of a new AONTAS Chairperson Tara Farrell, (Deputy CEO of Longford Women's Link).

We were also delighted to welcome Alice McDonnell (Transformative Recovery College), Tom O'Brien (South County Dublin Partnership) on to the Board, alongside Joy-Tendai Kangere and Alan Hand, who are the first Adult Learners Representatives to be elected on to the Board.

Regional Meetings

As part of the AONTAS Strategic Plan Consultation, AONTAS hosted a number of regional membership meetings in October 2018. These events provided a platform for members to come together and give valuable feedback on the development of the organisation's strategic plan over the next four years (2019—2022). Almost 100 members from 54 organisations across 20 counties were represented at AONTAS Regional Meetings in Galway, Dundalk and Cork. The meetings provided a space for rich discussion, an opportunity for us to re-connect with members at a local level, and a chance to focus on specific issues affecting local communities.

Community Education Meetings 2018

The AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) held its first meeting of 2018 in February and held two further meetings throughout the year. This meeting had a strong focus on quality assurance and engagement with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), with a view to developing a resource document to assist CEN Members and other Community Education Providers with the Re-engagement Process.

One of the outcomes of the February meeting was that issues pertaining to QQI reengagement will have a separate space within the CEN, in order to ensure that CEN meetings continue to be of relevance to all members. The day included presentations from:

- Valerie and Maureen of Women's Community Projects, Mullingar shared their experience of participating in the QQI reengagement pilot process
- Walter Balfe of QQI spoke about the learning from the pilot process and the next steps in terms of the 'live' reengagement process
- Marie Gould of ETBI shared information on QA developments in the ETBs
- Camilla Fitzsimons of Maynooth University spoke about the new Turn to Teaching initiative aimed at supporting engagement of students considered disadvantaged in terms of education experience

Two more CEN meetings took place in June and October, respectively, and took a broader focus, raising a range of issues relevant to CEN members and provided a space for exploring community education principles and practices.

In addition, AONTAS created a subgroup of the CEN in order to focus on the development of QQI reengagement process support tools and to organize advocacy concerning the waiving of QQI fees for community education providers seeking to reengage with QQI. The CEN held three CEN subgroup meetings during 2018. Theresa Sweeney, AONTAS Quality Assurance Officer joined the team in October 2018 to provide support and resources to CEN members seeking to reengage with QQI and to develop a comprehensive toolkit to assist members in understanding their obligations and the requirements of the QQI reengagement process. This Resource began development in 2018 and was launched in March 2019.

Communicating with Members

During 2018 AONTAS continued to develop and improve its new website (launched in 2017) kept up the distribution of the fortnightly newsletter with the aim of strengthening membership engagement and ensuring that members are kept informed about the work of AONTAS.

Website

Following on from the launch of the new, re-developed website www.aontas.com in 2017, AONTAS has continued to develop and improve the website throughout 2018 to ensure that members are provided with the most up-to-date relevant information on AONTAS and the adult learning sector. Website development in 2018 focused on the Community Education Network section – ensuring that CEN members were represented. A dedicated section was developed to highlight the Adult Learner Journal and further amendments were made to the EU section of the website.

Newsletter/ Online Communications

Members are at the heart of our work, therefore throughout 2018 we have continued to develop the AONTAS e-bulletin to ensure that members receive the most up to date information about AONTAS work, and about the field of adult learning. The newsletter also provides a space for members and interested stakeholders to share information about their work.

Members received the revamped fortnightly e-bulletin with adult learning updates throughout 2018:

- 25 editions of AONTAS News to 600 contacts
- 20 separate CEN Newsletters to 148 members
- 4 learner newsletters 100 contacts

A number of other targeted emails were sent to 1,000 contacts regarding the AONTAS Summer School, One Step Up, the Adult Learners' Festival and GDPR changes. 2 member postal mailouts took place in 2018.

Acknowledgements

In 2018 AONTAS delivered value for money to our funders and we acknowledge and appreciate the support of the Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS and the European Commission ERASMUS+. AONTAS acknowledges and thanks former Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton TD for generously participating in our National FET Learner Forum in 2018 and welcome the newly appointed Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh TD. AONTAS appreciates the support of stakeholders and colleagues across the lifelong learning field, from policy makers to academic, practitioners and learners. We thank all 2018 members of the AONTAS Board, former President Liz Waters and new Chairperson Tara Farrell for their commitment to good governance and leadership. Finally, we sincerely thank the AONTAS membership and the incredible adult learners for whom we had the privilege to work with, and for, whom we had the privilege to work throughout 2018.





Trustees' Report and Financial Statements

For the year

ended 31st

December 2018

Trustees and Other Information for the year end 31st December 2018

Trustees

- Mr Alan Hand, Director
(Appointed 28 November 2018)
- Ms Alice McDonnell, Director
(Appointed 28 November 2018)
- Mr Brian Dooley, Director
- Ms Camilla Fitzsimons, Director
(Resigned 17 May 2018)
- Mr Chris O’Ralaigh, Director
- Mr Colm Kilgallon, Hon. Treasurer
- Ms Elizabeth Waters, President
- Ms Elizabeth O’Sullivan, Director
- Mr Gabriel Keating, Director
- Ms Grace Finlay, Director
(Resigned 24 March 2018)
- Mr James Prior, Vice-President
(Resigned 22 November 2018)
- Mr John Darcy, Director
(Appointed 28 November 2018)
- Ms Joy-Tendai Kangere, Director
(Appointed 28 November 2018)
- Mr Liam Ahearn, Director
- Ms Moira Leydon, Director
- Ms Tara Farrell, Hon. Secretary
- Mr Tom O’Brien, Director
(Appointed 28 November)

Company registered number
80958

Charity registered number
CHY6719

Registered office
2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street
Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Company secretary
Tara Farrell

Independent auditors
Nexia Smith and Williamson (Ireland)
Limited, Paramount Court, Corrig Road,
Sandyford Business Park, Dublin 18

Bankers
Bank of Ireland, Baggot Street, Dublin 2

Solicitors
PJ Walsh & Company Solicitors, 12
Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2

CRA charity number
20013042

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st December 2018

The trustees present their trustees' report together with the audited financial statements of AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation ('the charity') for the year 1 January 2018 to 31st December 2018. The trustees confirm that the Annual Report and financial statements of the company comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

On the 28 November 2018 the charity availed of the option to dispense with the suffix CLG from the company name, by special resolution.

Objectives and Activities

a. Policies and objectives

The principal activity of the charity is to ensure that every adult in Ireland has access to appropriate and affordable learning opportunities throughout their lives, thus enabling them to contribute to and participate in the economic social and cultural development of Irish Society.

The charity is limited by guarantee not having a share capital.

b. Activities for achieving objectives

Key activities included the promotional work performed which looked at raising the profile and value of adult learning through the Adult Learners' Festival, advocacy work which focused on addressing key issues facing members, delivering the role as the National Coordinator

of the European Agenda for Adult Learning and holding the meeting of the National Adult Learners Forum.

Achievements and Performance

a. Key financial performance indicators

The surplus for the year after providing for depreciation and taxation amounted to €59,508 (2017: €36,080) and this was transferred to reserves at the year end. At the year end the charity has current assets of €564,133 (2017: €582,840) and liabilities of €184,844 (2017: €266,194).

Financial Review

a. Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Accounting Policies.

b. Principal risks and uncertainties

The trustees have assessed the risks and have taken measures to manage these risks in AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation as follows:

Market Risk

In common with many government funded charities, the charity is affected by both the budgetary constraints implemented by the national government and the changing nature of external economic conditions. The trustees are confident that the charity has adequate financial resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

Fraud Risk

This risk is mitigated by maintaining segregation of duties for receipt of funds and the payment of creditors. The trustees have put processes and controls in place to ensure that detailed checking is carried out at all stages to ensure the accuracy and validity of all transactions.

Structure, Governance and Management

a. Constitution

The charity is a Company Limited by Guarantee in Ireland governed by its Constitution. The charity does not have a share capital and consequently the liability of the members is limited, subject to an undertaking by each member to contribute to the net assets of the charity on winding up such amounts as may be required not exceeding €6.35. The AONTAS Board constitutes the Board of Trustees of the company under the terms of Article 28 of the Articles of Association of the charity.

Contained within the AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation constitution is a mechanism whereby representatives from the membership are elected to become a member of the AONTAS Board. In the case of all elected positions not being filled, there is an additional

mechanism whereby the elected Board can co-opt a person to fill the vacancy. Candidates for co-option must be agreed by the Board and will be selected on the basis of relevant skills and expertise required to allow the Board to function at the optimum level of excellence.

b. Future Developments

The trustees are not expecting to make any significant changes in the nature of the business in the near future.

c. Exemptions from disclosure

There are no omissions of the names of any trustees, executive officers or senior staff members for any extenuating personal circumstances.

d. Funds held as Custodian Trustee on behalf of Others

AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation does not act as Custodian Trustee on behalf of others.

Trustees' Responsibilities Statement

The trustees (who are also directors of AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2014 and enable the financial statements to be audited. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditors

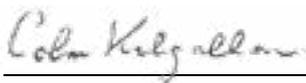
Each of the persons who are trustees at the time when this Trustees' Report is approved has confirmed that:

- so far as that trustees is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditors are unaware, and
- that trustees has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a trustees in order to be aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditors

The auditors, LHM Casey McGrath Limited resigned and Nexia Smith and Williamson (Ireland) Limited were appointed on casual vacancy. They have indicated their willingness to continue in office. The Designated trustees will propose a motion re-appointing the auditors at a meeting of the trustees.

This report was approved by the trustees, on 25th April 2019 and signed on their behalf by:



Mr Colm Kilgallon, Director



Ms Tara Farrell, Director

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation ('the charity') for the year ended 31st December 2018, which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account), Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish law and Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the Republic of Ireland. In applying that framework, the directors have elected to have regard to the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to Charities ("SORP").

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Company's affairs as at 31st December 2018 and of its surplus for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) ("ISAs (Ireland)") and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland including the Ethical Standard issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority ("IAASA"), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which ISAs (Ireland) require us to report to you where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, other than the financial statements and our Auditors' Report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014

Based solely on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that in our opinion:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report is consistent with the financial statements;
- the Trustees' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements;
- we have obtained all the information and explanations which we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit; and

- the accounting records of the charity were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, and the financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report.

The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions required by sections 305 to 312 of the Act are not made. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Respective responsibilities

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Trustees' Responsibilities Statement, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the management either intends to liquidate the company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error,

and to issue an Auditors' Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the IAASA's website at: [https://www.iaasa.ie/Publications/ISA-700-\(Ireland\)](https://www.iaasa.ie/Publications/ISA-700-(Ireland)). This description forms part of our Auditors' Report.

The purpose of the audit report and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Section 391 of the Companies Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditors' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Damien Kealy
Nexia Smith and Williamson (Ireland Limited)
Chartered Accountants Statutory Audit Firm
Paramount Court
Corrig Road
Sandyford Business Park
Dublin 18

Statement of Financial Activities incorporating Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st December 2018

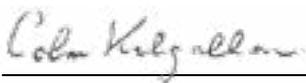
		Unrestricted funds 2018	Restricted funds 2018	Total fund 2018	Total funds 2017
	Note	€	€	€	€
Income from: Charitable Activities for Generating Funds					
Income from Membership Subscriptions		29,033	-	29,033	28,862
Charitable activities:					
Department of Education and Skills - Solas FET Grant		-	960,006	960,006	955,998
Department of Education and Skills - Solas NFLF Grant		-	172,980	172,980	83,294
Erasmus + European Agenda for Adult Learning Grant		-	82,162	82,162	111,419
Erasmus + Making an Impact at European Level		-	13,753	13,753	27,157
Other Income	6	-	3,272	3,272	14,202
Other charitable activities		-	-	-	2,956
Income from Summer School + Future Lab and REVEAL		2,250	16,715	18,965	-
Total income		31,283	1,248,888	1,280,171	1,223,888
Expenditure on Charitable Activities:					
Charitable activities:					
Department of Education and Skills - Solas FET		-	959,233	959,233	940,506
Department of Education and Skills - Solas NFLF		-	172,979	172,979	82,497
Erasmus + European Agenda for Adult Learning Grant		-	50,751	50,751	112,865
Erasmus + Making an Impact at European Level		-	11,039	11,039	13,503
Other Expenditure		-	240	240	17,771
Summer School + Future Lab + REVEAL		-	18,965	18,965	-
Other charitable activities		3,134	4,322	7,456	20,666
Total expenditure	5	3,134	1,217,529	1,220,663	1,187,808
Net income/(expenditure)		28,149	31,359	59,508	36,080
Net movement in funds		28,149	31,359	59,508	36,080
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		262,216	60,591	322,807	286,727
Total funds carried forward		290,365	91,950	382,315	322,807

The notes on pages 75 to 85 form part of these financial statements.

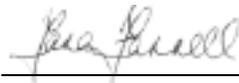
Statement of Financial Position as at 31st December 2018

			2018		2017
	Note	€	€	€	€
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	8		3,026		6,161
Current assets					
Debtors	9	46,053		71,820	
Cash at bank and in hand		512,373		511,020	
		558,426		582,840	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	(179,137)		(266,194)	
Net current assets			379,289		316,646
Net assets			382,315		322,807
Charity Funds					
Restricted funds	11		91,950		60,591
Unrestricted funds	11		290,365		262,216
Total funds			382,315		322,807

This report was approved by the trustees, on 25th April 2019 and signed on their behalf by:



Mr Colm Kilgallon, Director



Ms Tara Farrell, Director

The notes on pages 75 to 85 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31st December 2018

		2018	2017
	Note	€	€
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided by operating activities	15	62,643	39,631
Movement in working capital:			
Movement in debtors		25,767	(35,045)
Movement in creditors		(87,057)	(12,612)
Net cash (used in)/ provided by investing activities		(61,290)	(47,657)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		1,353	(8,026)
Cash and cash equivalents brought forward		511,020	519,046
Cash and cash equivalents carried forward	16	512,373	511,020

The notes on pages 75 to 85 form part of these financial statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018

1. Accounting Policies

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the charity's financial statements.

1.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) Charities SORP (FRS 102), and the Companies Act 2014.

AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy.

1.2 Restricted funds

Restricted funds represent grants, donations and other income which can only be used for particular purposes specified by the donors. Such purposes are within the overall aims of the charity.

1.3 Unrestricted free reserves

Unrestricted funds represent amounts which are expendable at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for the other purposes. It is the policy of Aontas National Adult Learning Organisation to retain sufficient reserves to cover future commitments in relation to its on-going function and mandate. The provisions are intended to finance:

- Working capital requirements
- Potential setbacks in income
- Unexpected/emergency expenditure

1.4 Incoming resources

Voluntary income or capital is included in the Statement of Financial Activity when the charity is legally entitled to it, its financial value can be quantified with reasonable certainty and there is reasonable certainty of its ultimate receipt. Entitlement to legacies is considered established when the charity has been notified of a distribution to be made by the executors. Income received in advance of due performance under a contract is accounted for as deferred income until earned. Grants for activities are recognised as income when the related conditions for legal entitlements have been met. All other income is accounted for on an accruals basis.

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Fixtures and fittings	20% Straight line
Office equipment	20% Straight line
Computer equipment	20% Straight line

Tangible fixed assets are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

1.7 Grant receivable

Grant income receivable from the Department of Education and Skills through SOLAS and grant income receivable from Erasmus is treated as being restricted as the income is applied for particular purposes. All other income receivable is treated as being unrestricted.

Grants are recognised when there is entitlement, certainty of receipt, and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability. Income is deferred when:

- The grant is to cover a period greater than the financial year in which it was received; or
- The donor specifies that the grant must only be used in future accounting periods; or
- The donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

1.8 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1.9 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.10 Liabilities and provisions

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Statement of Financial Position

date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised within interest payable and similar charges.

1.11 Pensions

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charitable company. Annual contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the income and expenditure account in the period to which they relate.

1.12 Resources expended

All resources expended are accounted for on an accrual basis. Charitable activities include costs of services and grants, support costs and depreciation on related assets. Non-staff costs not attributed to one category of activity are allocated or apportioned pro-rata to the staffing of the relevant service. Finance, HR, IT and administrative staff costs are directly attributable to individual activities by objective. Governance costs are those associated with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

2. Employees

The average number of persons employed by the charity during the year was as follows

	2018	2017
	No.	No.
Administration	10	10

The number of employees whose total employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) for the reporting period which fell within the bands below were:

	2018	2017
	No.	No.
In the band €70,001 - €80,000	1	1

Key management personnel's remuneration is set by the board

3. Staff Costs

	2018	2017
	€	€
Wages and Salaries	577,442	492,476
Social Security Costs	56,188	49,613
Pensions Costs	23,367	33,272
	656,997	575,361

4. Net Incoming Resources

Net Incoming Resources are stated after charging/ (crediting):	2018	2017
	€	€
Depreciation of tangible assets	3,135	3,551
Amortisation of grants receivable	-	(4,428)
	3,135	(877)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

5. Analysis of Resources Expended

Description	Department of Education and Skills -SOLAS - FET Grant	Department of Education and Skills - SOLAS NFLF Grant	Erasmus - European Agenda for adult Learning Grant	Erasmus + & Leargas - Adults Education Leaders, Learning in Europe	Other Grants	Total	Total
	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2017
	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
Management expenses	52,103	-	-	-	-	52,103	40,353
Adult Learners' Festival and AONTAS publications	85,957	-	-	-	-	85,957	118,669
Policy and research	15,037	-	-	-	-	15,037	23,717
Information and Resources	33,404	-	-	-	-	33,404	27,148
Office costs	115,978	-	-	-	-	115,978	116,029
Learner Forum Project	-	109,912	-	-	-	109,912	44,088
Use of premises	87,281	-	-	-	-	87,281	93,016
Membership, communications and promotions	29,693	-	-	-	-	29,693	40,509
General expenses	-	-	10,191	14,923	14,942	40,056	84,701
Depreciation on fixtures, fittings and equipment	-	-	-	-	3,135	3,135	3,551
	419,453	109,912	10,191	14,923	18,077	572,557	591,781
Support Costs	539,770	63,067	40,560	-	4,709	648,106	596,027
Totals	959,223	172,979	50,751	14,923	22,786	1,220,663	1,187,808

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

6. Other Grants Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2018	Restricted Funds 2018	Total Funds 2018	Total Funds 2017
	€	€	€	€
Government Capital Grant released		-	-	4,728
Sundry Income	-	-	-	130
Exhibition Income	-	40	40	774
Other funding	-	-	-	343
FINALE Grant	-	3,232	3,232	8,227
Total	-	3,272	3,272	14,202

7. Analysis of Support and Governance Costs

	2018	2017
	€	€
Salaries and related costs	648,106	575,361

Basis of apportionment: Pro Rata

8. Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures and fittings	Office equipment	Computer equipment	Total
	€	€	€	€
Cost				
At 1 January 2018 and 31st December 2018	11,713	50,026	52,405	114,144
Depreciation				
At 1 January 2018	11,713	50,026	46,244	107,983
Charge for the year	-	-	3,135	3,135
At 31st December 2018	11,713	50,026	49,379	111,118
Net book value				
At 31st December 2018	-	-	3,026	3,026
At 31st December 2017	-	-	6,161	6,161

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

9. Debtors

	2018	2017
	€	€
Other debtors	10,725	15,204
Prepayments	28,365	53,164
Accrued Income	6,963	3,452
	46,053	71,820

10. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2018	2017
	€	€
Trade creditors	67,008	127,069
Other creditors	24,059	15,972
Deferred income	60,110	108,733
Accruals	27,960	14,420
	179,137	266,194

Other taxation and social security

	2018	2017
	€	€
PAYE	17,640	12,583

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

11. Statement of funds

Statement of funds – current year

	Balance at 1 January 2018	Income	Expenditure	Balance at 31 December 2018
	€	€	€	€
Unrestricted funds				
General Funds - all funds	238,437	33,720	(9,941)	262,216
Other General funds	23,779	(2,437)	6,807	28,149
	262,216	31,283	(3,134)	290,365
Restricted funds				
Restricted Funds - all funds	48,290	1,190,168	(1,177,867)	60,591
Other Restricted funds	12,301	58,720	(39,662)	31,359
	60,591	1,248,888	(1,217,529)	91,950
Total of funds	322,807	1,280,171	(1,220,663)	382,315

Statement of funds – prior year

	Balance at 1 January 2017	Income	Expenditure	Balance at 31 December 2017
	€	€	€	€
Unrestricted funds				
General Funds - all funds	238,437	33,720	(9,941)	262,216
Restricted funds				
Restricted Funds - all funds	48,290	1,190,168	(1,177,867)	60,591

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

12. Capital Grant

	2018	2017
	€	€
Capital grants received and receivable		
At 1 January	-	19,494
Amortisation		
At 1 January	-	(15,066)
Amortised during the year	-	(4,428)
At 31st December	-	(19,494)
Net book value		
At 31st December	-	-
At 1 January	-	4,428

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

13. Deferred Income

Grantor	Grant Programme	Purpose of Grant	Term	Amount of Grant Awarded 2018	Deferred Income @ 1 January 2018	Accrued 2018	Amount not recoverable	Recognised Income in 2018	Deferred to 2019
				€	€	€	€	€	€
Solas	CORE Grant	Note 1	1 year	975,500	2	-	15,496	960,006	-
Solas	National FET Learner Forum	Note 2	1 year	195,205	-	-	-	172,980	22,225
Erasmus +	Adult Education Leaders, Learning in Europe	Note 2	2 years	-	9,522	3,964	-	13,486	-
Department of Education & Skills	Learning today for a better tomorrow	Note 3	2 years	8,638	139	-	-	8,777	-
Department of Education & Skills	Increasing participation	Note 3	2 years	-	99,070	-	-	73,384	25,686
Erasmus +	Future Lab for Adult Education	Note 4	2.75 years	13,199	-	-	-	1,000	12,199
				1,192,542	108,733	3,964	15,496	1,229,633	60,110

All of the above grants are restricted.

Note 1

- Advocating and Lobbying for the Development of a Quality Service for Adult Learners.
- Promoting the value and benefits of Adult Learning
- Building Organisational Capacity

Note 2

Financing adult learners in Europe and identifying where to invest.
Erasmus + Mobilities for staff and individuals to travel across EU for learning and professional experience.

Note 3

Learning Today for a Better Tomorrow - Representing the voice of Adult Learners in Europe.
EAAL - Increasing participation and increasing pathways in Europe.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

14. Analysis of net assets between funds

Analysis of net assets between funds – current year

	Unrestricted funds 2018	Restricted funds 2018	Total funds 2018
	€	€	€
Tangible fixed assets	-	3,026	3,026
Current assets	291,363	267,063	558,426
Creditors due within one year	(998)	(178,139)	(179,137)
	290,365	91,950	382,315

Analysis of net assets between funds – prior year

	Unrestricted funds 2017	Restricted funds 2017	Total funds 2017
	€	€	€
Tangible fixed assets	-	6,161	6,161
Current assets	262,216	320,624	582,840
Creditors due within one year	-	(266,194)	(266,194)
	262,216	60,591	322,807

15. Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2018	2017
	€	€
Net income for the year (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	59,508	36,080
Adjustment for:		
Depreciation charges	3,135	3,551
Net cash provided by operating activities	62,643	39,631

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2018 (Cont.)

16. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2018	2017
	€	€
Bank	512,222	510,882
Petty cash	151	138
Total	512,373	511,020

17. Company Limited by Guarantee

The charity is limited by guarantee not having a share capital.

The liability of the members is limited.

Every member of the charity undertakes to contribute to the assets of the charity in the event of its being wound up while they are members, or within one year thereafter, for the payments of the debts and liabilities of the charity contracted before they ceased to be members, and the costs, charges and expenses of winding up, and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributors among themselves, such amount as may be required, not exceeding €6.35.

18. Tax Clearance Note

AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation are aware of the requirements in regard to obtaining in date tax clearance certificates for suppliers of goods and services in excess of €10,000. Whilst they are substantially compliant with the requirements they are working towards full compliance by the end of 2019.

19. Post balance sheet events

There have been no significant events affecting the charity since the year-end.

20. Approval of Financial Statements

The board of trustees approved these financial statements for issue on







Contact Us

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