

EUROPEAN AGENDA FOR ADULT LEARNING REPORT

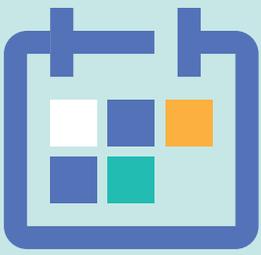
Taking the Next Steps



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

SOLAS

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leánúnaigh agus Scileanna
Further Education and Training Authority



300

education & training events were promoted through the calendar on the website.



OVER 18,000 PEOPLE

accessed information on education and training options through onestepup.ie and the Freephone Helpline.



Social media campaigns reached over **1 MILLION PEOPLE** with over **5,000 people** engaging with the campaign directly.

OUTCOMES

1,312 LEARNERS

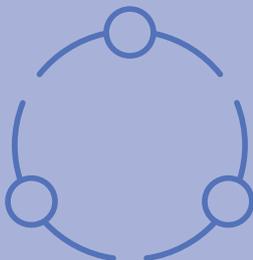
and prospective learners were involved in activities.



57 LEARNER ADVOCATES

spoke at events or told their learner stories on the promotional videos.

ETB PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES



ALL ETBs participated in the project

23 EVENTS
4 VIDEOS
2 PROVIDER LEAFLETS



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SUMMARY

In 2014 AONTAS was nominated by the Department of Education and Skills to become the National Coordinator for the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL). The EAAL highlights the need to raise awareness and increase participation in adult learning. The project is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and co-financed by the Department of Education and Skills through SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority.

Since 2012 AONTAS, along with partners NALA (The National Adult Literacy Agency) and ETBI (Education and Training Boards Ireland) have been involved in carrying out activities under the EAAL; AONTAS managed the One Step Up initiative, NALA were responsible for the training of Learner Ambassadors and ETBI; the promotion of adult learning activities at local level.

During this project (2014–2015) AONTAS, assisted by a Project Advisory Group (Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS, NALA, INOU, AEOA, ETBI, Léargas) had an important role of coordinating three interlinked activities as part of the EAAL.

Again AONTAS managed the One Step Up initiative which provided information to thousands of adult learners through its Freephone Helpline, website referral, and calendar of events. AONTAS also supported ETBs to organise activities locally to promote their service; all ETBs participated in the project. In total 1,312 learners and prospective learners were involved in activities with 57 learners acting as learner advocates promoting the benefits of adult learning.

Finally AONTAS sub contracted the analysis of PIAAC research to NALA, the research shows there is a significant number of adults with low basic skills, with 17.5 per cent of adults at the lowest level in literacy. The in depth research has been useful to understand the needs of learners. A seminar attended by 57 policy makers and practitioners was held in October 2015 to highlight the findings and raise awareness of this research.

In 2015 AONTAS was successful in their application for a further two year project (2015–2017) ‘Learning Today for a Better Tomorrow’ which will continue to build on the work of the project.



INTRODUCTION

The background features a large, light blue triangle on the left side. Overlaid on this and extending towards the right is a complex pattern of various blue brushstrokes, including straight lines, curved strokes, and dots, creating a textured, artistic effect.

CONTEXT

Adult learning is a key part of the lifelong learning spectrum of which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning activities undertaken by adults. The wide benefits of adult learning are well documented and they show positive outcomes for both personal, social and economic wellbeing. The economic crisis highlighted the increasing need for adults to participate in lifelong learning activities: to develop personal competencies or to upskill for employment. It also revealed the importance of adult learning in achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy. The strategy sets out a vision for Europe to become a ‘smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion’.

In 2009, the Council of the European Union, who define the priorities for Europe, established a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training called the ‘Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) which is consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy. It builds on the work of its predecessor, the ‘Education and Training 2010’ (ET 2010) and provides common strategic objectives for Member States which include principles for achieving these objectives, as well as common working methods with priority areas. The four objectives to address challenges in Education and Training by 2020 are:

- 1 Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality.
- 2 Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training.
- 3 Promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship.
- 4 Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

Each EU country is responsible for its own education and training system, with EU policy designed to support national action and help address common challenges. In order to support European policy developments, monitor progress and contribute to the evidence base, a number of European benchmarks were set out in the Education & Training 2020 framework to increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning, particularly the low-skilled. The EU benchmark set for education states that an average of at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning, by 2020 (European Union 2011).

EUROPEAN AGENDA FOR ADULT LEARNING

The European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) is the European Council’s resolution in 2011 for European cooperation in adult learning policies. The EAAL Member States, with the support of the European Commission, were invited to focus on the four objectives outlined in the ET 2020, which are most relevant to their particular needs. The EAAL project came out of a need to have more coherent adult learning policies across Europe. Although many European Member States have lifelong strategies in place, in order to create organised adult learning policies the EAAL aimed to reinforce the ET 2020 priorities in the sector to achieve the longer term vision of equal opportunity and access to high quality learning. The focus was on awareness raising, participation and access for groups that need learning most, including the low-skilled, unemployed, migrants and older people.

The EAAL which is embedded in the ET2020 highlights the need to increase participation in adult learning of all kinds (formal, non-formal and informal learning) to acquire new work skills, for active citizenship, or for personal development. It defines the focus for European cooperation in adult education policies for 2012–2020 and builds on the work of the Commissions Communication on Adult Learning: ‘It’s Never Too Late to Learn’ and the Action Plan on Adult Learning 2008–2010.

The Council resolution asked Member States to designate a National Coordinator in order to facilitate cooperation in implementing the EAAL project. The European Commission coordinates the network of National Coordinators whose role it is to promote adult learning in their countries, provide policy support and gather and disseminate examples of best practice. The European Commission also works with a range of European associations, networks, and labour organisations to promote adult learning. Since 2012 the European Commission has been working with countries to implement the EAAL. To date, the majority of member states, including Ireland have created measures to raise the participation in adult learning by focusing on the individual adult, however further work is needed. Currently the participation of adults in learning varies across Europe, from as low as 1.7% in Bulgaria up to 31.4% in Denmark. In Ireland participation in lifelong learning is 7.3%, which is still below the EU average which stands at 10.7%¹. Rates are especially low for low-skilled and older adults.

PHASE 1, 2012–2014 EUROPEAN AGENDA FOR ADULT LEARNING

The first phase of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) 2012–2014 was coordinated by the Department of Education and Skills in collaboration with key stakeholders; AONTAS, The National Adult Learning Organisation, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Adult Education Officers Association (AEOA) and Léargas. AONTAS know from engaging with learners via the Information Referral Service that one of the key challenges faced by learners is accessing the right information in relation to education and training opportunities. The project aimed to enhance access to a variety of learning opportunities thus contributing to active citizenship and social cohesion through three initiatives coordinated by key stakeholders in the project.

AONTAS managed the ‘One Step Up’ project, which involved developing a website, online calendar and Freephone Helpline which referred almost 7,000 people (both online and over the phone). NALA coordinated the ‘Learner Ambassador Project’ which identified, trained and supported learners to act as advocates; outlining the benefits of learning and encouraging adults to engage in lifelong learning in their local community. Finally the ‘Encourage a Learner Project’ was undertaken by Education

¹ Source Eurostat (EU LFS) online data code September 2014
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Lifelong_learning_statistics

and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). This project involved the dissemination of leaflets highlighting local learning and guidance service contacts with the view to encouraging other learners to engage in adult learning.

With the success of the first phase of the EAAL project, AONTAS were asked to assume the role of National Coordinator, taking over from the Department of Education and Skills in 2014. National Coordinators are required to develop national activities plans, to implement the EAAL at national and regional level co-funded by the European Commission, the Department of Education and Skills through SOLAS. The majority of National Coordinators are in education ministries, for example the Ministry of Education in France, and Denmark, however AONTAS are one of the few Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) fulfilling this important role. While the first phase spanned two years the second phase of the project took place over one year November 2014 – November 2015 and has built on the outcomes of the first project. This report provides an insight into the activities which have taken place in Ireland and have contributed towards the aim of the European Agenda of Adult Learning which is to raise the participation of low skilled adults in adult learning activities.



“I know what it’s like to feel that you’re not good enough for jobs because of education, now I believe in myself, what I have gained is an abundance, confidence wise.”

—
DALC Learner

Cróna Gallagher, Donegal ETB and representative of the AEOA on the Project Advisory Group



OVERARCHING APPROACHES



OBJECTIVES

During the first phase AONTAS developed the website OneStepUp.ie and an online calendar of events to raise awareness about adult learning, to guide people towards their local education and training services and highlight information events that were happening locally. The website is supported by a Freephone Helpline 1800 303 669. Under the same project NALA developed a Learner Ambassadors Project, which trained and supported adult learners to become Learner Ambassadors in their local community. The objectives of this project, which aimed to build on the work of the first phase were:

- 1 To analyse results of the survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) and use the evidence to support service providers to improve the basic skills of the population.
- 2 To bring together stakeholders to exchange information, debate policy issues and support concrete actions within the Further Education and Training (FET) strategy.
- 3 To improve access for adult learners, support improved networking among policy makers and providers, and to create better synergies in provision to ensure a more accessible and coordinated information for adult learners.
- 4 To provide a Freephone Helpline and a web-based referral system for adult learners, to analyse and document the use of this service so we can inform policy makers and assist providers.
- 5 To support local providers (both formal and non-formal) to organise awareness raising events about the importance and availability of adult learning.

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

As part of the EAAL a Project Advisory Group was established. The role of this group was to advise on the development and implementation of the project in line with the approved implementation plan, review the progress, contribute ideas which might enhance the quality of the project and make recommendations where appropriate. The purpose of this group was to act in an advisory capacity to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the EAAL. The Advisory Group was supported in its role by AONTAS who chaired and convened meetings. The group also had a role in the dissemination of information to target groups and constituencies.

The Project Advisory Group comprised seven representatives from key stakeholder organisations in the project; the Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS (the Further Education and Training Authority), ETBI, NALA, INOU (Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed), Adult Education Officers Association (AEOA) and Léargas. The group met four times during the project from November 2014 to October 2015. Progress reports were presented at each meeting and this was to inform stakeholders, especially the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS, of the activities that were taking place under the EAAL. Members of the group provided valuable feedback and analysis on the project while informing their own organisations, colleagues and constituencies of the progress taking place under the EAAL project. In addition to this, the Project Advisory Group also supported Léargas in hosting an EPAL Steering Committee.

ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

‘Adult education is thought to be best promoted if campaign initiatives are developed and implemented through joint stakeholder cooperation networks (European Union, 2012).

AONTAS has a long history of engaging with a variety of stakeholders and collaborated with a wide range of partners in the implementation of the EAAL. AONTAS worked in collaboration with key stakeholders from the planning, implementation, evaluation and the sharing of project activities and outcomes which were crucial to the project being successful. This project has enabled better collaboration and communication between key stakeholders. The following piece looks at the role stakeholders played in the project and is categorised into three groups; Providers, Policy makers and those working at European level.

1 PROVIDERS

The first stakeholder group that we worked with were the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), most of which are members of AONTAS, and they were key to the success of this project. Each ETB was supported by AONTAS to organise a promotional event or produce a promotional tool, for example a video featuring learners, to showcase the range of education opportunities offered within their service. The ETBs were also instrumental in engaging with learners who acted as advocates at promotional events or took part in promotional videos. AONTAS engages regularly with members and has built relationships with each ETB. The building of relationships with stakeholders has been extremely important in contributing to the EAAL project, especially at a time of radical change and transformation in the Irish further education and training sector. The EAAL project allowed ETBs to benefit from the promotional fund available and supported them to carry out promotional activities. AONTAS ran a wide ranging promotional campaign which further highlighted their services. One of the outcomes of the ETB promotional activities showed that over 1,300 learners participated in these events with many of these learners enrolling onto courses as a result of attending events.

2 POLICY MAKERS

The second stakeholder group were policy makers. AONTAS has a strong track record of engaging and collaborating with policy makers, for example those from SOLAS and the Department of Education and Skills. During the EAAL project, policy makers gained important insights into the barriers and challenges faced by adult learners through snapshots of data gathered throughout the One Step Up project, and by attending the PIAAC research seminar which raised the profile and created awareness amongst practitioners and policy makers of the PIAAC research and its implications for policy. Research bulletins were developed by NALA on completion of the PIAAC research and disseminated, at the PIAAC seminar, through the Project Advisory Group, AONTAS network of members and via the AONTAS e-bulletin. The sharing of outcomes as a result of the EAAL work will continue during future AONTAS events.

Ministers Damien English and Jan O’Sullivan contributed to the ETB promotional activities by officially opening the Athboy Alpha adult learning centres in Co. Meath and Kerry ETB Head Office respectively. Kerry ETB includes a walk-in Guidance and Information service. The Ministers were given the opportunity to visit these adult learning centres in the heart of the community, listen to and engage with learners who showcased their work portfolios and the skills they have acquired in a range of subjects such as Cookery, Woodwork, Science and Beauty.

3 THOSE WORKING AT A EUROPEAN LEVEL

The third stakeholder group was the National Coordinators. AONTAS communicated regularly with National Coordinators in other European countries sharing experience and best practice. One of the outcomes of the project was sharing the knowledge gained through the implementation of the EAAL in Ireland at European level with those working in the area of adult learning. Project updates were given on the European Commission online platform (ECAS) as well as through the EPAL website. AONTAS also attended a number of conferences during the year. Events included ‘Realising Impact’, a conference organised by NIACE, London which looked at the impact of adult learning and its measurement. The conference also showed what they have learned from their experience of implementing the EAAL in the UK. Berni Brady, former AONTAS Director, attended the NIACE Impact Seminar Conference in Cardiff, Wales where she presented on the Irish experience of the EAAL project which allowed us to share updates of the EAAL project with colleagues in the UK. AONTAS is an active member of the European Association for



Denise Shannon, Léargas; Berni Brady, AONTAS; Liam Kilbride, Vice President of AONTAS; Gina Eber, EAEA and Emma Grainger, Léargas at the AONTAS AGM 2015

Education of Adults (EAEA) and Niamh O’Reilly, AONTAS CEO, sits on this board. AONTAS has been a partner in a number of European projects, for example the Grundtvig project “Sowing the Learning Seeds” for the exchange of best practice on Adult Learning Festivals. AONTAS has utilised its connection with these networks by sharing what we have learned with our European counterparts.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

A key part of the National Coordinator role is to share and disseminate learning from the project. The work of the project was disseminated through a range of online platforms and by sharing progress through presentations at events. The Project Advisory Group comprised key stakeholders who have a vast knowledge and experience in the field of adult education, but they also have access to a wide range of networks which include learners, providers, practitioners, and policymakers. The Project activities of the EAAL were presented at each meeting and this information was then disseminated by the Project Advisory Group members to their own organisations, colleagues, and networks. Using the Project Advisory Group as a platform enabled us to share examples of best practice and the outcomes of the project to major stakeholders.

AONTAS MEMBERS

AONTAS, as a membership organisation, represents approximately 500 providers of adult and community education, along with tutors, researchers and individual adult learners. Activities were disseminated to our membership network via our AONTAS website www.aontas.com and through updates via the AONTAS weekly e-bulletin.

NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN NETWORKS

The sharing of examples of best practice was incorporated into the work carried out by AONTAS at a national and European level to highlight the major activities that were contributing to the EAAL project. AONTAS shared its learning from the project by sharing information about the project at meetings of the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) and at a European level through the EAEA and INFONET. ‘European Developments and Learning’ was the theme of the AONTAS 45th Annual General Meeting held on the 13th May 2015. This event was attended by fifty-nine practitioners and stakeholders. Gina Eber, General Secretary, EAEA gave an input into the developments on Lifelong learning policies. AONTAS presented on the overall activities of the EAAL project and Léargas provided information on EPALE as a useful resource to assist practitioners in their work.

PRACTITIONERS AND POLICYMAKERS

NALA hosted a seminar to present the findings of the PIAAC data and to create a national space for discussion on the practice and policy implications arising from the research. Policy makers and providers gained useful insights into the seminar and also benefited from the opportunities for exploring future collaboration, partnerships and further research. Fifty-seven practitioners and policy makers attended the PIAAC seminar on findings from the research which will inform their practice and feed into policy developments.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING

As the Irish Coordinator of the EAAL project AONTAS' role involved the Coordination, monitoring and evaluation of project activities. Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and overseeing the developments and progress was important to ensure the successful implementation of the project. A document detailing information on the EAAL was developed for ETBs to explain the aims of project, and how they could avail of funds to support their work. This included guidelines on the type of activities they could organise as part of the project. Clear guidelines for other sub-contracted activities like the research into PIAAC data were also developed to ensure quality in the execution of the project. AONTAS, as the National Coordinator of the project communicated regularly with key stakeholders. The project was also monitored and reviewed at regular meetings to ensure quality and timeframes were adhered to.

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP MEETINGS

1st Meeting: Established the working group, terms of reference and a project implementation plan with clear timeframes. This was presented and agreed at the first meeting.

2nd Meeting: Updates were provided by key stakeholders including AONTAS, NALA, ETBI and Léargas. A promotional strategy for the dissemination of activities was agreed and discussions about the new call for proposals formed part of the meeting.

3rd Meeting: Updates were given by stakeholders on the work of the project and initial results of the PIAAC research. There were discussions about the organisation and hosting of PIAAC seminars.

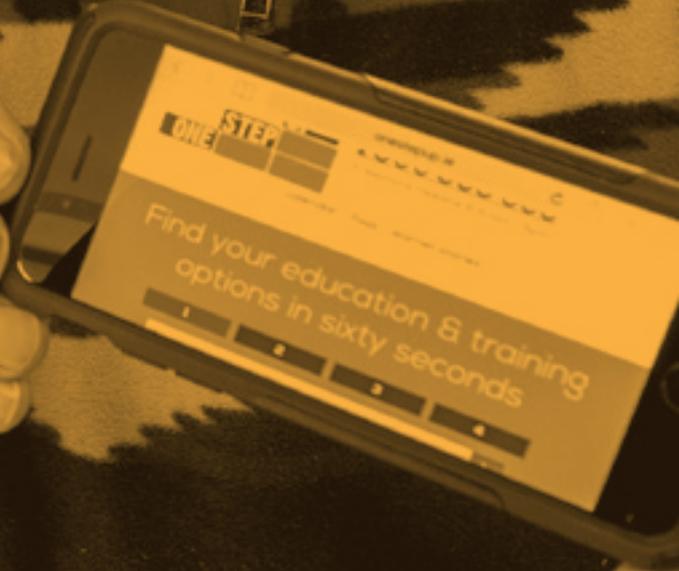
4th Meeting: Final reports were presented by stakeholders on the outcomes and dissemination of the project. Activities of EPAL managed by Léargas formed part of this meeting, which included two further stakeholders to the group. The next steps of the project were discussed; this concluded that AONTAS will continue to manage the European Agenda in Adult Learning activities until 2017.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered during the lifetime of the project. For example, the website was monitored using Google Analytics which allowed us to track the usage of the website by date, time, and location of the user. Data was also gathered using a Client Relationship Management (CRM) system to gather information about those who contacted the AONTAS Freephone Helpline Information Referral Service. Evaluations were carried out to inform project activities, future work and best practice. The following evaluations were undertaken in this project:

- An evaluation of the One Step Up website was carried out by asking learners and providers to complete a survey via Survey Monkey.
- Social media campaigns were evaluated using Google Analytics and Facebook Insights.
- Follow-up calls were carried out with those contacting the Freephone Helpline.
- PIAAC seminar was evaluated using an evaluation feedback form.
- ETB Promotional activities were assessed using an evaluation feedback form.

I felt that the Adult Guidance Service helped boost my self-confidence and also helped me recognise the skills and qualities I had already achieved.

—
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB Learner



INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN ADULT LEARNING



A — ANALYSIS OF PIAAC DATA TO INFORM POLICY AND SEMINAR



Berni Brady; AONTAS, Dr Sarah Gibney; Researcher

One of the key priority areas identified under the EAAL is ‘Improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult learning sector’, using key messages arising from major international surveys and studies such as the Adult Education Survey (AES), the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).

The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies or PIAAC, as it’s widely known is a major international survey carried out by the OECD and supported by the European Commission. The survey provides a review of the skills level of the adult population across all socio-economic groups in different countries and documents the evidence of the wide effects and benefits of developing skills throughout life.

In 2011/ 2012 Ireland participated in the survey which provides valuable insights into how adults use skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT at home, in work and in social situations. This data has shown that individuals who score at lower proficiency levels in these areas tend to be unemployed, in low paid jobs, report poor health and believe that they have little impact on the political process (OECD, 2013). These findings provide rich resources for those involved in the delivery of adult learning to understand and learn about the challenges facing low skilled adults. One of the key activities carried out under the EAAL project in Ireland was to analyse this data and use the information to inform the work of the Further Education and Training (FET) strategy and improve services for those most distanced from education, training and the labour market. AONTAS worked in collaboration with NALA to capitalise on the rich data available and to analyse the data around three key themes: Everyday Skills, Workplace Skills and Social Wellbeing.

On the 7th October 2015, NALA hosted a seminar entitled, ‘What PIAAC tells us about skills use, workplace skills and social participation at Level 2 and below’. The seminar presented information on the PIAAC data, provided inputs from experts related to the key themes arising from the research as well as opportunity for dialogue through workshops.

Fifty-seven people, the majority being further education and training practitioners, as well as policy makers and those in the area of FET policy and research attended the seminar. A third of those who attended were not aware of the PIAAC results before attending the event. Marian Lynch, National Literacy and Community Education Coordinator spoke about skills use in everyday life, Professor Mark Morgan, Trinity College Dublin spoke about skills use, social inclusion and parental education and Keith Pollard, Mandate Trade Union spoke about skills use and low paid workers. The focus of the afternoon was to provide an opportunity to discuss the impact, cause and effects of poor adult literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills and explore possible solutions through a range of workshops.

Policymakers and practitioners attended a workshop on one of three themes; Everyday Skills Use, Workplace Skills Use and Social Wellbeing. The following captures dialogue in each workshop and identifies future actions in order to enhance participation and opportunities for adults.

WORKSHOP 1: SKILLS USE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The aim of the workshop was to discuss the PIAAC findings regarding ‘Everyday skills use amongst adults’, to share best practice examples for increasing participation in adult learning and to explore what policy actions are required for raising awareness of the civic, education and employment outcomes of adult learning.

The topic of ‘themed literacy’ was highlighted as a means of engaging ‘hard to reach’ learners by incorporating literacy into overarching topics or learning activities which are both relevant and enjoyable. Technology was cited as a good hook for engaging people to improve their literacy skills, for example: how to use Skype, Facebook or a digital device. In terms of learner retention and engagement, short courses that are relevant to learners’ interests were identified as having significant value.

Community education and adult literacy programmes were highlighted as an important stepping stone to further education and employment, in addition, family learning and outreach programmes offered meaningful ways to engage communities with low skills proficiency, for example through the Men’s Sheds programme.

At policy level, a number of recommendations were offered by workshop participants. Firstly, the moratorium on staff recruitment and of mandating people receiving social welfare onto courses has impacted negatively on adult learning participation levels. In addressing these issues, a broader, cross departmental approach that incorporates long-term investment with specific resources allocated to the lower skilled is required. Evidence-based policy making and political will are central to supporting activities that raise everyday skills; from continuous professional development for practitioners to a more comprehensive guidance service that underpins the whole sector.

WORKSHOP 2: SKILLS USE IN THE WORKPLACE

The aim of the workshop was to discuss the findings of PIAAC in relation to ‘Workplace skills use among adults’ and identify ways of engaging low skilled and low paid workers in education and training. The workshop also aimed to identify the employer and policy makers’ role in increasing the participation of low skilled adults in education and training.

In the workplace, low skills proficiency impacts on a person’s capacity to work thus highlighting the importance of continuous engagement in education and training. However, needs assessment and the appropriateness of the mode of education delivery impact greatly on accessibility of learning. Furthermore, with the increasing professionalisation of many sectors workers with vast on-the-job experience will now require a qualification to gain or continue to work, for example, in the caring profession.

The wider benefits of workplace learning and its impact on everyday life was noted by workshop participants. For example, a person upskilling in the area of I.T, can also

develop their communication skills in the process, these can be used to keep in touch with family. At all levels, there is a need to raise awareness of the value and benefits of engaging in education and training in the workplace, for example the Skills for Work programme and direct conversations were highlighted as the most useful ways to engage with people in relation to workplace skills.

Employers have a key role in supporting the upskilling of staff in the workplace. As a method for incentivising workbased learning, paid education leave, which is often the norm in other countries, was offered as an example for increasing participation. At policy level, further measures are required for supporting minimum wage workers to upskill and providing continuous professional development should be offered to all workers. Flexible training without assessment and the use of alternative methods for validating competencies, for example Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), should be available to workers, again particularly the low skilled.

WORKSHOP 3: SOCIAL WELLBEING

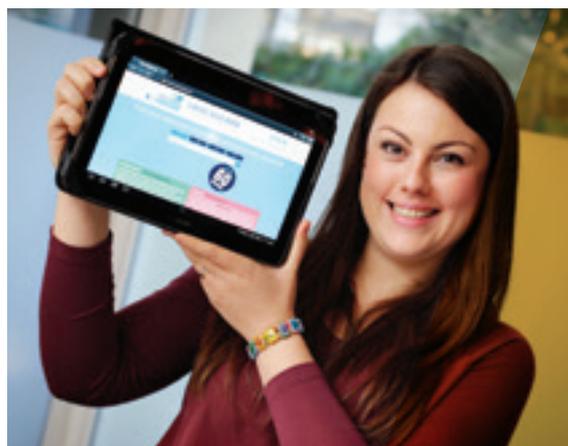
The aim of the workshop was to discuss the findings of PIAAC in relation ‘Social Wellbeing’ and to identify examples of best practice for increasing the participation of adults in civic and political participation.

Literacy is the foundation skill for adults to vote; it was quoted that in Ireland 25% of adults can’t vote because of literacy issues, therefore the implications of low literacy levels as a barrier to participating in political process was emphasised. A number of methods for addressing this issue were: civic, social and political education courses, local networking campaigns, mock elections and student development funds i.e. to cover Dáil visits which support the participation of adults in civic and political activities.

Health literacy is an essential skill to support social wellbeing. Communication methods used by health professionals were highlighted as a potential barrier for individuals with low literacy engaging with services. The use of medical jargon can disempower an individual. However, in order to address health inequalities, Plain English training for professionals should continue and the over emphasis on written material avoided. Increased collaboration and cooperation between adult educators and healthcare professionals could assist this process. Also, the ability to navigate the health system can also be supported through activities such as home school liaison and by DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Coordinators. The latter was cited as a model of good practice and thus their reinstatement was called for.

In summary, the workshops noted that national policy priorities and local practices are diverse, however, an overarching, all-encompassing literacy policy strategy is required in order to address the transversal skill needs of adults that go beyond skills for employment. In addition, adult learners must be central to the development and evaluation of services.

B — PROVISION OF HELPLINE AND ONESTEPUP.IE



The One Step Up project includes a website, www.onestepup.ie, a Freephone Helpline (1800 303 669) and an online calendar of events. In 2015, AONTAS carried out a survey with key stakeholders including learners and providers to get feedback on the usability of the website.

The results of the survey were extremely positive. The majority of people found the learner stories ‘powerful’ or ‘inspirational’ and the contacts for the local Education and Training Boards (ETBs) were the most useful aspect of the website.

The evaluation informed developments to the website which include shorter, concise FAQs, personalising the homepage with inspiring learner videos and adding links to local libraries within the events calendar. Improved functionality has made the website easier to navigate. A new events application has been embedded into the AONTAS Facebook page which means that any event on the One Step Up website is also promoted on Facebook.

There has been a good response to the One Step Up Freephone Helpline which provides an Information Referral Service and directs adults seeking education and training options to the relevant place; between November 2014 and October 2015, there was an increase in calls to the Helpline compared to the previous year. Data gathered from the web based referral service and Freephone call-backs have provided useful data for practitioners in the ETBs as well as policy makers, for example those from the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS who are members of the Project Advisory Group. Data from the project was also fed into policy by Berni Brady, who sits on the Board of SOLAS, which is responsible for developing a world class further education and training system.

The One Step Up website and Freephone Helpline has helped thousands of adults access information on their education and training options. The following is a summary of outcomes from the One Step Up website and Freephone Helpline and what we have learned from adults seeking information.

How we helped adults looking for their education and training options:

- There were 17,513 website users on the One Step Up website and 6,826 completed user profiles captured through the website.
- 540 people contacted the Freephone Helpline between November 2014 – October 2015.

What we learned about the adults seeking information:

- 48% were between 35–65 years and from the Dublin area but user profiles came from all over Ireland.
- 47% of users were looking for courses (this is a 6% increase from 2014).
- 35% described themselves as long-term unemployed, 29% employed and 16% unemployed.
- Of those seeking basic skills, 40% were employed.
- Of those seeking basic skills, the majority were in employment and 64% were 18–25 years.

BARRIERS TO RETURNING TO EDUCATION

In order to ensure that adults contacting the Freephone Helpline service are finding their education and training options AONTAS carries out follow up calls with adults who have contacted the AONTAS Freephone Helpline service. These calls show some positive results with 35% of respondents stating they were in education and training and a further 11% of respondents had signed up to a course. However, there are still barriers for adults in returning to education and the follow up calls highlighted this, 46% of respondents didn't find what they were looking for due to the availability of course offerings or due to funding issues.

“Adult Education inspires you and gives you confidence in yourself.”

—
Longford and Westmeath ETB Learner



HOW WE INFORMED ADULTS ABOUT THE ONE STEP UP/ INFORMATION REFERRAL SERVICE

As National Coordinator AONTAS has a role in promoting all the activities and outcomes that took place between November 2014 and October 2015. The following information demonstrates examples of how AONTAS has promoted the One Step Up website and Freephone Helpline with learners, providers and important stakeholders who work with adults with low basic skills.

- 3,000 copies of an information flyer were disseminated to stakeholders.
- 17,000 promotional bookmarks were disseminated to the public.
- 2,500 posters were disseminated to relevant organisations working with the target group.
- 10,000 AONTAS Information Booklets ‘What Next’ were distributed; including an ad for www.onestepup.ie on the inside cover.
- 300 education and training events were promoted through the calendar on the website.
- 2 social media campaigns carried out reached over 1 million people with over 5,000 people engaging with the campaign directly.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

AONTAS engaged with its members and key stakeholders in the project. AONTAS informed relevant organisations and agencies about One Step Up including the ETBs, Department of Social Protection, Citizens Information centres and Libraries. Promotional material on the One Step Up project was sent to these organisations and agencies in May. The project has assisted in building relationships and reaching those ‘hard to reach groups’ for example the Department of Social Protection has included the www.onestepup.ie in its presentation of information to groups seeking employment or training opportunities, as part of its service to unemployed people. Information was also disseminated via e-bulletin and external websites of the INOU, Age Action and on www.activelink.ie

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations on the role of AONTAS were delivered, and information on One Step Up was disseminated to over 100 frontline staff from the Department of Social Protection and Louth and Meath ETB who engage directly with the target group – those with basic skills.

FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS

The AONTAS information team attend Education and Training Fairs and Exhibitions which showcase the range of opportunities available to people who are considering their options. These events range in size and are organised by local community groups, Local

Area Partnerships, ETBs, libraries and the Department of Social Protection to encourage and provide information to prospective learners. A flyer developed in the first project was updated to reflect the current project and to promote the One Step Up website and Freephone Helpline number. An A3 poster and bookmarks were also developed in order to reach the target group. These materials were disseminated to adults attending the event but also with other providers exhibiting at the event. This was an effective way of reaching the target group.

MEDIA

AONTAS used both traditional and digital media to raise awareness and share the experience and learning gained through the project. The project got national media coverage including features in publications such as the Women's Way Magazine, Sunday Business Post, and the Irish Times Newspaper.

NATIONAL RADIO ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

In 2014 AONTAS found the radio advertising campaign really effective in promoting the One Step Up website and Freephone Helpline. During May 2015, a one week radio advertising campaign was carried out on radio stations nationwide. A 30 second advert promoted the One Step Up website and Freephone Helpline as a useful resource for adults to find their education and training options in sixty seconds. A social media and poster campaign took place during the same week to support this campaign.

ONLINE ADVERTISING

As a charity, AONTAS availed of a Google Grant which helped to promote the One Step Up website and enhance existing resources. Adults searching for information on education and training options are directed to the One Step Up website. This is crucial to the promotion of the website as the majority of callers to the Freephone Helpline stated they heard about us by searching Google/internet.

WEBSITES

AONTAS manage and contribute to a number of websites where information about the One Step Up project was shared regularly on the *www.aontas.com* website. AONTAS also contributed to the ECAS and EPALE website by uploading articles on these websites.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES

AONTAS has a large online community with over 3,700 Twitter and over 2,400 Facebook followers. Two social media campaigns were used to promote the One Step Up website, calendar and stakeholder events. The first campaign took place in May and aimed to increase awareness and visibility of the *www.onestepup.ie* website as well as increasing engagement with the AONTAS Facebook page. The campaign promoted posts and used learner story videos to engage with Facebook users.

The second campaign took place in September and aimed to promote the education and training opportunities available locally, while promoting the calendar on the One

Step Up website, these events were organised by education and training providers, for example local community education groups and ETBs. During the campaign forty local events were promoted on the One Step Up website and advertised on Facebook, targeting Facebook users in the county where events were taking place.

ENGAGEMENT ON FACEBOOK

There was positive engagement with the Facebook campaign. The effectiveness of the campaign was measured by Facebook activity; 159 new likes were registered on the AONTAS Facebook page. There was a reach of 1,109,564 people during the two campaigns with over 5,000 people reacting directly through post likes, comments and shares.

Learner story videos were also useful to engage Facebook users. A video featuring Denise who shares her learner experience and the benefits of participating on the Boxing Clever programme in Ballymun reached 45,824 people and was watched 12,163 times.

ENGAGEMENT ON ONE STEP UP

During the campaign, there was an increase in the number of users to the One Step Up website. In the second campaign, 82% of people were directed from Facebook. There was an increase in users from counties where events were promoted, for example 26% of profiles gathered in one day were from County Kerry.

ENGAGEMENT WITH PROVIDERS

As a result of the campaign there was great engagement with education and training providers. A call for events was issued prior to the campaign and 40 events were submitted for the September campaign. The majority of events promoted were Open Days or Information events which promoted education and training opportunities and aimed to recruit learners for forthcoming courses. Events were promoted across 10 Education and Training Boards, with 61% of events coming from the ETBs. The remainder of events came from other providers (26%), Community Education Network (10%) and Partnerships (3%). AONTAS also engaged with Kerry ETB in relation to the promotion of its video which achieved a reach of 7,116 people and 1,596 video views.



Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in Ireland



etbi

Education and Training
Boards Ireland
*Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Éireann*

C — ETB PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are the main providers of education and training programmes in Ireland. There are 16 ETBs located nationwide who offer a wide range of adult education services including literacy, vocational training and community education. AONTAS engaged and supported all 16 ETBs to organise a promotional event or activity to create greater awareness at local level about the services available and to support learners to act as advocates for adult learning.

The majority of ETBs organised an event, 4 ETBs produced a video and 1 ETB produced a leaflet; all of these activities raised awareness about the education and training opportunities available locally and highlighted the benefits for adult learners. During this project, 23 events were organised, 1 event was attended by over 200 people. While events were targeted at learners they were also attended by providers and key stakeholders including policymakers. These events were an opportunity for policymakers to hear first-hand examples of the 'learner voice' and their contribution shows their commitment and recognition of the value of adult learning.

The ETBs have contributed to the aims of the EAAL by increasing the participation of adults in learning by creating awareness of the options open to prospective learners and to other stakeholders that support adult learners, for example, the Department of Social Protection. Learners who acted as advocates, who spoke at events and took part in promotional videos have reached out to prospective learners to promote the benefits of adult learning. This activity has contributed towards the implementation of the agenda through creating awareness of lifelong learning benefits and reaching out to target groups.

A summary of the overall activities are highlighted below and an overview of the contribution and achievements are outlined under each individual ETB. In 2015, 23 events supported by the EAAL project were organised by ETBs to raise awareness about the education and training opportunities available through their service. These events were attended by a total of 1,312 learners and prospective learners and 57 learner advocates who spoke at events or told their learner story on the promotional videos produced by ETBs and in this way inspired and motivated other learners. 4 ETBs choose to produce a video featuring learners and one ETB produced 2 leaflets to promote their service.

CAVAN AND MONAGHAN ETB



Description of the Activity

The Cavan and Monaghan Adult Guidance Service organised two 'Education 4 Transformation' events on the 25th and 26th of February 2015 which coincided with the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival. The aim of the events was to promote the education and training services available within the Cavan and Monaghan ETB (CMETB). A Careers and Information event was organised

in both Cavan and Monaghan town which highlighted the range of returning to education opportunities available throughout the two counties.

Outcomes of the Activity

Sixty people attended the events, which included guest speakers, past clients of the guidance service as well as three literacy students who shared their own experiences of returning to education. Prospective learners got the opportunity to speak to current students which created great enthusiasm at the event for those enrolling in courses. The impact of the event also meant that a number of people made one to one confidential appointments with Information Officers and Guidance Counsellors in their local area.

CORK ETB



Description of the Activity

The Cork ETB produced a video featuring community education learners. The aim of this video was to capture the benefits of community education and show the wider benefits that are gained by learners who participate in these programmes. Two adult learners acted as

advocates on this video sharing their experience and promoting the opportunities that are available.

Outcomes of the Activity

The video highlights the benefits for potential learners but also creates awareness of community education amongst funders, statutory bodies and community partners. It also hopes to raise the profile of community education within the FET sector. The video achieves the objectives of the project by raising awareness of the opportunities while

providing a useful resource for the Cork ETB to showcase their work. This video will be used on the Cork ETB website and promoted through AONTAS's promotional channels.

DONEGAL ETB



Description of the Activity

Donegal ETB organised a learner event on the 27th February 2015 coinciding with the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival. The aim of the event was for community education learners to share their experiences of community

education. With the help of an external facilitator learners engaged in a round table discussion and shared their views and experiences of participating in Donegal ETB's community education programme, all feedback from the learners was documented and compiled into a report which can inform future programmes.

Outcomes of the Activity

The event was attended by fifty-five learners who came from 15 different community education groups from across the county. Learners got the opportunity to meet other learners from across the county and share their experience and what they have gained from participating in community education. The event also highlighted the value and importance of community education. Learners also got the opportunity to voice their concerns regarding the future funding of community education which has been depleted in recent years.

DUBLIN AND DUN LAOGHAIRE ETB



Description of the Activity

Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB) organised an Open Day and official launch of the Riversdale Adult Education/ Fingal Adult Education centre. The aim of the event was to raise awareness about the education and training opportunities available and benefits for adult learners. The event created awareness at a local level and throughout community

agencies about the services available to adult learners. Potential adult learners had the opportunity to meet tutors in person and discuss their learning options. From meeting with current and past participants they were able to discuss the practicalities of returning to education and the supports available to them.

Outcomes of the Activity

The event achieved its aims by providing an overview of courses on offer while two learners captivated an audience of eighty people by sharing their experience of returning to learning and how they progressed from a QQI level 3 to a full level 5 award in Childcare, they also spoke of their aspirations to go to the local Institute of Technology. The launch event had a positive impact on the service and illustrated the importance of providing a welcoming environment for adults to learn where they are valued.

CITY OF DUBLIN ETB



Description of the Activity

The Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC) are a community based organisation who provide adult basic education and are funded by the CDETb. DALC made a number of videos featuring learners from their programmes which aimed to create awareness about the education and training opportunities available and the benefits for adult learners. The activity involved producing

4 videos which involved students sharing their experience of returning to adult basic education and the impact it has made on their lives.

Outcomes of the Activity

One of the learners spoke about the abundance of confidence and knowledge he has gained as a result of participating in an adult learning course with DALC. Students of DALC were also involved in the production of the videos which enabled them to develop their skills and confidence in digital media while acting as learner advocates. The video has succeeded in improving the DALC's website and making it more accessible to students with literacy difficulties as well as more effective in promoting the services on offer at DALC.

They invested in me and I really appreciate it, they see my worth.

—
Donegal ETB Learner

GALWAY AND ROSCOMMON ETB



Description of the Activity

Galway and Roscommon ETB (GRETB) launched their FET Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2014–2019 on the 4th November 2015 to raise awareness of Literacy and Numeracy provision in GRETB and to present an overview of new strategies planned for the next five years. The event was successful in raising awareness of the services available as well as new approaches and developments in literacy and numeracy. The highlight of the event was a learner who shared her story of why she went back to education, her motivations and the supports she found useful.

Outcomes of the Activity

The event was attended by forty-five learners and provided an opportunity to showcase the range of programmes available. The event had a positive impact on the various stakeholders (Department of Social Protection, prison service, school principals) present and new referrals were received from the Simon Community and the Department of Social Protection. A school also requested that an Adult Literacy Organiser speak to parents of children in a local school as they have identified that many parents have literacy difficulties.

KILDARE AND WICKLOW ETB



Description of the Activity

Three events were organised in the Kildare and Wicklow ETB (KWETB) and aimed to promote the range of opportunities available to learners, recruit students and promote awareness in the wider community. An Open Day was held in the Bray Adult Learning centre; this event provided an opportunity for learners to see the newly refurbished centre, hear from two inspirational learner ambassadors who participated in the Learner Ambassador programme of the first phase of the EAAL project and meet with

ETB staff. Further events also took place in Athy and Kildare town where participants could view an exhibition of work completed by the art and photography students. Learners from both classes gave a short presentation describing their work and learning experience.

Outcomes of the Activity

In total 140 participants attended the three events held by the ETB. The events were successful in promoting programmes services available and engaging with learners. Prospective learners were motivated to join a variety of courses and in Bray forty people attended a follow up session after the Open Day and 65 people (30% which were new learners) registered for a course.

KERRY ETB



Description of the Activity

Kerry ETB organised four events to promote the range of courses, supports and services available. The aim of the events was to create awareness of the opportunities available to potential learners, providers and local employers. North Kerry College held an Open Day in Listowel, a DSP Jobs Fair was held in Listowel and Killarney and an Official Opening of Kerry

ETB's new Head Office took place in Tralee. Learners played a key role in the showcasing of activities of the ETB during the events; refreshments were prepared by cookery students, an art exhibition portrayed the work of community education and BTEI learners and there were performances by music students.

Outcomes of the Activity

The events were beneficial in creating greater awareness of the education, training and supports available within Kerry ETB reaching out to the 230 learners who attended the events. Also the official opening of the new Head Office by Minister Jan O'Sullivan increased the media profile of the centre, leading to a greater awareness of the adult education services available. The impact of the events also lead to an increase in Adult Guidance and Information appointments.

KILKENNY AND CARLOW ETB

Client Testimonials

The Adult Guidance Service was excellent with advice and detailed information. They gave me a clear insight into the educational courses available in Kilkenny and throughout the country.

Very good assistance and support when applying for courses, job application letters, CVs and preparation for interviews.

I felt that the Adult Guidance Service helped boost my self-confidence and also helped me recognise the skills and qualities I had already achieved.

I found the one to one guidance counselling sessions and follow up very important because I was able to go over ideas and this helped me to set goals in a realistic and helpful way.

Contact Us

Bernadette O'Searca Educational Guidance Co-ordinator
Philip Callaghan Educational Guidance Counsellor
Mary Rose Carr Educational Guidance Counsellor
Paula Harte Educational Guidance Counsellor
Aisling Garaghty Information Officer

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W: www.kcetb.ie

COUNTY KILKENNY
ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE SERVICE
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB

What are my options for education?
What career would suit me?

etb

Description of the Activity

Kilkenny and Carlow ETB (KCETB) aimed to promote and enhance the profile of services by updating and printing promotional material for the Kilkenny and Carlow Adult Educational Guidance Service. The leaflets produced provided information regarding the purpose of the Adult Educational Guidance Service and supports offered through the service. Learners were also involved in the publications and their testimonials and experience were printed anonymously on the leaflets.

Outcomes of the Activity

The profile of the Adult Educational Guidance Services in Kilkenny and Carlow was enhanced with over 3,000 leaflets printed and distributed throughout Kilkenny and

Carlow through internal and external agencies in both counties. The materials were disseminated using the internal programmes of the ETB including VTOS, BTEI programme and Adult Literacy as well as through external agencies like INTREO, the HSE, Local Enterprise Offices and organisations working with people with disabilities.

LAOIS AND OFFALY ETB



Description of the Activity

Laois and Offaly ETB (LOETB) organised two Open Days at the Portlaoise Further Education Centre which aimed to highlight the range of courses and services available within the centre which incorporates the Adult Literacy Service, Community Education, Adult Guidance, Skills for Work and Contracted

Training services. Learners brought along prospective learners to visit the centre to enquire about courses and was beneficial to reaching out to low skilled adults and those requiring ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes.

Outcomes of the Activity

The event created an opportunity for 120 prospective learners to visit the centre, meet tutors and register for a course. The event was successful in that it received numerous enrolments for part-time courses, created awareness of ETB activities with local services including agencies like DSP, Local Partnership and the HSE. It also created an opportunity for ETB programmes Community Education, Adult Education and Guidance Service and the Back to Education Initiative to work in partnership.

LIMERICK AND CLARE ETB



Description of the Activity

Limerick and Clare ETB (LCETB) organised seven events as part of the EAAL which coincided with their Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival. This involved over 150 events which took place between the 23rd and 29th March 2015, the theme of the Festival was 'Learning for Positive Living' with a focus on adult and community

education. The events included an art classes, an interview workshop, 'Gmail Know How' and 'Buying Online', a photographic exhibition, a digital photography workshop, craft demonstration and the West Limerick Education and Training Showcase.

Outcomes of the Activity

In total 102 learners attended the events. There were great achievements arising from the events; as a result of the initial taster workshop students progressed onto a 4 week craft class. After the photographic exhibition some of the learners continued onto another photography course and eight older women went on to do a beginner's computer course. The West Limerick Education and Training Showcase involved learner advocates and prospective learners found the event informative and there was a 73% increase in the number of people who attended this event compared to last year.

LONGFORD AND WESTMEATH ETB



Description of the Activity

Longford and Westmeath ETB (LWETB) organised an event to launch a book of learners' writing called 'School wasn't as much fun as this' and to celebrate adult learning and acknowledge the achievement of learners within the ETB with a presentation of QQI certificates to learners. This event was held on the 26th February 2015

in Longford and coincided with the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival. A number of LWETB further education staff gave inputs and three adult learners gave motivational and positive speeches regarding returning to and progression to higher education, attainment and employment. They spoke about challenges and supports they received but also the positive outcomes resulting from their participation.

Outcomes of the Activity

There was a presentation of QQI awards which was attended by over 130 learners who received a formal presentation of their certificates. There was a great response to the book that was launched which reflects the positive experiences and outcomes of adult basic education. Learners who contributed to the book were delighted to see their writing valued and acknowledged in a published format. The cover of the book –'Tree of Learning' was designed by art students in the ETB.

LOUTH AND MEATH ETB



Description of the Activity

The Louth and Meath ETB (LMETB) organised an Open Day and Official Launch of the newly refurbished Alpha Learning Centre, Athboy on the 21st September 2015 launched

by Minister Damien English which was attended by over 200 people. The event aimed to promote the activities of the further education services of LMETB and encourage participation in lifelong learning opportunities for both an individual's personal and professional development. A number of 'taster sessions' were held for learners to enable them to sample the courses on offer at the centre. It also gave learners a chance to talk with tutors about the course content and commitments.

Outcomes of the Activity

The outcomes achieved as a result of the event included a greater interest in courses for October, an increase in people contacting the service and follow up drop in service. The first pre course placement session was fully booked out as a result of the event. The event also provided an opportunity for the ETBs to establish links with local community organisations and development groups interested in supporting and promoting adult education.

MAYO, SLIGO AND LEITRIM ETB



Description of the Activity

The Mayo, Sligo Leitrim ETB (MSLETB) organised a Leitrim Learner Conference hosted and organised by the Leitrim Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service. The event aimed to highlight the range of opportunities available and inspire and motivate learners from across the county. Guest speakers at the event included motivational speaker Billy

Dixon and author Christy Kenneally who provided both practical and aspirational speeches on confidence and motivation to learners. Two adult learners from the Leitrim Adult Education Guidance service inspired the learners in attendance by sharing their experience and speaking about the real challenges and advantages of returning to education.

Outcomes of the Activity

There was great attendance at this event, with 180 learners from across Leitrim attending the conference. The speakers created a great buzz and atmosphere at the event which received a lot of positive feedback from learners across the county and tutors in attendance. The event also achieved its aim of promoting the service as there was an increase in numbers contacting the guidance service in the two weeks directly after the event.

TIPPERARY ETB



Description of the Activity

Tipperary ETB engaged with six learners to make a Learner Ambassador video called 'My View to you'. The aim of the video was to highlight the benefits of participating in community education programmes using learners who have been engaged with the programme and who acted as positive role models. It also aims to promote the overall

services provided by the Tipperary Adult and Community Education programme. The video features interviews with 3 community education learners from the North Tipperary Community Education programme on location in the community garden in Nenagh.

Outcomes of the Activity

The three community education learners act as positive learner advocates by sharing their experience of returning to education and benefits they have gained from engaging with the Men's Shed Programme. The videos provide a useful resource and capture the positive outcomes which can be used on the Tipperary ETB website.

WATERFORD AND WEXFORD ETB



Description of the Activity

Waterford and Wexford ETB (WWETB) created a video using learner voiceovers and images and aimed to promote the Adult Literacy service and the benefits of adult learning. The video highlights the range of opportunities and courses available within the ETB and involves twenty-five adult learners sharing the benefits and challenges they faced in

returning to learning. The video shows how participating in adult learning and being part of a group has affected learners' lives and their hopes for future work, as well as providing useful insights into the learner experience.

Outcomes of the Activity

The promotion of these positive narratives and the benefits for adult learners who have taken a step towards a new future will encourage and inspire other learners also seeking to return to education. The production of the video has created a greater understanding of the challenges facing learners and the steps to overcome these challenges. The video showcasing the learners will be used as a useful resource on the Waterford and Wexford ETB website to promote the services of the ETB

I've always wanted to write, but never had the courage to learn, I could barely read, I could barely write and the only way I learned was by going to adult education.

—
Waterford and Wexford ETB Learner



PROJECT REFLECTIONS



A number of key themes regarding the impact and value of the EAAL project emerged: the value of highlighting PIAAC data to a range of stakeholders; the systemic impact of local promotional activities in awareness raising activities; the importance of disseminating relevant adult learning information across the sector and to prospective learners; and the contribution social media makes to reaching new cohorts of the population.

IMPROVING QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY WITHIN THE ADULT LEARNING SECTOR IN IRELAND

An evaluation of attendees at the PIAAC seminar found over a third of people were not aware of the research before the seminar which is an important study into the skills levels of the adult population. The research into the PIAAC data and organisation of a seminar for practitioners and policy makers will benefit adults with low basic skills as a result of the awareness created by the findings and enhanced insights for those involved in developing and delivering services to adult learners. The data shows that 17.5% of adults are at or below Level 1 (i.e. the lowest level) in literacy, with 38 % at Level 2 and low-skilled workers must be prioritised in adult education and training policies to minimise their risk of becoming unemployed in the future. Although it's too early to measure impact, this activity will assist in improving quality and efficiency within the adult learning sector in Ireland.

CREATING AWARENESS OF LIFELONG LEARNING BENEFITS AND REACHING OUT TO TARGET GROUPS

The outcomes of the ETB promotional activities have shown an increase in the participation of adults and Learner Ambassadors in the events organised nationwide. A total of 1,312 adults directly participated and benefited from the ETB activities. Further learners will also benefit through their engagement with the key stakeholders who attended events. Creating awareness amongst key agencies dealing with those hard to reach for example the Department of Social Protection will assist in increasing the participation of adults in learning and ensure adults are directed to the most appropriate programmes. The project has supported further education and training providers to promote their newly merged ETBs, adult education centres and the services that they offer which is vital at a time of change within the FET sector. The videos produced as part of the project have engaged with learners and promoted the wide ranging benefits of adult learning. The One Step Up website, which features learner story videos and provides education and training options to adults was visited by 17,513 people 6,826 who were looking for their ETB local contacts. This activity has contributed towards the implementation of the EAAL through creating awareness of lifelong learning benefits and reaching out to target groups.

IMPROVING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF ADULT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The One Step Up/Information Referral Service has contributed towards the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning by improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult learning sector with the aim of increasing participation of adults in education to 15% by 2020. The website and Freephone Helpline has provided data on the needs and challenges for learners. Throughout the project data has been gathered from those who engaged with the website and those who contacted the Freephone Helpline and this information has informed both the policy and practice arenas: through the Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS and the ETBs. Follow up calls proved a beneficial approach for monitoring the progression of callers into further education and training.

PROMOTING EQUITY, SOCIAL COHESION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP THROUGH ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Social media was used throughout this project to promote the EAAL activities with extensive promotion taking place in May and September 2015. Sixty per cent of the Irish population are Facebook users, thus the new events application has assisted us in reaching people and informing them about education and training opportunity available to them. Social media has become an effective tool for communicating with people, for example over 1 million people were reached through two separate campaigns. The calendar of learning events listed on the One Step Up website has also contributed towards the implementation of the European Agendas of Adult Learning by promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship.

AONTAS has worked with Léargas in relation to EPALE utilising networks to support greater participation in the online platform. This resource for adult education practitioners will inform best practice from within Ireland and across Europe, with the aim of providing a better quality service and meeting the needs of adult learners.

It has helped target low skilled adults in Laois.

—
***Sandra Doyle
Laois and Offaly ETB***



BUILDING ON THE OUTCOMES



AONTAS has a lot of experience of engaging with learners, policy makers and providers. As a result of AONTAS' experience and network of stakeholders, AONTAS were assigned the role of National Coordinator, which is the first time a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) has been responsible for implementing policy at this level in Ireland. The EAAL has allowed AONTAS to develop these relationships which were instrumental to the success of the project and will further strengthen partnerships in the next phase of activities.

AONTAS supported each ETB to organise a promotional activity to promote their services; this financial support provided an incentive for ETBs to participate in the project. Although many ETBs were under staff or time constraints due to new reporting systems, this support proved an effective way to engage each ETB, with all 16 ETBs participating in the project. This work would not have been possible without the support of funding from the EAAL. Further funding, outside of the EAAL, is required to support future activity which enabled the promotion of ETBs activity thus encouraging adults to take up learning opportunities.

The participation of ETBs in the project has led to further engagement and dialogue with AONTAS members many of which organised events for the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival. It has also enabled learners to become advocates and more involved in events like the first National Adult Learner Forum.

PHASE 3, 2015–2017

'LEARNING TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW'

Since the launch of the Further Education and Training Strategy in May 2014 which aims to integrate the further/adult education and training, SOLAS in partnership with its stakeholders has been working on its implementation. SOLAS has put in place strategic priorities for the delivery of the strategy as well as Further Education and Training service plans. With these policies and plans in place nationally the aim of the next phase of the EAAL is to support the work of the strategy by continuing to focus on the needs of the adult learner, in particular those with low basic skills through creating awareness of the importance and benefits of adult learning and encouraging them to re-engage with learning opportunities. The next phase 'Learning Today for a Better Tomorrow' will focus on building on the success of the current project, by focusing on the following activities:

ENGAGING WITH EMPLOYERS TO ENCOURAGE WORKPLACE LEARNING

The Skills for Work Programme is a national programme aimed at providing training opportunities to help employees deal with the basic skills demands of the workplace. The initiative is funded under the Department of Education and Skills and delivered by the ETBs. It is managed nationally by Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB. In the next phase of the project, AONTAS will work in partnership with the National Advisory Group of the Skills for Work Programme to highlight the achievement of the programme and promote it as a model of good practice, in particular using employers currently engaged in the programme as 'champions'. As the National Coordinator AONTAS will also support the Skills for Work Programme to organise a seminar targeted at employers with a view to encouraging them to engage in workplace learning for low skilled people. Two transnational study visits will also be organised in partnership with Skills for Work to exchange learning and best practices.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) are developing new systems which will require Community Education providers, formerly quality assured through the Further Education and Training council to re-engage with quality assurance procedures. Under the next phase of the project AONTAS will work with the AONTAS Community Education Network to develop and deliver virtual seminars designed to upskill forty-eight practitioners to engage with the new structures and systems to ensure Community Education providers can continue to deliver quality programmes for their learners.

CONTRIBUTING TO EPALE

AONTAS has worked with Léargas in relation to EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) utilising networks to support greater participation in the online platform. This resource for adult education practitioners will inform best practice from within Ireland and across Europe, with the aim of providing a better quality service and meeting the needs of adult learners. AONTAS will continue to work with Léargas to develop a list of key contributors for EPALE.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

As National Coordinator AONTAS has a role in the dissemination of best practice, thus two seminars will be organised for policy makers and service providers to share information from national and European developments, and learning from the current project, including the research undertaken by NALA. A promotional campaign using traditional and digital media will also be developed to share all aspects of the project and to disseminate project findings and outcomes.

ONE STEP UP

AONTAS has learned from engaging with adults via the Freephone Helpline and Information service that finding information on education and training options is still a challenge for prospective learners. The Freephone Helpline has directly supported over 500 people, 17,513 people used the website, with 6,826 referred onto their local contacts. AONTAS will continue to deliver this service to adults and build on the data available to provide useful insights into the needs and challenges faced by learners.

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GLOSSARY

BTEI	Back To Education Initiative
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EAEA	European Association for Education of Adults
ECAS	European Commission Authentication Service
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
ET2020	Education and Training 2020
ETB	Education and Training Boards
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INOUE	Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme International Assessment of Adult Competencies
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	Further Education and Training Authority
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

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