

Upskilling Pathways Recommendation reaching Target Groups through Community Education 28th May 2018

Due to the volume of information and target groups considered for review this paper outlines each aspect of the topics for consideration as requested by DES. Considering the makeup of the Upskilling Pathways Steering Group, AONTAS has concentrated this paper solely on *community education* as the ‘nature of engagement’ aspect, given that other experts can comment on ETB provision etc., including Skills for Work. Given the various target groups different kinds of community education are focused on: women’s community education; men’s community education; general community education and specific issues community education (lone parents/homelessness). Given the high numbers set out in the data from SLMRU, it is important to consider that within the stratification data are cohorts of the population with similar issues. Target groups were also chosen on the basis that statistical data is available and therefore progress of the group can be reported to the European Commission by the end of 2018. The outline includes not only education provision but examples of additional supports that are essential for learners to access and complete their educational course. To focus purely on the education provision would overlook the exact support target groups need to build their capacities: “different people need different amounts and different kinds of goods to reach the same levels of well-being or advantage” (Robeyns 2005: 97).

Upskilling Pathways Target Groups

Following research from SLMRU and discussion at the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation Steering group the summary cohorts were defined as:

Context of relationship/profile: **Women engaged in home duties**

- ✓ Approach - Women’s community education

Context of relationship/profile: **Men, and older men, in employment, farmers/construction/drivers and unemployed/inactive.**

- ✓ Approach – Men’s community education: Irish Men’s Sheds

Additionally at the steering group meeting (2nd May 2018) the following target groups were also identified as potential due to the of statistics on the cohort groups:

Context of relationship/profile: **Travellers**

Rationale: “Compared to non-Travellers, Travellers are over 50 times more likely to leave school without the Leaving Certificate or equivalent than we would expect based on their age distribution and other characteristics.” (ESRI, 2017 p.69)

Context of relationship/profile: Lone parents

- ✓ Women’s community education

Rationale: Those living in households with one adult and one or more children aged under 18 had the highest deprivation rate in 2016 at 50.1%, compared to 21% for the general population. Those with lower levels of education are at the greatest risk of poverty. Although on average, 55.3% of lone parents were participating in the labour market in Q2 2017 and are also an important target of the Upskilling Pathways recommendation (for people in employment)

Also to consider the high level of the target group within the following cohort:

Context of relationship/profile: Homeless

- ✓ Community education

“The levels of educational attainment were similar between males and females. Excluding persons in the not stated category, 78 per cent of males and 75 percent of females had a level of education no higher than upper secondary” (CSO, 2011).

Overall Strategic Context

The outcomes of adult learning are broad and in addition to the following national policies, additional national policy targets in other areas can also be met by focusing on the aforementioned target groups.

- ✓ National Skills Strategy 2025
- ✓ Action Plan for Education 2018
- ✓ FET Strategy (2014-2019)

Additionally:

- ✓ Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020
- ✓ National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020: creating a better society for all
- ✓ National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015 – 2017
- ✓ National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021

Reaching Target Groups

1. *Women engaged in home duties*

✓ **Women's Community Education as facilitator of Upskilling Pathways**

Community education is effective in engaging learners across NFQ levels and successfully supporting access and retention of educationally disadvantaged people who have less than upper second level education. The potential of community education in supporting the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation (EC, 2017) is significant, having developed learner-centred *assessment, offering learning provision* on-site with a particular focus on accredited programme from *NFQ level 3, 4 and 5*. The vast majority of community education learners have less than upper secondary education, estimated at 87% ([AONTAS, 2010](#)), a figure which is likely to be current today as the focus of organisations is on the most educationally disadvantaged. *Volume – numbers involved: 59,500 (SLMRU)*. Women's community education is also based in areas of disadvantage, given the increasing levels of suicide amongst mothers in certain areas of Dublin ([Irish Times, May 2018](#)) of Tallaght, Ballyfermot and Clondalkin with early school leaving as a contributing factor, engaging with women in such communities also has additional outcomes.

Assessment and guidance aspects:

Engagement in the community education process is essentially about understanding learners in terms of their knowledge, skills, competences and educational aspirations in addition to their needs for succeeding in an education context. It is also a process where the learner's experience is part of the learning process so *assessment* is by way of a holistic approach from the initial meeting with learners and through the teaching and learning process. Additionally, Links can also be made as applicable with the Adult Guidance Service in the ETBs and AONTAS provides information on progression via the [OneStepUp booklet](#).

Opportunities for progression:

Through community education, progression to other levels on the NFQ are possible, depending on the needs of the learner and how educational organisations can meet their supports e.g. childcare on site/location/timing of course. All of these aspects are considered in the running of community education courses. Collaboration with other education providers for progression are also in place depending on learner needs.

Measures, outcomes and follow up:

Data available in community education organisations.

Evaluation

- Through QQI Quality Assurance Processes – evaluation of the programme QA.
- Of learning – through assessments as applicable.

Validation

1. Accredited Programmes through QQI

Women’s Community Education Providers have various arrangements in place to offer accredited programmes as appropriate to their size, provision, mode of funding and learner needs. Most are legacy FETAC providers who are seeking to reengage with QQI.

- i. Through engagement with QQI for the provision of accredited learning
- ii. If possible, through RPL if a National Policy for RPL in FET (as per FET Strategy) was available

2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- i. Required processes for RPL in a community education context which could be made available by the QQI RPL Practitioners Network
- ii. Funding for RPL made available – funding is normally linked to course provision not RPL.

Organisations:

Example: Longford Women’s Link, An Cosan, Access 2000 (Wexford), National Collective of Community Based Women’s Networks (NCCWN). See appendix 1 for more.

Case Study – Need for State Support for Accredited Programmes for Women

In 2018, AONTAS member Longford Women’s Link (LWL) offered a QQI level 4 in Retail Skills Course (developed by LWL) to a group of 50 women in an area who were economically inactive or in low paid positions. The programme costs €38k and is philanthropically funded. Seven women are now in employment and other students have built their capacity and confidence in the workplace. Operating in one of the most economically disadvantaged regions of the country, with one of the highest rates of lone parents in pockets of Longford - who are most likely to live in consistent poverty, LWL and women’s community education providers like it around the country reach the people that the formal education system is otherwise unable to reach. An evaluation of the programme is taking place in June and LWL are open to any additional information by DES.

2. Lone Parents

✓ **Specific focus community education - Case Study of One Family**

Although not a homogenous group they are predominantly female (84%, CSO 2016). Women's community education also offer educational services and additional supports to lone parents. As specific data on the target group is required for the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation (UPR) a case study of one organisation with a specific focus on lone parents was considered in relation to how it can support the UPR: e.g. One Family. One Family offer tailored supports and accredited programmes that support lone parents to reach NFQ level 4 or 5.

Assessment and guidance aspects:

To ascertain the skills levels, learners can participate in a non-accredited programme to build capacity: New Steps programme; Pathways programme. Relating to guidance and assessment for these programmes additional one-to-one sessions with key-worker are offered every two weeks. These sessions are focused around personal goals within the aims and objectives of the New Steps programme.

Provision from One Family:

Accredited: New Futures programme (to NFQ level 4)

Additional Supports: Wrap-around and one-to-one support, optional counselling, information and parenting supports within One Family. Travel costs covered (up to €4 per day) and limited on-site childcare. Small subsidies may be available towards off-site childcare costs.

Opportunities for progression:

One Family have a relationship with Ballsbridge College of Further Education through the collaborative – 'Options programme' - 3 minor awards at level NFQ 4 and 5. All One Family learners have progression opportunities into full time education in Ballsbridge College of Further Education and other colleges.

Measures, outcomes and follow up: Data from One Family is available on request.

Evaluation

Through QQI Quality Assurance Processes – evaluation of the programme QA.

Of the learning – through the organisation’s assessments as applicable.

With Ballsbridge College of Further Education

Validation

1. Accredited Programmes through QQI

One Family is a legacy FETAC provider and are seeking to reengage with QQI as is appropriate to their size, provision, mode of funding and learner need.

i. Through engagement with QQI for the provision of accredited learning

2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is not currently in place but could be explored following QQI reengagement if a clear outline of the process was in place and funding and resources for RPL provided in addition to learners’ interests for the process.

3. Men, and older men, in employment, farmers/construction/drivers and unemployed/inactive

✓ Men’s Community Education: Irish Men’s Sheds Association

The Irish Men’s Sheds association are open to exploring the potential involvement of men’s sheds in the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation as they reach 10,000 men across the Island of Ireland and in every county, including rural areas. The main cohort of men are predominantly in the UPR target age range of 45-64 years. The Men’s Sheds is an ideal ‘intervention’ to reach the target group. The Men’s Sheds Association can put a question to its members to explore the interest in undertaking accredited provision, or if there was a system for RPL in place, having experiences validated on the NFQ. It will depend on the uptake and interest from the men’s sheds.

Volume – numbers involved: 177,400 (SLMRU)

Level and type of activity: Possibly in association with ETBs or community education organisations at level NFQ 3 or 4.

Assessment and guidance aspects:

Engagement in men’s sheds is dialogical and focuses on interaction with men to acknowledge their experience, support learning exchange and exploring opportunities for collective

development in the 'Shed'. Additionally, links can also be made as applicable with the Adult Guidance Service in the ETBs and AONTAS provide information on progression via the OneStepUp booklet.

Opportunities for progression:

Links also exist with ETBs and other community education providers to support progression currently, learning provision in Men's Sheds is generally non-accredited.

Measures, outcomes and follow up:

Data provided by Men's Sheds.

Validation: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is not currently in place but could be explored if an education provider could support an RPL process and if funding and resources for RPL were provided but it is dependent on learners' interests for the process.

4. Travellers

✓ **Community Education e.g. through Local Training Initiatives (LTIs)**

It is essential that Travellers are identified as a target group as they are specifically within the range of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation as the ESRI report states: "The odds of leaving school without having completed second level (the Leaving Certificate or equivalent) were 33 times higher for Travellers than for non-Travellers" (p.69). Traveller women have higher educational attainment but due to the cultural practices of early marriage and large family sizes there is added pressure on these women to be stay at home mothers. This might be addressed through the provision of adequate child care for women attending courses. Whilst community education offers Travellers with educational options, and they do engage in those services, number of which are not available at present.

Gap in provision:

Local Training Initiatives for Travellers (LTI) AONTAS members state that the current education provision for Travellers 'is at an all-time low.' Bray Travellers lost their LTI programme which they state was due to the changes in policy with funding aimed at younger age groups compared to older learners as it had been (this is despite the fact that reports continually show older learners as having lower educational attainment in the community). All Senior Traveller Training centres

were closed in 2012. Resource Teachers for Travellers were withdrawn in 2011. Targeted initiatives developed at a local level with high level quality assurance might be a practical support e.g. LTIs.

5. Homeless

✓ Focus Ireland Education Provision

Community education providers regularly support homeless people to attain a qualification on the NFQ. As mentioned previously, community education reaches the target groups and provides the necessary supports to engage educationally disadvantaged people who are faced with a multitude of issues, including mental health and addiction. Conscious that the UPR will require statistics, Focus Ireland offer education provision and have access to data for engagement and progression purposes that can be collated.

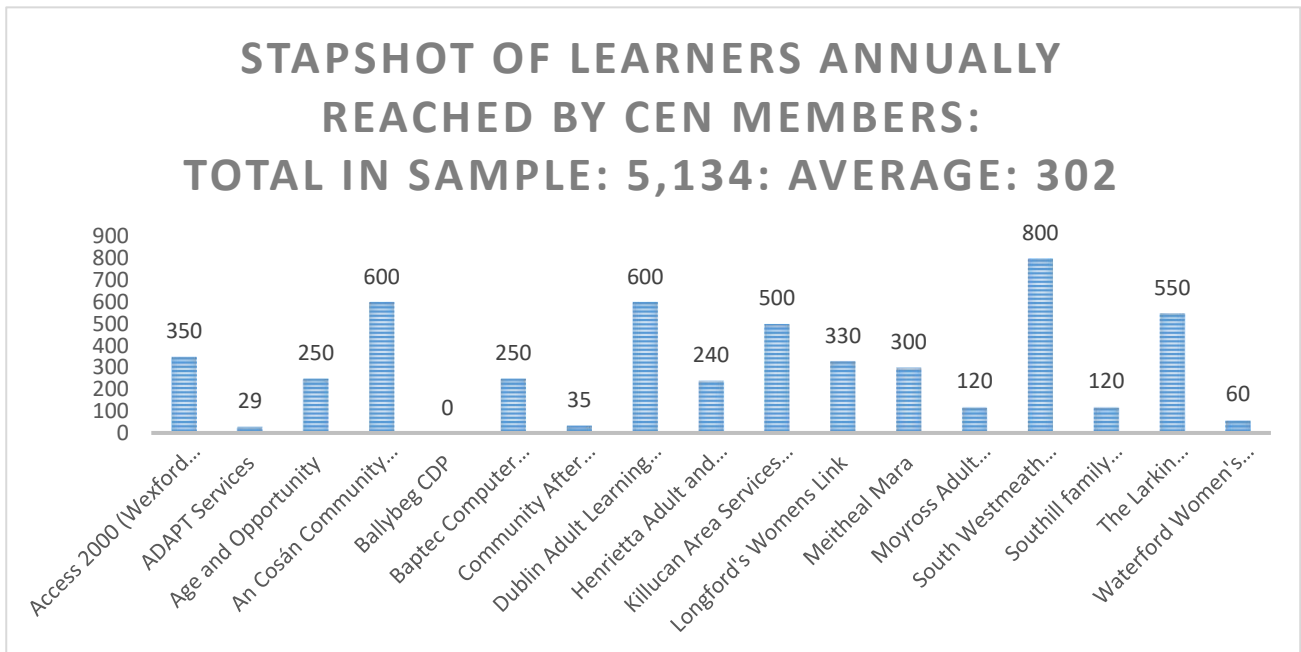
Reporting National Targets

As Ireland will have to report to the European Commission on the target groups and progress in relation to the UPR, it is important not to choose target groups that could be considered easier to reach for the sake of demonstrating progress.

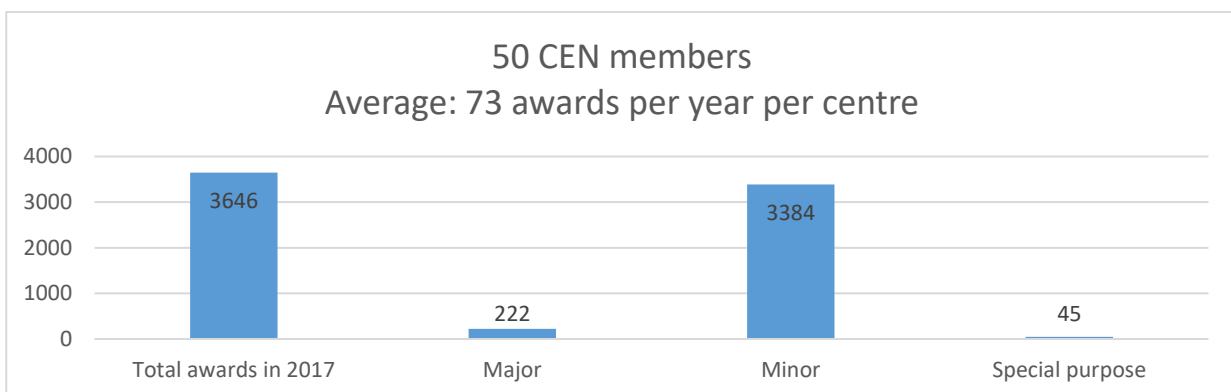
Ireland should include traditionally hard to reach target groups in order to make the UPR meaningful and having an identifiable impact on national qualifications levels. Huge strides have been taken by Ireland to increase the level of FET provision available. However, rather than identifying target groups that potentially are easier to reach, e.g. those in employment, although it is not to say that such cohorts do not require extensive support to gain a qualification on the NFQ, a specific focus on hard to reach groups should be made. This could be made in terms of measuring the journey travelled by learners that they are hard to reach and experience a multitude of needs. Additionally, offering qualitative as well as quantitative updates to the European Commission would outline progress made for numbers of cohorts that are deemed low statistically e.g. the unemployed.

Gap in Provision – Supporting Community Education

A list of community education organisations that are members are detailed in appendix 1, which demonstrates the national reach and potential. With more sustainable funding community education could reach the UPR target groups on a broader scale. A snapshot of the numbers of educationally disadvantaged learners in the target group of the Upskilling Pathways recommendation reached by 18 AONTAS CEN members, community education providers from across Ireland is outlined the following graph (1).



In graph 2, is an approximation of the accredited provision by 50 CEN members: 3646 awards. This figure is very conservative as it does not include the awards that go through the ETBs but where community education groups provide the venues and resources and have done the bulk of the labour intensive work in terms of recruitment and engagement with learners. However, ETBI will have such statistics. Graph 2. Estimate of accredited provision by 50 CEN members.



Target Funding for Community Education

The previous graphs demonstrate the impact of accredited community education provision, but behind each number is a person with educational aspirations. The target group of Upskilling Pathways are early school leavers who are more likely to be unemployed/in non-standard employment, live in poverty, and require affordable childcare, transport and financial support. Community education provides a range of supports that enables their participation in accredited learning, thereby supporting the Upskilling Pathway goal in reaching a qualification at EQF 3/4 (NFQ 4/5). However, there is little scope to increase provision given the current funding levels and the previous and complex model of community education funding. The 2017 ERASMUS+ transnational (Ireland, Portugal, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland) project FinALE drew on research from n56 members of the CEN. The most common form of funding for community education is *direct, programme, project* and *formula* funding coming from: six Government Departments, SICAP, philanthropic, learner fees and other sources. This is unsustainable. Given the potential of community education to reach the target groups due consideration to expanding community education provision should be made within the context of the UPR.

Impediments to Reaching the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation Target Groups

1. Upskilling Pathways Recommendation Fund for Community Education

Community education groups have precarious funding streams and in order to reach the Target groups a specific Upskilling Pathways Recommendation Fund should be put in place to increase the number of learners in community education, increase accredited community education provision and to offer organisations the ability to provide RPL to learners.

2. QQI reengagement fees as an impediment to offering accredited provision to NFQ4/5

Community education groups do not have specific funding for a QQI fee, even if it was available CEN members estimate that the €5000 reengagement fee could cover the complete cost of a QQI level 5 Minor award for 20 hard to reach learners. Or the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation Fund could cover the cost of reengagement and programme validation costs.

3. Travellers Education Programmes (LTIs)

Increase and allocate funding of LTIs to Travellers education programmes e.g. Bray Travellers CLG.

Appendix 1:

Community education organisations in the AONTAS Community Education Network.

Community Education Organisation	County
St. Catherine's Community Services Centre	Carlow
Bailieborough Development Association	Cavan
Clare Local Development Company (Eirí Corca Baiscinn)	Clare
Clare Women's Network	Clare
Cork Adult Education Council	Cork
Cork City-Centre/Citywide Community Education Network	Cork
IRD Dulhallow	Cork
Mayfield Arts Centre	Cork
Meitheal Mara	Cork
South and East Cork Area Development	Cork
Comhlacht Forbartha an Tearmann	Donegal
Mevagh Family Resource Centre	Donegal
Tir Boghaine Teo	Donegal
Active Retirement Ireland	Dublin
Active Senior IT Society	Dublin
Addiction Response Crumlin	Dublin
Adult Community Education Network (ACE)	Dublin
Age Action Ireland	Dublin
Age and Opportunity	Dublin
An Cosán	Dublin
Ballyfermot and Chapelizod Partnership	Dublin
Ballyfermot STAR	Dublin
Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership	Dublin
Baptec Training & Education Centre	Dublin
Blanchardstown Area Partnership	Dublin
Clondalkin Centre for the Unemployed	Dublin
CMS Learning Centre	Dublin
Community Action Network (CAN)	Dublin
Community After Schools Project (CASPr)	Dublin
Computer Learning in Communities (CLIC)	Dublin
Congress Centres Network (ICTU)	Dublin

D.A.T.E.- Dundrum Adult Training and Education	Dublin
D8CEC	Dublin
Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC)	Dublin
Dublin Simon Community	Dublin
Dublinia Heritage Centre	Dublin
Epilepsy Ireland	Dublin
Exchange House National Travellers Service	Dublin
Firhouse Day Activity Centre (CRC)	Dublin
Focus Ireland	Dublin
Greystones Family Resource Centre	Dublin
Henrietta Adult and Community Education Service (HACE)	Dublin
Irish Men's Sheds Association	Dublin
Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed	Dublin
Irish Yoga Association	Dublin
KLEAR Ltd	Dublin
Larkin Unemployed Centre	Dublin
Loreto Centre Crumlin	Dublin
Lourdes Youth & Community Services Ltd	Dublin
Mercy Family Centre	Dublin
North Wall Community Development Project	Dublin
One Family	Dublin
Partners Training for Transformation	Dublin
Quarryvale Family Resource Centre	Dublin
RADE	Dublin
Respond! College	Dublin
Rosemount Family Resource Centre	Dublin
Ruhama	Dublin
SAOL Project	Dublin
Soilse	Dublin
South Dublin County Partnership	Dublin
South Dublin Voluntary Groups	Dublin
Southside Women's Action Network (S.W.A.N.)	Dublin
St Andrew's Resource Centre	Dublin
T.A.R.G.E.T.	Dublin
The Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme (CASP)	Dublin

The Media Co-op/ Near fm	Dublin
The Open Training College	Dublin
The WEB Project	Dublin
Turas	Dublin
Warrenmount C.E.D. Centre	Dublin
Yoga Therapy Ireland	Dublin
Blue Teapot Theatre Company	Galway
Enterprising Athenry ADC	Galway
Society of St Vincent De Paul	Galway
Kerry Action for Development Education (KADE)	Kerry
Network Kildare	Kildare
KCAT Art and Study Centre	Kildenny
Kingsriver Community	Kilkenny
IT Centre, Mountmellick Development Association	Laois
About Hygiene	Leitrim
Limerick Community Education Network	Limerick
Mobile IT	Limerick
Longford Women's Link	Longford
The PYDO Foundation for Education and Wellbeing	Louth
Mayo Abbey Parish Community Development Company Ltd	Mayo
Blayney Blaydes	Monaghan
Ballycommon Telework & Training Centre	Offaly
The Acorn Project	Offaly
Roscommon Women's Network CDP	Roscommon
Knockanrawley Resource Centre	Tipperary
Spafield Family Resource Centre	Tipperary
Irish Men's Sheds Association	Waterford
Key Project (Ballybeg CDP)	Waterford
Men's Development Network	Waterford
Respond! College	Waterford
Waterford Women's Centre / Access 2000	Waterford
Killucan Area Services CLG	Westmeath
South Westmeath Employment, Education & Training Services (SWEETS)	Westmeath
Training for Employment	Westmeath

Women's Community Projects (Mullingar) Association Ltd.	Westmeath
Transformative College	Westmeath
ACCESS 2000 Wexford Ltd	Wexford
Community Training & Education Centre	Wexford
South West Wexford Community Development Group Project	Wexford
Southwest Wexford CDP	Wexford
Bray Travellers CDG (<i>Education programme not funded</i>)	Wicklow
Carnew Training and Development Centre	Wicklow
Little Bray Family Resource Centre Community Development Project	Wicklow

NCCWN: - Women's Community Education

1. Blayney Blades
2. Dochas For Women
3. Donegal Women's Network
4. Claremorris Women's Group
5. North Leitrim Women's Centre
6. Roscommon Women's Network
7. Clare Women's Network
8. Limerick Women's Network
9. Southwest Kerry Women's Association
10. Waterford Women's Centre
11. Access 2000 Wexford
12. Clondalkin Women's Network
13. Ronanstown Women's CDP
14. Rowlagh Women's Group
15. Southside Women's Action Network
16. Women's Community Projects Mullingar
17. Women Together Tallaght Network