Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy 10-Year Strategy for Ireland

SOLAS Public Consultation

Tuesday, 22nd December 2020

AONTAS

The Voice of Adult Learning

Recommendations

1. Identify barriers faced by adult learners engaging in all forms of literacy

2. Set measurable targets in the new ALND Strategy

3. Promote and invest in best practice examples of literacy learning opportunities

4. Ensure a cross-departmental Government approach in the delivery of the new ALND Outreach Strategy

5. Ensure employees are provided with free quality learning opportunities that are supported by employers

Introduction to AONTAS

AONTAS is a long established (1969), non-governmental membership organisation that promotes that value of adult learning and advocates for the rights of all adult to quality learning across the tertiary education system. We have an unwavering commitment to educationally disadvantaged adults, we offer solutions-focused advocacy that is evidence-based drawing on research and our extensive meaningful learner engagement activities. Our [Strategic Plan: A Vision for Educational Equality](#) (2019-2022) is informed by principles of: social justice, feminism, partnership, valuing diversity, advancing equality and supporting social inclusion.

We continually strive to be offer work of the highest quality as an inclusive, informed, dynamic organisation which will act as a cooperative, trusted, critical friend to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. We continually engage with learners and educators from further education and training, community education and higher education on a weekly basis, affording us key insights into practice. We have expertise in educational equality and we advocate strongly for community education, as the most inclusive, yet underfunded part of the education system.

Our work covers: **Research**: Authentically hearing learner voice, particularly those marginalised, through a mixed-methods research project, The [National FET Learner Forum](#). Some recent examples of publications in this area are the 2019 Annual Synthesis Report and the COVID-19 FET Learner Report. Democratising relevant academic work in our well-established peer reviewed journal, *[The Adult Learner.](#)* **Promoting** lifelong learning and access: first week of March the annual [AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival](#) (circa 300 events/open days across Ireland), [STAR](#) awards recognising excellence in inclusive education projects and an [annual Policy Day event](#). **Encouraging** people to engage in learning: Freephone information referral helpline and website www.onestepup.ie. **Building capacity** and supporting professional development in community education through the [AONTAS Community Education Network](#) (Est. 2007, 10-year anniversary conference opened by Minister Coveney).

We have strong **European** links: designated by the then Department of Education and Skills as the National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning, we lead/partner in four EU projects across all levels of Erasmus+, are on the Board of the European Association for the

Education of Adults (EAEA) and are linked globally. Co-established the Network of Adult Learning Across Border ([NALAB](#), [video](#)) in response to Brexit, at the AONTAS Lifelong Learning Summit, with special guest, Secretary General *Seán Ó Foghlú*. Ultimately, all our work, and communications activities aims to advocate for the rights of all adults to engage in learning so to fulfil their aspirations. Who we represent: Organisations and individuals committed to educational equality for adults: **500 members** [all 16 ETBs, over 120 community education organisations, adult learning/access departments of Higher Education Institutions, social justice NGOs, educators and learners across the Island of Ireland].

Introduction to Submission

This submission has been developed by AONTAS the National Adult Learning Organisation as part of a public consultation process led by SOLAS the Further Education and Training Authority. It provides key recommendations based on the views of adult learners and the expertise of our membership in order to support the development and success of a new 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND) Strategy for Ireland. It frames literacies within a human rights framework, which sees literacy as a basic human right, the foundation for engaging in lifelong learning, and essential for engagement in social, civic, cultural and economic spheres of life. It is incumbent upon all stakeholders, government departments, agencies and education providers across the tertiary system to deliver an effective, actionable 10-year Strategy that addresses the long-standing, systemic issue of adult literacy in Ireland. In addition to the areas outlined in this submission, broader macro-level structural inequalities (including poverty) manifest in educational inequalities and must also be tackled if we are to achieve positive change for adult learners.

> 'Literacy allows the pursuit of other human rights. It confers a wide set of benefits and strengthens the capabilities of individuals, families and communities to access health, educational, economic, political and cultural opportunities'
> (READ Educational Trust, 2020).

AONTAS welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the new ALND Strategy and advocate for the inclusion of learner voice, the promotion of positive learning experiences and the development of strategic actions to address the unmet needs of people within the areas of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. In addition, AONTAS urges SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) to develop and to

promote inclusive models of literacy learning, including community education, and to support the development of a new structure focussed on educational equality.

As part of taking an evidence-informed approach to this submission, and in response to a request by DFHERIS and SOLAS, AONTAS has conducted research with adult learners to identify their views, experiences and recommendations in literacy provision and strategies for outreach. In addition, AONTAS has collated research findings across the jurisdictions of Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, through our aforementioned network NALAB, to highlight trends and offer a regional insight into the provision of ALND across the UK. These papers can be found in the appendices of this submission.

1. Identify barriers faced by adult learners engaging in all forms of literacy

AONTAS urges SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to identify the barriers faced by adult learners, and potential learners, engaging in all forms of literacy provision. **Special emphasis must be placed on listening to the needs of specific cohorts and understanding their life circumstances**. Also, it is important to note that many people with qualifications across the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), experience literacy, numeracy and digital skills difficulties. These cohorts include, but are not limited to:

- First-time and part-time mature students
- Those living in disadvantaged rural areas
- People in unstable and unsustainable employment
- Migrants
- Low-qualified adults (those with less than an upper-second level),
- Early school leavers
- Individuals experiencing long-term unemployment
- Asylum seekers
- People with disabilities
- Travellers
- Roma
- Lone Parents
- People experiencing homelessness
- Those in receipt of social welfare payments,
- People living in poverty

- Those from or who have low-income families
- Substance Misusers
- Those who face discrimination based one or more of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's 'nine grounds' under the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018

Each group must be engaged with and consulted on their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs. **This should include specific target numbers for each group with a transparent research methodology and reporting process.** This process should allow for meaningful engagement and seek to identify structural, social, and dispositional barriers. Therefore, creating an evidence-based Strategy that is robust in its capacity to meet the needs of all learners. To support this outreach process, a range of key stakeholders across statutory agencies and civil society organisations should be identified that can enable and support this process in a partnership approach.

In addition, this new Strategy offers an opportunity to deconstruct assumptions that certain groups are hard to reach or lack motivation to engage in learning. **AONTAS encourages SOLAS and DFHERIS to draw on inclusive learner voice mechanisms that work in partnership with learners, such as the National FET Learner Forum**. We must create a shift in mindset in order to improve our approach by moving towards an understanding that some voices are not hard to reach but are often seldom heard (Flynn, 2013). Outreach strategies should be learner-centred and utilise qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups to ensure that quantitative data is contextualised and rooted in the lived experience of those cohorts the new Strategy should be most concerned with.

Barriers identified by learners

As part of our contribution, through the National FET Learner Forum, AONTAS conducted two focus groups and an online survey with 92 adult learners to identify the barriers faced in promoting learning opportunities in the area of literacy, as per figure 1 (see also Appendix X).

Figure 1 Data results from focus groups (National FET Learner Forum, December 2020)

What are some barriers you see in promoting literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (IT skills?)	
Perceived Stigma	• Learners would like to see feelings of shame, embarrassment or fear around improving literacy numeracy and digital literacy skills be alleviated
Digital Skills	• Learners felt that digital skills would continue to become more and more important in the modern world • Learners want to see digital skills incorporated into all literacy and numeracy course
Disability Supports	• Learners with disabilities would like their course materials to be accessible, with limited text, large font, and visuals aids included
COVID-19	• Learners would like digital skills courses to be prioritised in the reopening of centres • Learners would like tutors and learners to have access to all IT needs necessary to teach and learn online

2. Set measurable targets and utilise appropriate learner-centred tools in the new ALND Strategy

The new ALND Strategy must provide measurable targets and focus on educational equality by supporting target groups as previously outlined. Success means different things to different people and therefore learners must be consulted with directly. **Each learner must have the opportunity to identify and discuss their individual learning needs and describe what success looks like to them.**

AONTAS therefore suggests that the new Strategy considers tools such as the [My Journey: Distance Travelled Tool](#) which the Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal have developed as part of a joint initiative to develop a soft skills measurement tool, working closely with Quality Matters, Trinity College Dublin, and co-created with Local Development Companies. The tool helps initiate conversation, assess needs, and plan steps in conjunction with the service user (or learner in this context) to address the identified needs (again, which would be ALND skills needs here). The tool also gathers evidence-based data which can be used to identify gaps in services and help plan local service provision and over time this can help providers to improve their services. It has the potential to highlight good practice, support the sharing of learning, and demonstrate programme impact. One of the five soft skills areas measured is 'literacy and numeracy confidence'. This tool could be tailored to the area of measuring ALND skills to produce a range of valuable data that would help to identify where the new Strategy is achieving its goals and where requires attention. For the most recent update on the Tool see *Pobal and Quality Matters' (2020)* [*Report on the Development of My Journey: Distance Travelled Tool*](#). Furthermore, clear and measurable targets should be a core part of this Strategy with an emphasis on learner voice for identifying gaps, progress made and learner identified solutions when planning each phase of implementation. The impact of the Strategy should also include a longitudinal survey and focus group with a core group of learners that allows SOLAS and DFHERIS to understand the long-term impact of the Strategy. The focus group will allow researchers to engage with a group that have lower levels of literacy and evaluate the progress or lack of progress made with this group. Particular focus must be made to engage with the most vulnerable and marginalised learners and work in partnership with community education, FET, and literacy tutors as key stakeholders.

3. Promote and invest in best practice examples of literacy learning opportunities

A fundamental area regarding the social inclusion function of the new Strategy is the need to reach the diverse cohorts of adult learners whose learning needs require a variety of learning opportunities in order to engage with ALNDL skills provision. By definition, the individuals and communities furthest from the education system will need alternative educational approaches to those of the traditional formal education system which has failed them for various complex

reasons. Echoing the findings of the OECD Report (2019) *How's Life in the Digital Age?*, Social Justice Ireland (2020) have also stated in *Well-being in the Digital Age* that

> '[I]n order to make the most of the opportunities present by digital technology, and to mitigate the potential negative impacts then Ireland must first address the digital skills gap. **We must develop an education and training system that can support adults throughout their lives** as they acquire skills and navigate the transitions that will occur as a result of the digital transformation of the economy.' (emphasis added)

Developing appropriate and inclusive measures across the stakeholders and sectors which make up the tertiary education system must therefore form a top priority for the Department's new Strategy. The new policies developed by the Department will have to be capable of combatting the socioeconomic damage done by deficits in Ireland's Literacy and Numeracy levels which fuel the deeper educational divide and the widening digital divide which continues to exacerbate social exclusion and economic disadvantage for individuals and communities already at the margins of society. The delivery of basic 'learning to learn' skills for each and every kind of literacy under the remit of the new Strategy will have to not only be innovative in nature, but also grounded in the lived experience of the diverse target group which its interventions are aiming to impact on. Fortunately, Ireland has at its disposal a constituent of the wider educational ecosystem proven to be effective in implementing exactly said kind of interventions at local community level; and recognised as playing an invaluable role in achieving the specifically social inclusionary aims of this new Strategy (see *Community Education: More Than Just a Course*, AONTAS, 2010).

Community education provision in Ireland is regarded on European and international stages as a leader in best-practice for engaging those left behind and out of traditional formal educational structures. Of equal, if not greater significance for this new Strategy , the community education sector is an established national success for being uniquely able to cater to the learning needs of local communities and individuals in the target group. Community education addresses educational and social inequality, particularly for women, and in doing so meets a multitude of national policy priorities; including but not limited to increasing lifelong learning participation rates, improving qualifications and skills for employability amongst the most underqualified members of society, improving social inclusion, and improving mental health and well-being. A major reason why community education is so successful in addressing educational inequality is because it is learner-centred, supporting people to build their confidence and learning to learn skills, including ALND skills.

Furthermore, community education enables access to education that improves ALND skills by overcoming barriers to participation such as location and cost. Community education also offers a range of local needs-driven supports that depending on community needs may include mental health and addictions counselling, domestic violence support, and childcare. These supports are particularly important for the participation of women learners who often face barriers to education due to family responsibilities as evidenced in the *Adult Education Survey 2017* (Central Statistics Office, 2018).

On the need for including an integrated approach to cross-curricular methods for improving ALND in the new Strategy , it is crucial that a whole-of-government approach is adopted for accountability as much as for effectiveness. As described by NALA in *Literacy for Life* (2020a), a whole-of-government approach that sees cross-departmental accountability for developing and implementing literacy policy requires a combination of cross- curricular pedagogical methods implemented across the wider tertiary education system. Reasons for aspiring to this kind of a 'holistic, cross-sectoral, lifelong and life-widening perspective' are rooted in the need for strategic actions, objectives and indicators that will deliver positive outcomes for the most disadvantaged learners with the lowest levels of ALNDL skills. Borrowing from the vision outlined in the *UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020-2025),* this approach speaks to the 'need to foster partnerships with multiple actors, including multilateral organisations, parents, libraries and the wider community' (UNESCO 2019, 1). Furthermore, this approach is vital to the 'identification of challenges and the impact of policies and practices at the individual and community levels, especially when literacy notions, uses, practices and benefits are considered highly contextual and complex' (ibid, 4). In short, the community education sector already provides this key local contextual infrastructure for achieving such a robust and nuanced national Strategy.

4. Ensure a cross-departmental government approach in the delivery of the ALND outreach strategy

The new ALND Strategy has the potential to address multiple policy goals across a variety of Government Departments. This is because

> 'improved literacy can contribute to economic growth; reduce poverty; reduce crime; promote democracy; increase civic engagement; prevent HIV/AIDS and other diseases through information provision; enhance cultural diversity through literacy programmes in minority languages; lead to lower birth rates as a result of increased education; and confer personal benefits such as

increased self-esteem, confidence and empowerment' (READ Educational Trust, 2020).

However, the positive outcomes of improved literacy can only be realised if literacy is delivered with a collaborative, strategic and evidence-based approach. In current times, with the complex nature of society, and the diverse needs of learner cohorts, the issue of literacy cannot be addressed by an individual Department or agency. It will require multiple stakeholders, including a collective of Government departments forming strategic alliances by coming together for the greater good and with the aim of shared public policy goals. This approach must build the capacity of all stakeholders involved and include outreach across a variety of communication channels within different Departments in order to reach people furthest from the education system. It should equip those charged with implementation with effective skills for collaboration through the design of clear goals, shared responsibility and mutually beneficial alliances. Furthermore, Government services and documents must be communicated in plain English for the accessibility of people with lower levels of educational attainment and those with disabilities. "Learners with disabilities would like materials to be accessible, use limited text per page and large font, and contain visual aids such as pictures and images. Digital materials are often inaccessible to learners with disabilities" (AONTAS, 2020).

'We live in a shared-power world in which many groups and organisations are involved in, affected by, or have some partial responsibility to act on public challenges' (Bryson et al., 2006).

Successful Outreach

As part of the National FET Learner Forum AONTAS (2020) met with learners and asked for their perspectives on outreach for the development of the new ALND Strategy.

Advertisement	Focus on advertisement in community hubs, schools, post-offices, the INTREO office, on radio, and videos on social media
Stepping Stone	Emphasise ALNDL services as a stepping stone or gateway to further educational opportunities and future employment opportunities
Personal and Familial Benefits	Emphasise the intangible benefits to learners: increased confidence, increased independence, familial benefits and communications skills.
Individual Learner Assessments	Previously enrolled FET Learners should be able to avail of assessment for ALNDL courses that run in parallel with their courses

AONTAS calls for a collaborative focus on educational equality

During the current pandemic there has been a significant exacerbation of disadvantage as those with lower-levels of literacy and lower-level qualifications are most likely to have lost their job, have poorer health, and have fewer resources to engage in the seismic shift to remote learning. It will further marginalise learners who cannot progress in further education and training in a remote context and set back their learning. AONTAS calls for the creation of a new structure with a tertiary-wide approach for educational equality in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. For more details on this, please see AONTAS Public Consultation on the Statement of Strategy 2021- 2023 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

5. **Ensure employees are provided with free quality learning opportunities that are supported by employers**

AONTAS urges SOLAS and DFHERIS to increase learning opportunities for employees through paid learning leave. This should provide opportunities for those up to Level 5 in order to address literacy across all three areas and in turn increase the adult learning participation rates. In 2019, 67,000 learners were supported by ETB Adult Literacy Services (SOLAS, 2020, p.8), and

yet a study estimated that only 12.5% of those with literacy needs were using the services (NALA, 2020, p.50). The participation rate of adults (at the age of 25–64) in lifelong learning in Ireland was 12.6% in 2019, greater than the EU average of 11.3%, and yet lower participation rates were reported for those with low educational attainment (4.2%) and those working in low-skilled occupations (approximately 6%) (SOLAS, 2020, p.16). Thus, the current situation for these groups is far below the national target set for 2020 (10%) and the one set for 2025 (15%) (SOLAS, 2020, p.16). It is also behind the EU's target for 2020 as 15% of adults participating in lifelong learning (Eurostat, 2019).

In other words, the data suggests that people in jobs identified as 'low-skilled' are less likely to engage in professional development opportunities than people with higher levels of qualifications, thereby exacerbating inequality, the so-called Mathew Effect (Walberg and Tsai, 1983). We must examine the barriers imposed by people in different vocational areas and offer suitable solutions to meet their needs. For example, if a person working in retail is paid the minimum wage and not provided with time for study-leave they will be forced to prioritise working in order to pay their bills. This person may also have children and childcare costs to factor in to their situation too. Policy could address this by guaranteeing employees have free learning opportunities with paid study leave and suitable childcare services offered on-site that ensure this person can engage in literacy and progress onto further learning opportunities.

Learner success

AONTAS shares learner stories as a mechanism to listen to the experiences and needs of learners while also promoting their achievements and the often-transformative impact of adult learning for individuals, their families and their communities. AONTAS believes learner voice is an essential part of outreach in the adult learning sector. Liz is a proud advocate for employees who returned to learning. She engaged in the Skills to Work programme and developed

skills in Excel while improving her digital literacy. Liz was given new responsibilities in work due to her success in education and then won 'staff member of the month'. You can read her story here. There are currently opportunities for some employees through programmes like Skills to Work and Skills to Advance. However, there is no guarantee that employees will be provided with flexibility to attend these due to time constraints in working hours. For people that can engage, they may need to complete one module at a time in addition to full-time working hours and personal family or care duties. This could, for example, mean that a person at Level 2 may

take over 6 years if undertaking 3 modules or less per term, to reach a Level 5 unless they are provided with paid study-leave.

Conclusion

Success in the areas of outreach, access, support, flexibility, and progression are all crucial to the performance of the new Strategy in relation to improving Ireland's ALNDL skills. This Strategy must not only target learners with greater ALDN needs as standalone individuals. The learners which this Strategy aims to support and empower belong to communities that face significant barriers to participating in formal education and with unique sets of local learning

needs, often accumulated over lifetimes and generations. This Strategy must therefore put an emphasis on the role of holistic, wrap-around, area and community-based approaches to addressing a hierarchy of needs rooted in local lived experience of being left behind and outside of the formal education system. The Strategy's emphasis must be placed on how best to deliver improvements in ALND skills and competences within and across communities that authentically connects with their experience of higher levels of not only educational disadvantage but also of poverty and social marginalisation.

Community education by design and default provides such innovative localised solutions. This highly developed form of provision addresses the unique learning, social and financial needs of the learners and communities they serve and are an integral part of. The community education sector therefore provides the Department and its new Strategy with a ready-made, fit-for-purpose, value-for-money infrastructure that is necessary for achieving its goals over the next decade. While scale and scope are clear priorities for the new Strategy out of necessity, so too is the nature, role and quality of the provision which the new Strategy will need to rely on for its implementation and ultimate success. Community education in Ireland is a global leader in this regard. The local, on-the-ground, supportive, flexible and proven pedagogical formula that is employed by community educators within the most disadvantaged communities across Ireland who experience the most educational marginalisation -alongside the lowest levels of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy - is widely recognised as working best to encourage adults to take the first step to back into education and to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

The adult and community education sector provide the pre-existing lifelong learning infrastructure which caters to the uniquely local learning needs of entire communities experiencing barriers to attaining higher levels of ALND. Furthermore, plays a crucial role in overcoming these barriers by using a model that empowers learners, their families and entire communities in a supportive and flexible way. Issues surrounding the shame and stigma of lower educational achievement are bypassed by community education. The new Strategy must encourage, develop and promote adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy through trusted local community-based institutions with established positive reputations and credentials rooted in a strong track record of having a positive impact on local community life. There must therefore be increased ring-fenced multi-annual funding for organisations who already excel at delivering programmes and courses that involve improving learners' literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

Adults Learners with greater literacy needs are often also learners with disabilities; Travellers and Roma; home carers; women; learners in Direct Provision; learners impacted by homelessness. Issues learners face are not distinct isolated features that can be dealt with independent from their lived experience of other forms of educational disadvantage, social marginalisation and economic disenfranchisement. There are key populations where specific efforts to engage and provide community-based supports would not only fulfil the promises of the new Strategy, but would also bring about positive outcomes across other Government Departments' strategies. For example, the new Strategy should be close-fitted to the National *Action Plan on Apprenticeships* 2021-2025 (for more please see the AONTAS *Submission to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Apprenticeship Action Plan 2021-2025 Consultation Paper)* and the new *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education* (forthcoming) to ensure success over the coming decade.

Strategic actions must be calculated for bringing about sustainable positive change. Any actions within the Strategy to encourage, develop and promote Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy must appreciate that although they may seem like discrete and separate pieces that can be tackled and resolved individually, they are, in fact, interconnected outcomes of the same problem: intergenerational educational inequity. To be successful, this Strategy must therefore take actions which fundamentally address the underlying issues that have created the current

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disparity between those who have higher proficiency in ALND and those who have not. In short, actions which succeed in encouraging, developing and promoting one area should also be actions that succeed across all areas. Narrowly focusing this Strategy's efforts on individual learners will miss the opportunity to make systemic changes for entire communities and society as a whole in the long-term.

Finally, those in the Department responsible for developing and implementing this Strategy must be cognisant of the broader purpose of learning, which goes beyond meeting the skills needs of the economy. Although the following was discussed, and proposals made, twenty years ago in the *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (Department of Education and Science 2000, 14) many of its key policy recommendations still stand in relation to all forms of literacy:

> Within the adult education sector itself there is a number of competing needs to be addressed. These include the need to significantly increase the scale and flexibility of existing provision, to promote strategic shifts towards adult-friendly policies within existing institutions, to invest systematically in the development of core supporting services such as guidance and counselling and childcare, and to provide for an increased role and funding for community education. **Large scale increases in adult literacy investment, expansion of capital provision, implementation of an ICT programme for adults, specific equality initiatives to improve participation of marginalised groups, and structural developments are also needed**...Given the scale of change needed, the Government's priority is to expand the flexibility and supply of core programmes and services for adults, and to concentrate fee relief on those most at risk. The impact of this policy will be monitored to assess the take-up by different target groups, particularly those with less than upper second-level education. (emphasis added)

Improving ALDN also facilitates personal development, and the flourishing of healthier, creative, economically vibrant and culturally integrated communities. Where ALDN improves, so too do levels of civic engagement and democratic participation. As outlined by NALA (2020) in *Literacy For Life*, '[T]his draws parallels with the capabilities approach theorised by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. The capabilities approach emphasises the role of basic education in order to provide the opportunities for "meaningful freedom" people should have to shape their lives. This understanding of "literacy" allows for a focus on "literacy for citizenship" and the promotion of literacy as the cornerstone of a well-functioning and inclusive democracy' (2020, 12). Underpinning the Strategy must be an appreciation for how all forms of adult learning and Literacies can widen and deepen Ireland's collective commitment to equality and social justice,

characteristics that must continue to be nourished by Government so they may come to define everyday life on this island for today's population and so they may remain in the DNA of the wider educational ecosystem for the generations to come.

Authors: Dr Niamh O'Reilly (CEO), Dearbháil Lawless (Head of Advocacy) Dr Sam O'Brien-Olinger (Information and Policy Officer)

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Appendix 1

Adult Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Literacy Strategy Consultation:
The National FET Learner Forum

Adult Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Literacy Strategy Consultation
The National FET Learner Forum

Report Prepared by: Kalianne Farren, Akisato Suzuki and Leah Dowdall

18th December 2020

Contents

Introduction

Under the auspices of the National FET Learner Forum and at the request of SOLAS, learner feedback for the [Adult Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Literacy Strategy Consultation](#) was gathered. A total of 92 learners took part in this consultation process from six ETBs and seven Community Education centres. Learners came from both FET and non-ETB funded community education provision. All were currently actively enrolled in an FET or Community Education course. Learner feedback was gathered through virtual focus group discussions and a learner survey. The findings presented in this report, come from the major points raised by learners.

Methodology

Two specific purpose virtual focus groups were held on the Adult Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy Strategy on 3 December 2020 and 8 December 2020; a total of 9 learners took part in these events. These events were open to both FET and Community Education learners from non-ETB funded provision. Additional focus group feedback was gathered from learners who attended the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board regional Forum events held on 8 December 2020, 9 December 2020, and 10 December 2020; a total of 40 learners took part in the Laois and Offaly regional Forum events.

Forum discussions focused on three core questions. These questions were as follows:

- *What are some effective ways your centre teaches adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills (IT skills)?*

- *What are some barriers you see in promoting literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (IT skills?)*

- *What can be done to help improve adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy in Ireland?*

All discussions were delivered by a trained facilitator. The findings drawn were developed though the notes taken during these discussions.

The learner survey was opened over a period of two weeks. A total of 43 learners completed this survey. Learners were asked four key questions in the survey. These questions were as follows:

- Do you agree with the statement: "My literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills are/were well supported in my learning experience"?

- What are some examples of effective literacy, numeracy, or digital literacy training you have received?
- What are some challenges you think learners face in improving their literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills?
- What do you think can be done to improve literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills across Ireland?

As part of the survey, learners were asked to voluntarily provide additional demographic information. The majority of responses were from learners at the age of up to twenty-four (72.1%) and male learners (67.4%). Twenty responses (46.5%) indicated belonging to at least one of the following groups: Traveller or Roma (3 learners), living in Direct Provision (3 learners), homeless (2 learners), lone parent (2 learners), person with a disability (6 learners), non-native English speaker (3 learners), and person born outside of Ireland (8 learners).

The total learners who participated in both Forum events and completed the survey came from a variety of course levels and across a number of course programmes. The breakdown of learners by course level who participated in this consultation process can be found in Table 1 below. The breakdown of learners by course programme can be found in Table 2 below. The survey responses correspond with the 26 learners who responded to this question, not the 43 learners in total who completed the survey. The 'unknown' category consists of responses where learners gave their course name, but the course did not correspond with a course level.
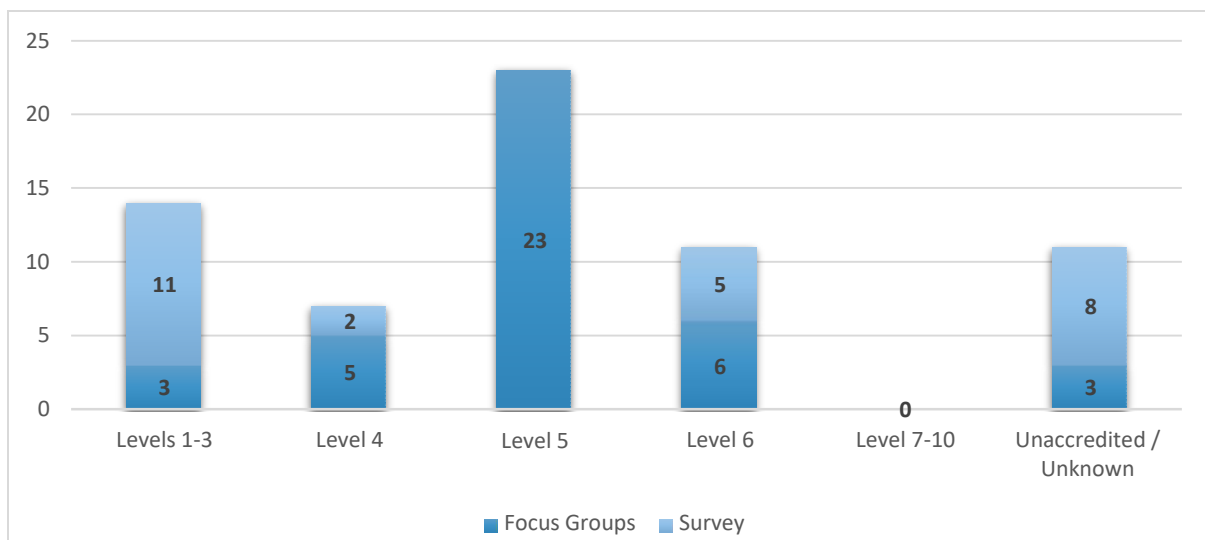

Figure 1: Learner representation by Course Level at all Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Consultation Processes
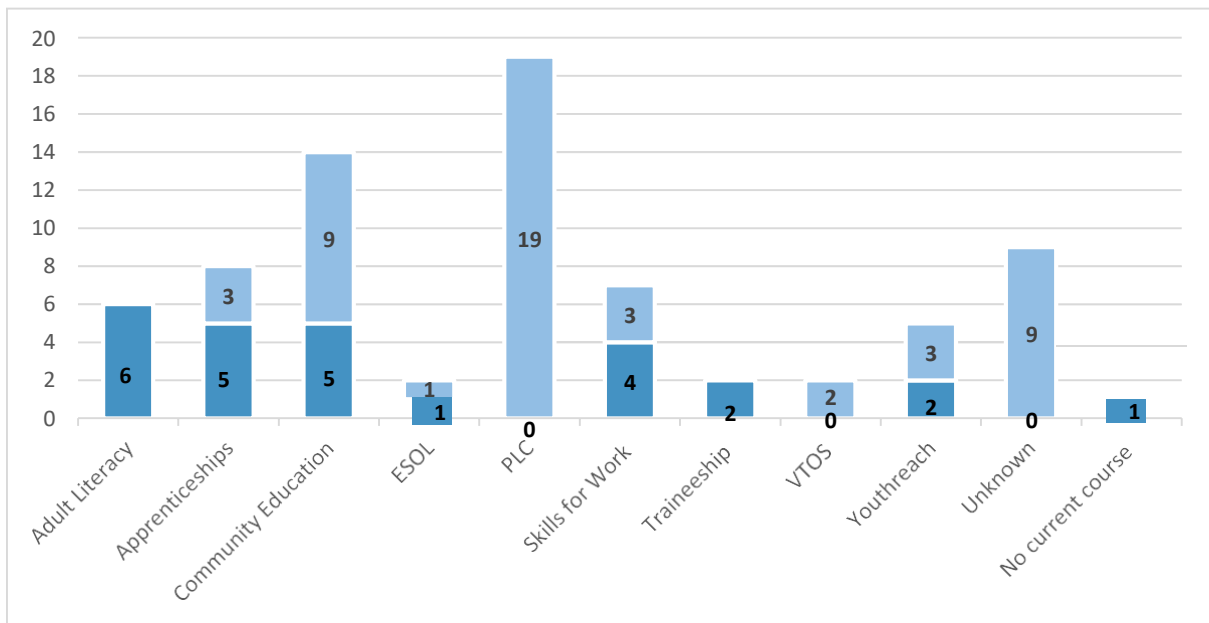
Figure 2: Learner representation by programme at all Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Consultation Processes

Findings

The findings section is presented in two key subsections: Forum Discussion Findings and Survey Findings. Findings from each are presented in both table and descriptive form. Evidence for both sections was drawn from learner feedback gathered.

Forum Discussions Findings

The table below presents key findings from the Forum discussions. Findings are presented by question. Each topic is expanded upon in the written passages featured below this table.

What are some effective ways your centre teaches adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills (IT skills)?	
One-to-one Support	• learners believe one-to-one support helps to improve their literacy skills
Peer Learning	• Learners believe peer learning is an effective feature of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learning
Tutors	• Learners praised their tutors for being patient, positive and encouraging

Class Atmosphere	• Learners believe an open and welcoming class atmosphere is a key ingredient for success
Practical Learning	• Learners appreciate the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned in class in a hands-on manner
Recognition of Prior Learning	• Learners felts they learned more when their prior learning was considered in the delivered of their lessons

What are some barriers you see in promoting literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (IT skills?)	
Perceived Stigma	• Learners would like to see feelings of shame, embarrassment or fear around improving literacy numeracy and digital literacy skills be alleviated
Digital Skills	• Learners felt that digital skills would continue to become more and more important in the modern world • Learners want to see digital skills incorporated into all literacy and numeracy course
Disability Supports	• Learners with disabilities would like their course materials to be accessible, with limited text, large font, and visuals aids included
COVID-19	• Learners would like digital skills courses to be prioritised in the reopening of centres • Learners would like tutors and learners to have access to all IT needs necessary to teach and learn online

What can be done to help improve adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy in Ireland?	
Advertisement	• Learners would like increased advertisement with clear messaging around course affordability and access

Progression Pathways	• Learners suggested that literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to be promoted as starting point to taking other courses and gaining other skills
Promoting Wider Benefits of Learning	• Learners would like the wider benefits of literacy learning to be promoted

What are some effective ways your centre teaches adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills (IT skills)?

When discussing the effective ways that their centres teach literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, learners found small class sizes and **one-to-one support** they received very helpful. Having a small number of learners in each class meant learners could get more direct support from tutors and are able to focus on their work without distraction. Some learners, including learners doing non-accredited literacy courses and learners with disabilities, are receiving one-to-one support in their classes. These learners felt this is the best way to improve their skills, as the classes could be tailored to their specific needs. As one learner explained, "We get one-to-one support and they do make sure we really understand everything."

While learners felt that small class sizes were preferable, they also appreciated the opportunities to engage in **peer learning**. Learners enjoy being able to turn to their classmates for support and to discuss the topics they were covering in the class, both during class and during breaks between classes. They explained how the acquired nature of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy meant that learners could build their own confidence by supporting others. As one learner explained, "I could already know one thing, whereas someone else may have known about another, so we can all help each other out."

Learners felt that their **tutors** were very important to their success. Learners spoke very highly of their tutors, describing them as "patient", "sympathetic" and "encouraging." They appreciated how tutors respected learners. Tutors were described as being able to pick up what learners are struggling with and focus on the positives in learner's work, with one learner explaining, "there's no such thing as a stupid or a stupid answer." Learners also spoke about how tutors are able to draw out their skills from their past experiences and build their confidence, with another learner stating "they show you that you know more than you ever thought you did."

Learners also described **class atmosphere** as very important to their success. Learners appreciated the open and relaxed atmosphere of their classes. Many learners contrasted

this with their previous experience in school. Adult literacy classes in contrast were described as informal and moved at a flexible pace, allowing learners more time to focus on skills or topics they found challenging, with one learning explaining, "we can take our time, there's never any rush."

When discussing their courses, learners praised the **practical learning** involved in their coursework. Practical learning, they believed, allowed learners to relate their coursework to their everyday lives and to understand how classroom lesson can be applied in the outside. This was specifically mentioned by learners with disabilities, who found it easier to grasp concepts and learn when skills are applied to real life situations, and they are able to practice them. One learner described, "sometimes we do quizzes and fun stuff on the computer about shopping or food and drink." Learners felt this was particularly important for numeracy courses, where lessons can be more abstract. They wanted to see numeracy lessons focus more on life skills that learners will use, such as paying for something with coins or notes, or reading a bill or a receipt.

Finally, learners found that the **Recognition of Prior Learning** helped ensure literacy, numeracy and digital literacy lessons were shaped to best meet their needs. Learners came from a variety of backgrounds with diverse experiences and had varied reasons for returning to education. These experience in turn had in impact on what they brought with them to the classroom and what they wanted to learn. Each had specific goals for improving their skills, for example getting involved in local community activities, helping their children with their online learning, and buying and writing a birthday card for a loved one. Learners felt they could draw on their past experiences to help shape their individual learning goals. They also felt showcasing the skills they already had when they entered the classroom would help the tutor and learners better be able to identify key areas of focus for development.

What are some barriers you see in promoting literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (IT skills)?

When asked about the barriers to promoting literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in Ireland, learners spoke about the **perceived stigma** that can be associated with having limited literacy or numeracy skills. Learners identified feelings of shame, embarrassment, and fear of the unknown as factors stopping them from accessing a course. Learners described first enquiring or going to an educational centre, but not following up because of these feelings. Learner wanted to see this stigma addressed as part of a wider promotional campaign around literacy learning. As one learner explained "people need to know they are not alone, they are not stupid, and that help is out there." Learners maintained that more learners would access literacy numeracy and digital literacy courses if the stigma around these services was tackled.

Learners felt more focus should be placed on incorporating **digital skills** into their literacy and numeracy courses. They felt that digital skills were very important, particularly in light

of the ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19. As one learner explained, "it (the Internet) is the future, and it flows into everything we do." Learners thought that digital skills could be incorporated into their other courses by using a hybrid approach to learning, for example completing half of their adult literacy coursework on paper and the other half on a laptop or computer.

 Learners with disabilities wanted to see more **disability supports** specifically for literacy and numeracy offered across all courses. They felt that sometimes course materials contained too much text, or had a small font size that makes these materials difficult to read. They suggested that all materials be presented in an easy-read format with large font and minimal text. If these materials were paired with visual aids such a photos or images, it would be more accessible for learners with disabilities.

Learners also spoke about the current barriers related to **COVID-19** restrictions. Learners who were learning remotely missed face-to-face classes, and felt that basic skills courses, and particularly basic digital literacy skills courses, should be prioritised when reopening to centres. As one learner explained, "it's hard to learn how to use a laptop or a computer when you're at home, you can hardly get on it!" They also suggested that tutors be supplied with all necessary IT support to hold classes online. While learners praised centres' efforts to supply devices to those in need, they felt device access would remain a barrier to some learners who could benefit from improving their literacy, numeracy or digital literacy.

What can be done to help improve adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy in Ireland?

When discussing how to improve adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy in Ireland, learners pointed to **advertisement** for these services. Many learners had heard of their courses through word-of-mouth referrals from a family member or friend who had accessed the service previously. While word-of-mouth referrals were important, many expressed concern about learners who were not hearing about the supports available. Diversity in methods of advertisement was seen as key, given the potential limited literacy skills and digital literacy skills of those who benefit from taking a course. Learners suggested that courses be advertised through social media, in community centres, in INTREO offices, and on noticeboards in local shops, primary schools and the post office. One learner had taking part in door knocking and leafletting for his/her centre, and commented that potential learners appreciated this personal touch and being able to ask questions about the services available. Learners also felt the open access and limited cost of taking a course was a huge benefit. To ensure potential learners were aware of this benefit, they recommended that advertisement include information on affordable services and how to access them.

Framing literacy, numeracy and digital literacy courses as linking to other educational **progression pathways** was seen as important. Many learners who began in a course to improve their literacy numeracy or digital literacy course were able to progress onto other courses in their centres. They suggested adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills be emphasised as a gateway to further skills and learning, to encourage learners to access these services. As one learner explained, "I came in to improve my reading and writing, but now I've done communications, arts and crafts, I've done all sorts."

Finally, learners believed that more learners would take a course if they were aware of the **wider benefits** of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learning. Learners spoke about the ways in which taking their courses had greatly improved their lives, including increasing their confidence, increasing their employment options, becoming more independent, and improving their communication skills. As one learner explained "I never could have known how much it would improve my life." They recommended that these wider benefits be highlighted and listed as benefits of the completing a course.

Survey Findings

When learners were asked, "do you agree with the statement: 'my literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills are/were well supported in my learning experience'", the majority either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (see Figure 3). These findings suggest that learners feel their courses are currently doing an effective job of supporting literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

Figure 3: Responses to the question "Do you agree with the statement: 'My literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills are/were well supported in my learning experience'?"

When learners were asked, "what are some examples of effective literacy, numeracy, or digital literacy training you have received?", there was a variety of responses. These ranged from identifying exercises such as creative writing assignments, research skills, reading comprehensions, and typing practice to specific programs that learners received training on, such as Microsoft Teams, Outlook 365, Microsoft Word, and PowerPoint. It was suggested that learners had a chance to learn digital literacy, but not literacy or numeracy, as their courses were focusing more on the specialist topics. As one response explained, "we learned IT and, other than that nothing yet because of everything going around they thought it is more important for us to learn safety and CPR".

Learners were also asked "what are some challenges you think learners face in improving their literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills?". While answers were diverse, there were some common themes, such as social stigma, lack of confidence, disability barriers, language barriers, and lack of internet access. With respect to social stigma and the lack of confidence, learners pointed to a "feeling of embarrassment" and being "worried about what others think." It was also stated by some older learners that they "would feel shameful about going back to classroom, turning on a PC or laptop, or looking for help." As for disability barriers, dyslexia, and dyscalculia were cited as specific examples. The language barrier was mentioned especially in the context of learners whose mother tongue is not English. One specific negative consequence of the challenges was pointed out: "If [learners'] lack of literacy…is not picked up at interview for their course they may be placed in a class that is not suitable and drop out of the course."

When learners were asked "what do you think can be done to improve literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills across Ireland?", the following points were raised: better advertisement to inform learners of support and services available (e.g., through job centres and social welfare offices); a closer look at whether learners are struggling with any of the ALND; more tailored help for those in need of support (e.g., a one-to-one class); and better IT equipment and internet access. One respondent thought that, "more advertisements about going back to learning, more people telling their stories about going back" were needed. Another explained, "staff need to be trained to notice if someone is struggling."

Conclusion

Both the survey and the discussion findings highlight some key challenges that learners face in acquiring literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills. A number of these challenges are associated with the perceived stigma of needing to learn or a lack of self-confidence in one's ability to learn. In response to these, learners believed it was important to promote and celebrate literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learning. They felt this promotion would increase learner interest in available services and showcase some of the wider benefits of learning.

It was clear from both the survey and discussions that learners felt their literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills were currently well supported in their centres. They cited the one-to-one support given by tutors and the incorporation of peer learning as key ingredients to this success. Learners also believed that the link between life and learning concepts was critical to one's ability to engage with the information in a meaningful way.

Many of the recommendations to improve literacy, numeracy, and digital skills among adults focused on making materials more accessible to all learners, with a focus on the supports needed for learners with disabilities, and increasing access to the digital tools needed to effectively teach and learn literacy in a hybrid classroom. Learners preferred face-to-face courses, but accepted that remote learning was necessary and wanted to see a focus

on making remote learning more accessible for literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy learners.

These findings have been compiled by AONTAS through the National FET Learner Forum. Any questions on these findings can be directed to Kalianne Farren at kfarren@aontas.com or Leah Dowdall at ldowdall@aontas.com.
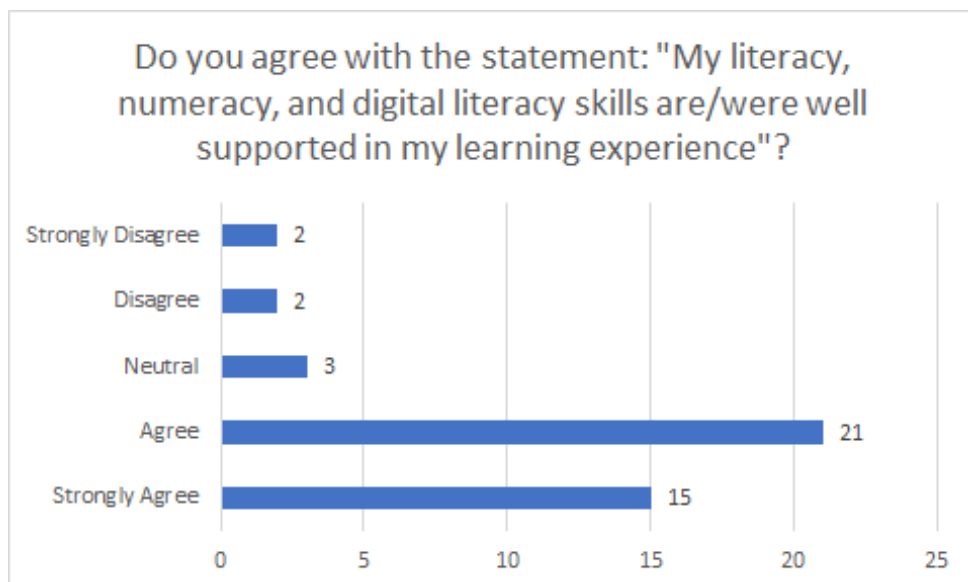
Appendix

Survey Responses

Do you agree with the statement: "My literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills are/were well supported in my learning experience"? (43 responses)				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15	21	3	2	2

What are some examples of effective literacy, numeracy, or digital literacy training you have received? (40 responses)	
Addiction Studies Level 7 Certification, Mathematical literacy.	1
[redacted for privacy reasons] have been and are fully supportive in not only the training I have done with them over the past two years but fully support my decision in becoming a numeracy advocate	1
Being able to understand what to do correctly	1
Communications and maths	1
Comprehension	1
Computer classes, art, maths classes, communications classes	1
English, maths	1
I don't know	1
I had a private tutor that taught me coding and IT	1
I had help how to write an essay and how to research online	1
I have done maths and first aid and personal development	1
I have never received any training in the above.	1
Individual literacy support. I also attend level 3 maths class.	1
IT and Communications classes	1

Learning to use Microsoft 365	1
Maths and communications	1
Maths class is effective. The job sheets for practical classes are also effective	1
Maths, computer skills	1
Microsoft teams, online mock exams	1
Microsoft Teams, Office 365, Online Mock Exams, PowerPoint	2
Microsoft Teams, Office 365, Online Mock Exams	1
Microsoft Teams, Office 365, Online Mock Exams, Power Point for Communications	2
None	2
Not received any yet	1
Plenty of computers available for use. Library well stocked with books required for my course. Tutor and peer support before numeracy exam.	1
Practising driver theory	1
Quizzes tests and online learning	1
To always wear eye protection	1
Turning it into games	1
Typing skills	1
Using the computer	1
We do work on Microsoft Word to help with our digital literacy	1
We done typing on a computer	1
We have IT classes after break most the time, but so far with everything going around we didn't get a chance yet to do maths or stuff like that. Since I am doing mechanical engineering, we are still in the process of learning safety and other important skills that you need like CPR	1
We learned IT and, other that, nothing yet because of everything going around they thought it is more important for us to learn safety and CPR	1
We were put in groups and had to write and think of things to write on what we were told.	1
Working with Microsoft Teams, Word and Excel have helped me improve greatly with my numeral literacy. Microsoft Word helps greatly with my spelling and my literacy. Another example would be PowerPoint for communication.	1

What are some challenges you think learners face in improving their literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills? (38 responses)	
A feeling of embarrassment for the learner. A one size fits all teaching style, we all learn differently.	1

A lack of entertainment	1
Accessing individual classes specific to literacy/numeracy need. English not my first language. I started primary school in Ireland when I was 8 years old. We speak [another language] at home.	1
Bad eyesight	1
Confidence	1
Dyslexia	1
Equipment, funding, staff facilitation, environments.	1
Frustrated and worried about what others think. It's hard	1
Having a disability	1
I don't know	1
I think learners would have difficulty not being able to complete it as quick as someone with experience	1
I think sometimes people are too lazy and don't put in the work. It can also be the case of some student that need to get extra attention if they are struggling in that particular department	1
If they have learning disabilities	1
If we didn't have internet access and equipment it would be a big problem. Not listening during class and having a foreign language could be a problem when it comes to understanding the work. Some people don't work well in group settings.	1
Internet access, equipment, listening, foreign language, group settings	1
Internet access, foreign Language	1
Internet Access, lack of equipment, listening, language barrier, group settings	1
Internet access, equipment, not listening, one to one	1
Lack of education and additions	1
Lack of self-confidence. If their lack of literacy is not picked up at interview for their course, they may be placed in a class that is not suitable and drop out of the course. Lack of equipment i.e. computers.	1
Listening	1
More read more about mathematics.	1
Most likely it is harder to spell more difficult words and write more difficult sentences.	1
No Internet access No equipment Foreign Language Working in group sessions	1
No internet access, poor English. Some people don't work well in a group setting	1
Not being able to read and/or write	1
Not enough practice	1

Not enthusiastic Unable to focus	1
Not having people listening to their struggles. Having to ask for help a number of times before things happen	1
Older learners can have huge challenges if they have no digital knowledge or if they have never heard of dyslexia dyscalculia that could be the reason they struggled in school or they have left school early. Some of them would feel shameful about going back to classroom, or turning on a PC or laptop, or looking for help.	1
Reading the time, using a computer	1
Some people are not good at maths or with computers	1
Some people don't put in the work like studying	1
Speed typing	1
Trying to learn new skills	1
Wi-Fi access at home is an issue for learners	1
Work experience	1

What do you think can be done to improve literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills across Ireland? (38 responses)	
Better Wi-Fi	1
Computer classes in primary school	1
Experience in typing more	1
Extra 1 on 1 classes for students who struggle	1
Extra help in schools	1
Giving hard ware, laptops, better Wi-Fi	1
Good communication skills between the teacher and the student. Every organization could provide laptops across the board and improve Wi-Fi connections. More one on one work with students that are struggling to understand the work. Attendance is a big need to keep up with the work on a daily basis.	1
Having more computers	1
I think it would be good if a spokesman came by to tell everyone the importance of literacy, numericity and digital literacy.	1
It would be good if a spokesman came by to tell everyone how important it is for people to have those skills	1
Laptops should be provided country wide, better internet access in certain parts of the country that are lacking good connection	1

Make it less of a stigma. Advertise more with people's stories. Stress that there is help and support available. Posters using animation in Job Centres, Social Welfare offices etc showing how easy it is to get help. Have a mentor/buddy scheme to help with one on one teaching.	1
Make more classes for it	1
Making learning more fun	1
More advertisements about going back to learning. more people telling their stories about going back.	1
More computer time	1
More courses	1
More funding for projects and internet skills	1
More online courses, engagement from participants, funding.	1
More time to help	1
No	1
None it all great	1
Pay more attention and try get students to understand what is going on	1
Provide Hardware Better Wi-Fi	1
Provide laptops having up to date software suitable internet access	1
Provide laptops, suitable software, lousy Wi-Fi	1
Providing Laptops, attend school, providing hardware, and better Wi-Fi	1
Providing more learning for people who struggle	1
Put you into a class with your own level of understanding	1
Read more books and practice now and again	1
Simple clear information on line where to get help / class.	1
Special help	1
Staff need to be trained to notice if someone is struggling.	1
Start giving lessons when they start the course	1
Tackle the stigma regarding the above, some people of a certain vintage have been traumatized by their school experiences. Tutors who are specifically trained in adult and community education need to be employed where they are most needed.	1
Teach it more to students	1
Voiceovers on questions and answers	1
Yes	1

Appendix 2

Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Participation and Attainment in the United Kingdom's Four Jurisdictions

Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Participation and Attainment in the United Kingdom's Four Jurisdictions

AONTAS & the Network for Adult Learning Across Borders (NALAB)

Dr Akisato Suzuki & Sam O'Brien-Olinger   December 2020

Introduction

This paper is being submitted to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) in support of SOLAS' work on adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy (ALNDL). This is a supplemental document for AONTAS' forthcoming submission to SOLAS in relation to the public consultation on the development of the new 10-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

As part of its research and development of a domestic policy position on how best to increase levels of ALNDL, AONTAS drew on its partners' work in the United Kingdom to establish an evidence-based regional picture of how our nearest neighbours– England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland – are faring, through our Network of Adult Learning Across Borders (NALAB). The importance of gaining a better regional understanding of the issues surrounding levels of ALNDL, and educational equity more generally, cannot be underestimated as Ireland faces into a post-Brexit landscape and begins its pandemic recovery. Heightened awareness of the social, political and economic interdependence between our two islands and five jurisdictions must increasingly translate into reciprocal support and mutually advantageous cooperation so that the educational rights and opportunities our populations deserve to benefit from and enjoy can be nourished, enhanced and maximised.

This paper summarizes general trends in participation and/or attainment in adult education programmes related to ALNDL in the UK's four jurisdictions. In brief, the data suggests that there has been, on average, a decline in recent years in participation numbers and levels of attainment in all of the four jurisdictions. The caveat with respect to the data presented in this report is that there is a variation in the availability and scope of relevant data across these jurisdictions. Therefore, not all relevant data are available in each jurisdiction; nor are the data necessarily comparable across these jurisdictions. Nonetheless, looking at all available data as a whole provides a useful picture about the general situations on ALNDL in the UK's four jurisdictions.

England

In England, there are annual data on the number of participation and achievement in English and math qualifications (Department for Education 2019). Figure 1 is the visualization of these data, both as the absolute numbers and as the proportions to the total population estimate in England – the top row
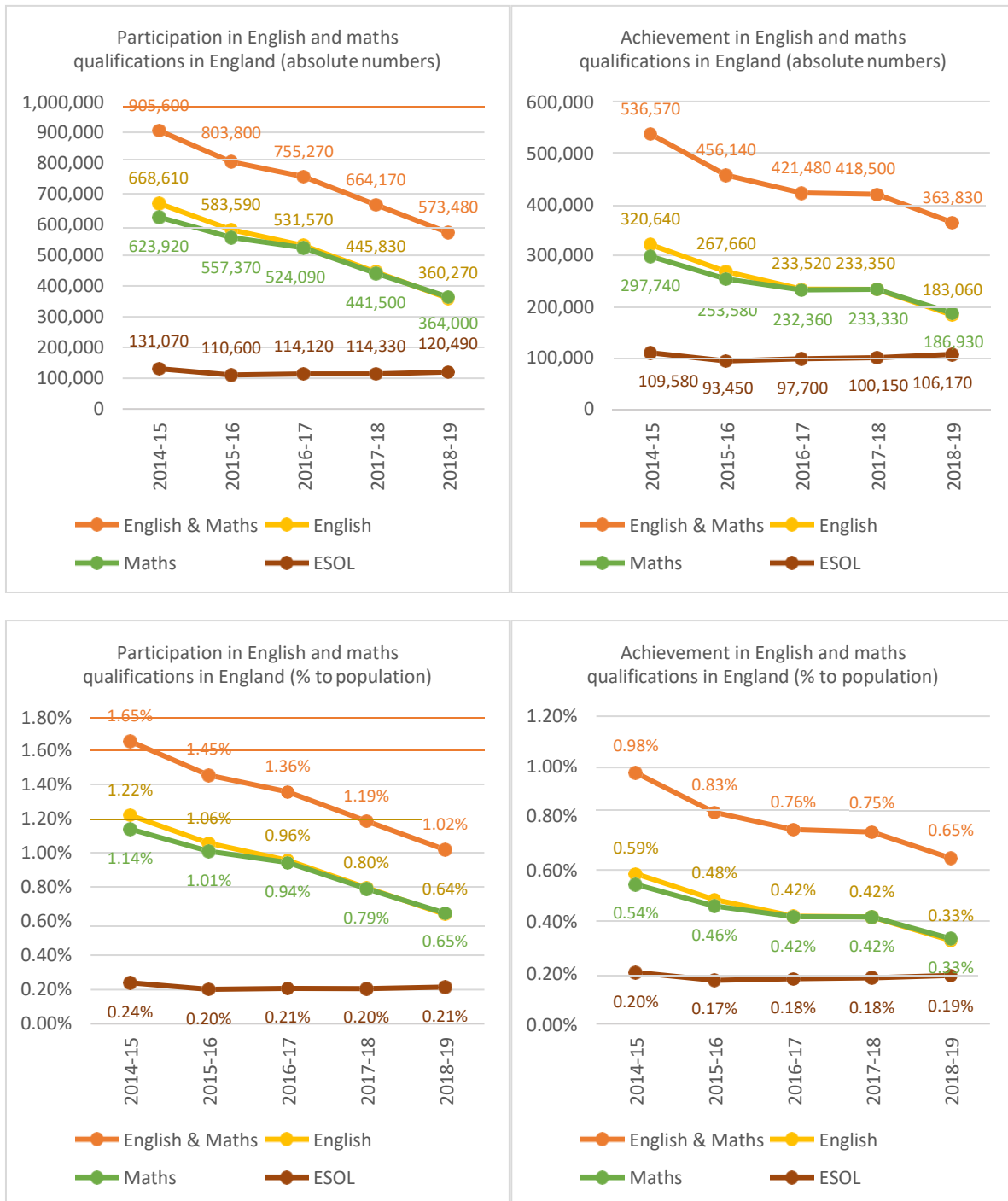
using absolute numbers and the bottom row using the proportions, and the left panel on participation and the right panel on achievement.

Except for data pertaining to English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), there have been steady decreases in the participation and achievement. The number of participation has dropped from the year of 2014-15 to the year of 2018-19, by 332,120 for English and maths qualifications, by 308,340 for English qualifications, by 259,920 for maths qualifications, and by 10,580 for ESOL. The proportion of participation to the population has dropped during the same period, by 0.63 percentage points for English and maths qualifications, by 0.58 percentage points for English qualifications, by 0.49 percentage points for maths qualifications, and by 0.03 percentage points for ESOL.

The number of achievement has dropped from the year of 2014-15 to the year of 2018-19, by 172,740 for English and maths qualifications, by 137,580 for English qualifications, by 110,810 for maths qualifications, and by 3,410 for ESOL. The proportion of achievement to the population has dropped during the same period, by 0.33 percentage points for English and maths qualifications, by 0.26 percentage points for English qualifications, by 0.21 percentage points for maths qualifications, and by 0.01 percentage points for ESOL.

Figure 1: Participation and achievement in English and maths qualifications

Participation in English and maths qualifications in England (absolute numbers)

Achievement in English and maths qualifications in England (absolute numbers)

Participation in English and maths qualifications in England (% to population)

Achievement in English and maths qualifications in England (% to population)

Sources: Department for Education (2019); Office for National Statistics (2020a). ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Scotland

There are annual data on enrolments in Basic Skills programmes, part of which include literacy and/or numeracy, in further education colleges in Scotland (Scottish Funding Council 2020). Unfortunately, to our knowledge, statistics disaggregated into each subject is unavailable. Figure 2 is the visualization of these data, both as the absolute numbers and as the proportions to the total population estimate in Scotland.

Since the year of 2008-09, the number of enrolments has significantly declined on average. The decrease from the year of 2008-09 to the year of 2018-19 is 6,426 (from 9,227 to 2,801) in terms of the absolute number and a 0.125 percentage point (0.176% to 0.051%) in terms of the proportion to the population.

Figure 2: Enrolments in Basic Skills programmes in Scotland
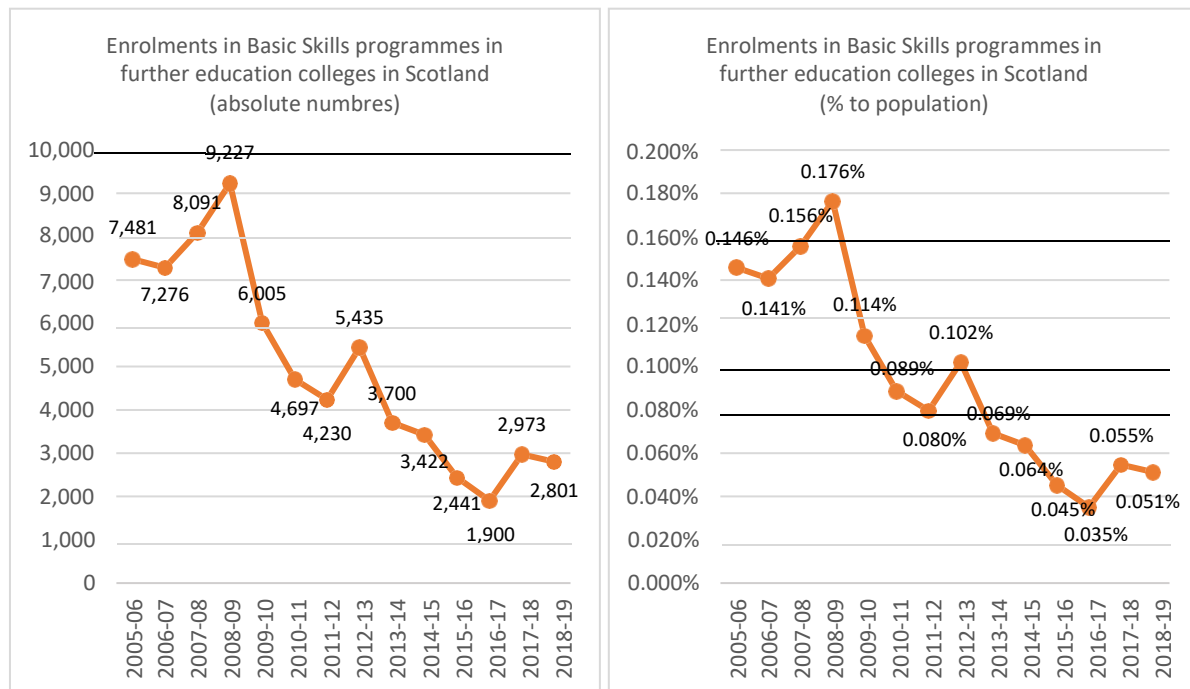
Source: Scottish Funding Council (2020); Office for National Statistics (2020c).

The Scottish Government published *Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Strategic Guidance* in 2011. This strategy outlined "detailed plans to improve the literacies capabilities of Scotland's adults over the next 10 years" (Scottish Government 2020, 1). In 2015, Education Scotland conducted a survey to examine how the situation changed after the publication of the above strategy which provides more data. However, the caveat is that the survey was on a small scale (228 valid responses) and, therefore, it is difficult to make any general conclusions. The profile of the respondents was: 174 individuals and 54 on behalf of groups or organisations.

In the survey, when the respondents were asked "Has access to literacies opportunities changed in the last five years? If so how?" there were similar numbers of respondents who indicated "increased numbers accessing services" (45 respondents, or 19.7%), and those who indicated "reduces numbers accessing services" (57 respondents, or 25%) (Education Scotland 2016, 17). This was despite 70 (or 30.7%) respondents pointing to "improved access for target groups" (Education Scotland 2016, 17).

When the respondents were asked "What is the primary focus for adult literacy services in your area/organisation? Tick all that apply," there were 157 responses (69% of the respondents) for "Improving literacy," 122 responses (54% of the respondents) for "Improving numeracy," and 117 responses (51% of the respondents) for "Improving use of IT" (Education Scotland 2016, 17).

Wales

In Wales, there are annual data on the completion of adult basic education (Welsh Government 2020), which captures the courses that involve literacy, numeracy, and/or digital skills (either directly or indirectly). Unfortunately, there are no data disaggregated into each subject of adult basic education, although there are separate data on the completion of ESOL. Figure 3 is the visualization of these data, both as the absolute numbers and as the proportions to the total population estimate in Wales.

Figure 3: Completion in adult basic education and ESOL in Wales
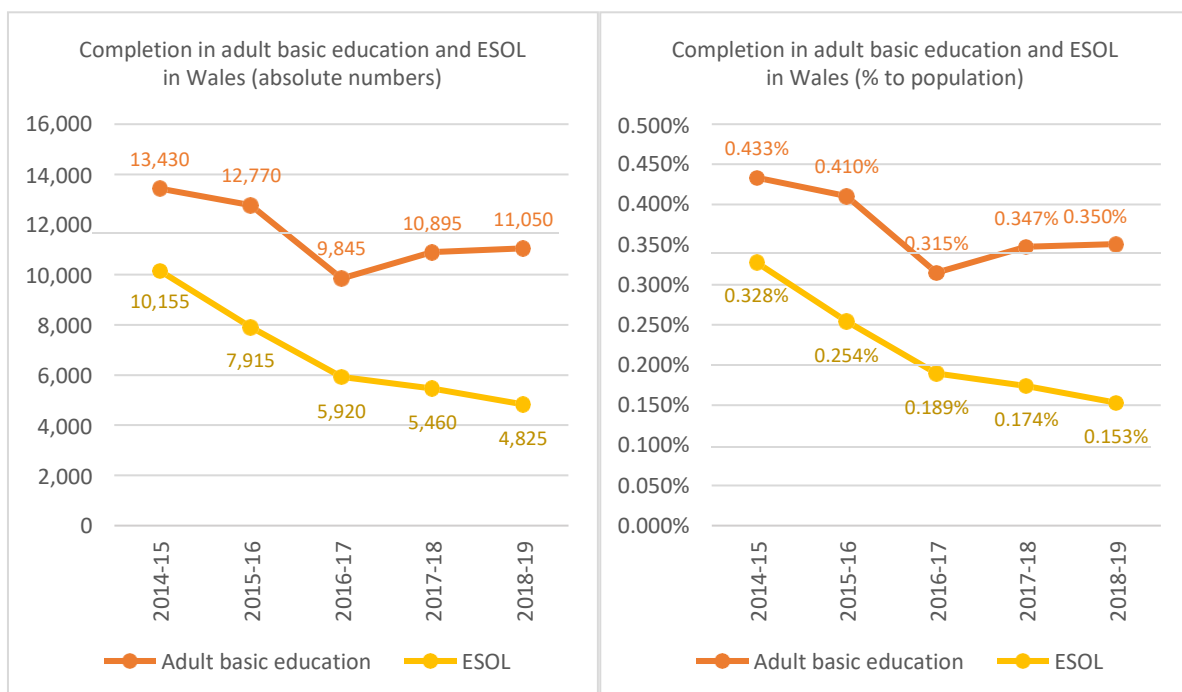
Sources: Welsh Government (2020); Office for National Statistics (2020d).

With respect to adult basic education, the trend shows there was a decline from the year of 2014-15 until the year of 2016-17 by 3,585 in terms of the absolute number and by 0.118 percentage points in terms of the proportion to the population, but then there has been a slight increase, by 1,205 in terms of the absolute number and by 0.035 percentage points in terms of the proportion to the population. As for ESOL, there has been a constant decline. The decrease from the year of 2014-15 to the year of 2018-19 is 5,330 in terms of the absolute number, and 0.175 percentage points in terms of the proportion to the population.
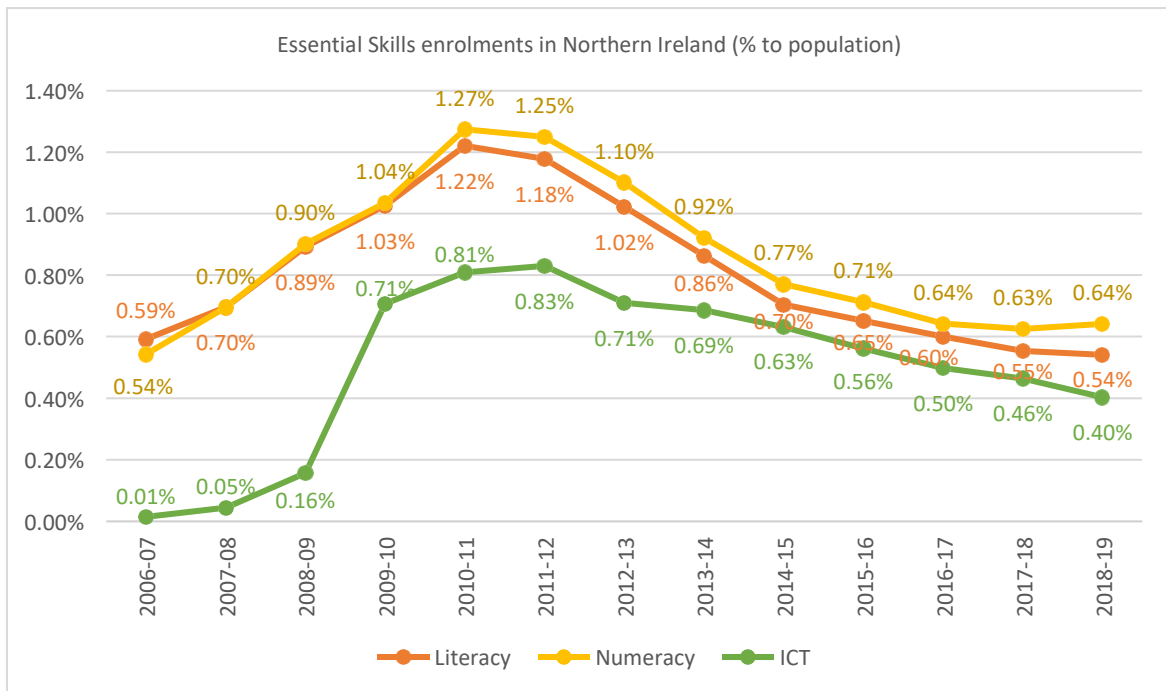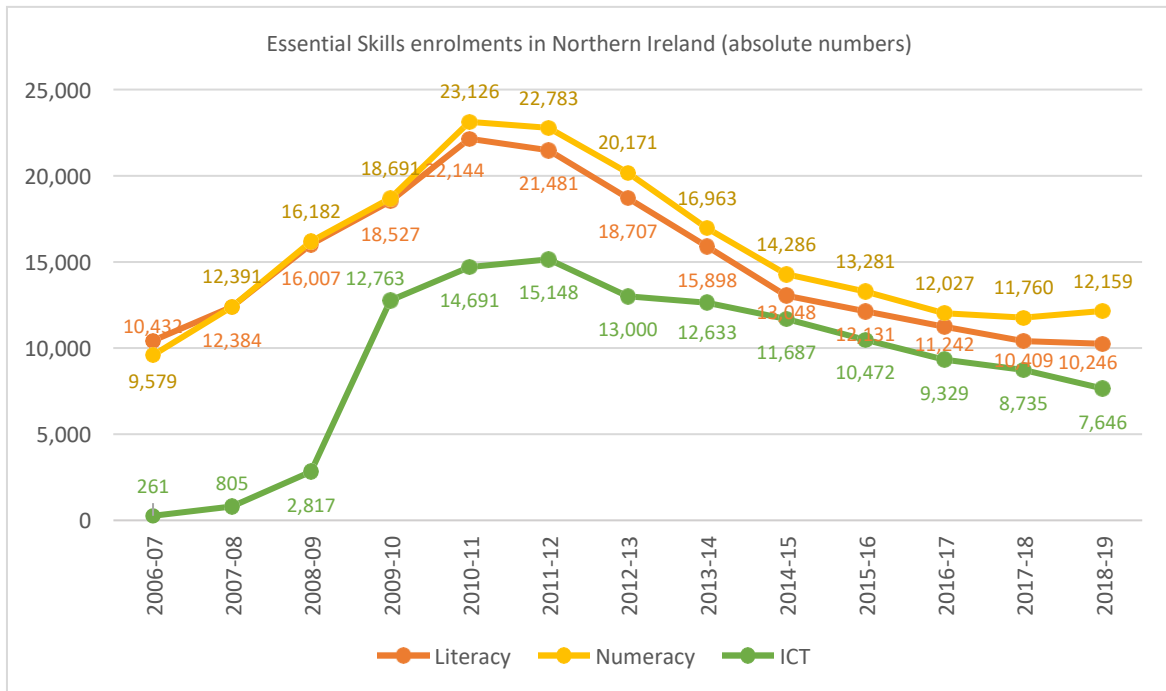
Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, there are annual data on essential skills enrolments and qualifications, which are disaggregated into literacy, numeracy, and ICT (Department for the Economy 2019). Figure 4 presents the time-series trend of enrolments in each subject (the top row for the absolute numbers and the bottom row for the proportions to the population estimate of Northern Ireland), and Figure 5 displays the time-series trend of qualifications.

The trend of enrolments was upward for literacy and numeracy until the academic year of 2010-2011, and for ICT until 2011-2012. Since then, there has mostly been a constant decline. The number of enrolments has declined by 11,898 for literacy and by 10,967 for numeracy from the year of 2010-11 to the year of 2018-19, and by 7,502 for ICT from the year of 2011-12 to the year of 2018-19. The proportion of enrolments to the population has declined by 0.68 percentage points for literacy and by 0.63 percentage points for numeracy from the year of 2010-11 to the year of 2018-19, and by 0.43 percentage points for ICT from the year of 2011-12 to the year of 2018-19.

The trend of qualifications shows a similar pattern. The number of qualifications has declined by 9,889 for literacy and by 9,816 for numeracy from the year of 2011-12 to the year of 2018-19, and by 3,020 for ICT from the year of 2012-13 to the year of 2018-19. The proportion of qualifications to the population has declined by 0.55 percentage points for literacy and by 0.55 percentage points for numeracy from the year of 2011-12 to the year of 2018-19, and by 0.18 percentage points for ICT from the year of 2012-13 to the year of 2018-19.

Figure 4: Essential Skills enrolments in Northern Ireland

Essential Skills enrolments in Northern Ireland (absolute numbers)

Essential Skills enrolments in Northern Ireland (% to population)

Sources: Department for the Economy (2019); Office for National Statistics (2020b).

Figure 5: Essential Skills qualifications in Northern Ireland

Essential Skills qualifications in Northern Ireland (absolute numbers)

Essential Skills qualifications in Northern Ireland (% to population)
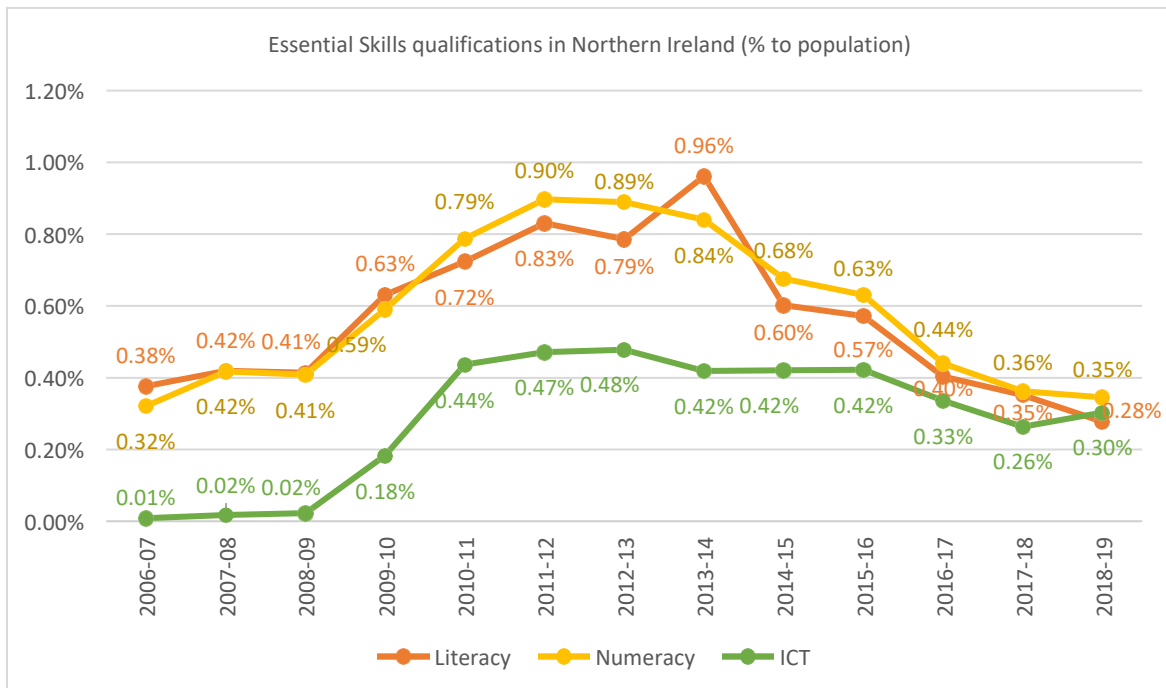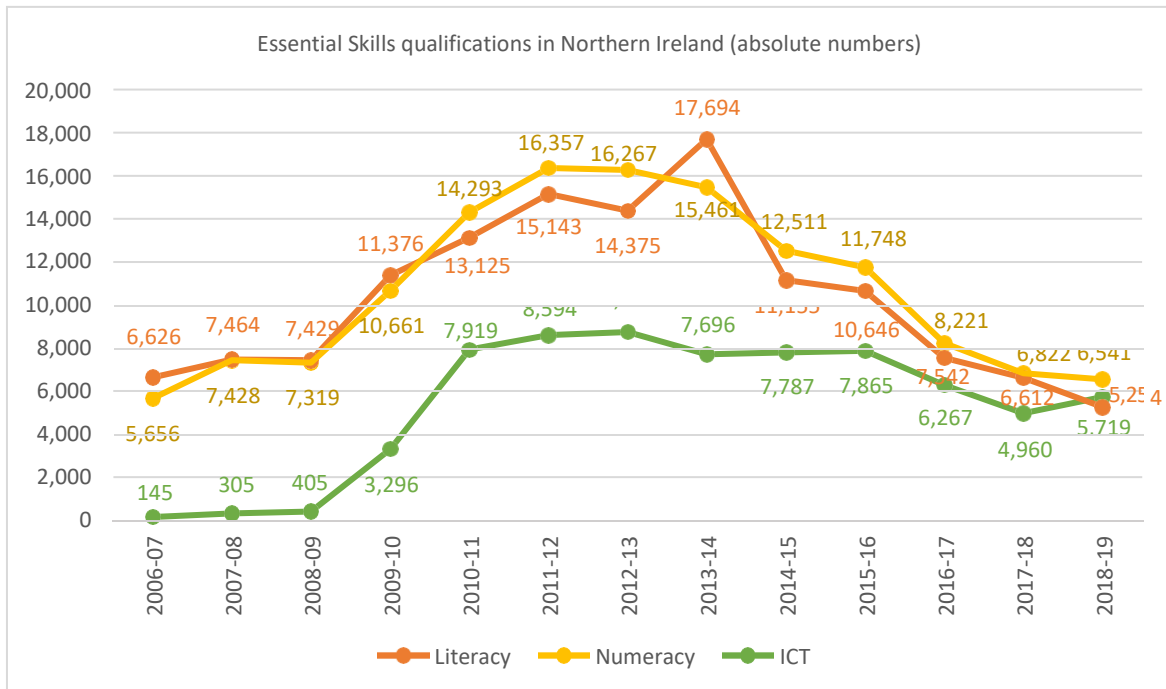
Sources: Department for the Economy (2019); Office for National Statistics (2020b).

ALNDL scores

To our knowledge, there are no systematic cross-national time-series data on ALNDL scores. However, there are a few relevant sources. For example, the OECD Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) collected cross-sectional data on adult literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments, in 2011 and 2012 – the Survey of Adult Skills (OECD 2013). Problem solving in technology-rich environments as a type of digital skill is defined here as "the ability to use digital technology, communication tools and networks to acquire and evaluate information, communicate with others and perform practical tasks" (OECD 2013, 20). England and Northern Ireland participated in this survey. The survey collected a representative sample of 5,131 adults (aged 16-65) for England and 3,761 for Northern Ireland (OECD 2013, 51-55). Table 1 presents the results; for reference, the OECD average and Ireland's scores are listed as well. The scores range from 0 to 500: the greater the number is stronger the skills are. Both England and Northern Ireland have scores similar to the OECD average in every subject. In addition, both have the highest score in problem solving in technology-rich environments, followed by literacy. The lowest scores were observed in numeracy.

Table 1: Average scores of adult literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments in the PIAAC 2011-12 Survey of Adult Skills

Area	Sample size	Literacy score	Numeracy score	Problem solving score
OECD Average	-	266	262	277
Ireland	5,983	267	256	277
England	5,131	273	262	281
Northern Ireland	3,761	269	259	275

Source: OECD (2013).

The Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies (SSAL) 2009 used a random sample of 1,927 adults (aged 16-65) to report on adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland (Clair, Tett, and Maclachlan 2010). Table 2 displays the results; the scores range from 0 to 500: the greater the number is the stronger the skills are. There are three measures: Prose, Document, and Quantitative. The definitions are as follows:

> Prose literacy is the knowledge and skills required to understand and to use information from texts such as newspaper articles and passages of fiction. Document literacy is the knowledge and skills required to locate and to use information contained in various formats such as timetables, graphs, charts and forms. Quantitative literacy is the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials (Clair, Tett, and Maclachlan 2010, 3n2).

Contrary to England and Northern Ireland, the Scottish sample of people scored highest in Quantitative, or numeracy (with the caveat that the PIAAC and the SSAL may not necessarily be comparable).

Table 2: Average scores of adult literacy in the SSAL 2009

Prose	Document	Quantitative
282	289	294

Source: Clair, Tett, and Maclachlan (2010).

Finally, the National Survey of Adult Skills in Wales (NSASW) 2010 (Miller and Lewis 2011) reported the proportion of people with different levels of literacy and numeracy in a nationally representative sample of 2,134 adults (aged 16-65). Table 3 presents the results. As in England and Northern Ireland, the Welsh sample scored better in literacy than in numeracy (again, with the caveat that these surveys may not be perfectly comparable).

Table 3: Proportion of people who achieved a certain level of literacy and numeracy in the sample in the NSASW 2009

	Literacy level	Numeracy level
Entry level	12%	51%
Level 1	29%	29%
Level 2 or above	59%	21%

Source: Miller and Lewis (2011)

The Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index (Lloyds Bank 2020) reports more recent data on digital skills, providing a measure of Essential Digital Skills for Life in the UK's four jurisdictions in 2019 and 2020. Table 4 displays the results. It seems that Wales and Scotland are performing less well than England and Northern Ireland, and their situations worsened from 2019 to 2020. However, it is unclear whether this is because of some substantial difference between all of the samples or just because the English sample was relatively small and therefore susceptible to error.

Table 4: People with Essential Digital Skills for Life by Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index

	England		Scotland		Wales		Northern Ireland	
Year	%	sample size	%	sample size	%	sample size	%	sample size
2019	78%	3,451	78%	368	70%	220	75%	151
2020	80%	3,496	72%	372	67%	215	80%	150

Source: Lloyds Bank (2020)

Learner voice

Across the UK, learner voice is also part of the evidence base for policy development, although not to a great extent. Such data was not available for this report, however, behind those statistics are people who have the right to attain literacy, numeracy and digital skills in order to engage in society. We know the transformative impact of adult learning and the importance of learner-informed policy strategies the further efforts towards educational equality.

While macro-level data such as participation rates provide a "big" picture, learner voices are also an important element to develop the ALDNL strategy. Over the last five years, AONTAS has accrued data of more than 3,000 learners in Ireland through the National FET Learner Forums. In this effort, it has identified several learner voices with respect to ALNDL throughout its research into issues facing adult learners. For example, the COVID-19 Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Report points to a learner who stated that learners needed "[t]he tools and skills to learn online, for example a laptop, good Wi-Fi (Internet connectivity), the right applications and a good learning platform" (quoted in Dowdall, Lovejoy, and Farren 2020, 17).

In another example from the 2018 Annual Synthesis Report a learner stated:

> "I believe that for the language classes, we need more classes. Because it's too little, two hours or two hours and a half a week at higher levels. And a variety of other classes maybe. Not a diploma, but a discussion class or an everyday living skills class. Things that would create an interest for other people to come. Because I find that it's very good, very interesting and very profitable for us that we are there" (quoted in Dowdall and Sheerin 2020, 31).

In short, referring to learner voices such as the above ones are essential to develop a learner-centred effective ALNDL strategy.

Conclusion

This supporting paper has reviewed trends in participation and/or achievement in adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (ALNDL) in the UK's four jurisdictions – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Overall, the data suggest that there has been a decline on average over the last several years in the number of participation and/or achievement in programmes related to ALNDL in these jurisdictions.

While the OECD PIAAC report indicated that literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy among people in England and Northern Ireland were similar to the OECD average in the survey of 2011-2012, it is unclear whether this has remained the case till today, as the number of participation and achievement in programmes related to ALNDL has significantly dropped over the years. With respect to Scotland, when the national survey was conducted more than ten years ago, it was indicated that Scottish people were on average stronger at numeracy than the other UK jurisdictions. However, again, participation numbers in programmes related to ALNDL has significantly decreased over the last decade in Scotland. According to the national survey in Wales, Welsh people on average had weakness in numeracy compared to literacy. Given the number of participations in programmes related to

ALNDL has been lower than five years ago, it remains unclear whether the situation has improved since the last national survey in Wales. Finally, the recent survey on digital skills suggests that in the UK's four jurisdictions, a non-negligible portion of their populations does not have essential digital skills for life.

As noted in the introduction, there is considerable lack of comparable data on ALNDL across the four jurisdictions. It would be highly beneficial for all stakeholders across the Irish Sea if our jurisdictions were able to harmonise their methods and measurements so that comparisons and contrasts could be made more comprehensively and clearly in the development of domestic and regional policy.

What is clear from the data across the UK is that the overall decline in participation rates, decrease in educational attainment and downturn across ALNDL/Basic Skills in the UK over recent years should be of grave concern to the Department and SOLAS. Not only do these trends threaten regional consistency and educational equity, along with detrimental consequences for populations within and across our borders; they represent a significant warning to Ireland about what can be expected should Government neglect to adequately invest in community-based provision of these key core competences. Failure to resource localised forms of education that successfully reach, engage and ensure progression regarding ALNDL across the UK has further excluded learners and communities already on the margins of their respective education systems and societies. In light of this central finding, it is vital that Ireland learns from its neighbours' mistakes and takes all necessary strategic actions to avoid replicating the policies that have resulted in such trends in ALNDL across the UK and contributed to increased domestic and regional social exclusion, economic marginalisation and educational disadvantage.

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Appendix 3

10 Year Adult literacy numeracy and digital literacy strategy: Relevant Policy Documents, Strategies and Service Providers and Services Provided

	Information Request Template - 10 Year Adult literacy numeracy and digital literacy strategy	
	Relevant Policy Documents, Strategies and Service Providers and Services Provided.	
	With a view to expediting and strengthening the development of the 10 year **'Adult Literacy Numeracy and Digial Literacy Strategy' (ALND Strategy)** members of the Inter Departmental Group are invited to provide details regarding services and service providers for which they are responsible (entries in the rows 1,2, and 3 below). In addition, the members are invited to provide the links to relevant policies and strategies that would be useful to the ALND Strategy that they are aware of (entries in the rows 4 and 5 below). These policies and strategies can be national, international, or supranational. Where possible, more details should be provided for these on the second worksheet ("policies and strategies detailed").	
1	**Department / Organisation:**	AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation
2	**Services and supports provided**	AONTAS is an independent advocacy organisation whose mission is to advocate for the right of all adults in Ireland to quality learning throughout their lives, and to promote the value and benefits of lifelong learning. This includes improving the lives of Ireland's most disadvantaged learners through increasing levels of ALND. As a national organisation AONTAS brings together voices in the field of adult learning connecting learners, tutors, policymakers, academics in order to shape a more equitable system of lifelong learning.
3	**Service providers**	AONTAS has a growing membership of 400 organisations and individuals committed to lifelong learning. Our membership includes learners; tutors; and statutory, nongovernmental, community, and voluntary organisations from across the island of Ireland. AONTAS' membership comprises of hundreds of organisations that deliver services and supports of direct relevance to ALND. Through capacity building, research, communications and advocacy work, AONTAS provides support to these organisations and the thousands of learners who benefit from their provision.
4	**Policy documents** Those in bold fonts are detailed in the sheet "Policies & strategies_details."	Bowyer, Georgina, Anna Grant, and Douglas White. 2020. Learning from Lockdown: 12 Steps to Eliminate Digital Exclusion.
		Education Scotland. 2016. *Adult Literacies in Scotland: Survey of progress and priorities 2010-2015*

		Department for Education. 2018. Essential digital skills framework. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework (accessed on 23 November 2020).
		Welsh Government. 2019. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy for Wales. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-esol-policy-wales.pdf (accessed on 23 November 2020).
		Scottish Government. 2014. Digital Participation: A National Framework for Local Action. https://www.gov.scot/publications/digital-participation-national-framework-local-action/
5	**Strategies** Those in bold fonts are detailed in the sheet "Policies & strategies_details."	**OECD. 2020. OECD Skills Strategy Northern Ireland (United Kingdom): Assessment and Recommendations. OECD Skills Studies. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/1857c8af-en.**
		Scottish Government. 2011. Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Strategic Guidance. See Education Scotland (2016) for the evaluation of the strategic guidance after five years of implementation.
		Welsh Government. 2017. *Adult Learning in Wales*. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/adult-learning-in-wales.pdf
		Department of Education and Skills. 2004. Skills for Life – the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills: Delivering the vision 2001-2004. DfES Publications. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7187/ (accessed on 23 November 2020).
		Welsh Government. 2019. *Digital 2030: A strategic framework for post-16 digital learning in Wales*. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/digital-2030-a-strategic-framework-for-post-16-digital-learning-in-wales.pdf (accessed on 20 November 2020).

Literature review - annotated bibliography approach

The focus should be on the following:

· International Policies, strategies and approaches of relevance to the ALND Strategy

· National Policies, strategies or approaches of relevance to the Strategy re Adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy/skills/divide (key issues, actors, compilation, approaches, etc)

· Data on the current provision / state of play of relevant services and supports provided/available in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

· Identification of ALND relevant provision and / or strategic approaches

6 documents were selected from the list; please scroll down to see all.

	1	Type: International Policies of relevance to the ALND Strategy
Annotated bibliography items	[country or supranational organisation / body] Northern Ireland, UK	"Building on a tradition of skills strategies, including the 2011-2020 overarching strategy Success through Skills - Transforming Futures, Northern Ireland is currently developing a new skills strategy. To support this process, the OECD and the government of Northern Ireland identified four priority areas for improving Northern Ireland's skills performance, which are the focus of this report" (p. 12).
	Title	OECD Skills Strategy Northern Ireland (United Kingdom): Assessment and Recommendations
	Citation	OECD. 2020. *OECD Skills Strategy Northern Ireland (United Kingdom): Assessment and Recommendations*. OECD Skills Studies. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/1857c8af-en (accessed on 20 November 2020).
	Key actor	Government of Northern Ireland

Aims/Targets		[Please list the main aims and objectives and if applicable, targets] Improve economic productivity, help economic recovery and growth, mitigate economic and social shocks
Stakeholders		[Please list key stakeholders involved and briefly describe their roles] "departments, government agencies, employer associations, trade unions, education and training providers, research institutions, and many more" (p. 238); they contributed to the project through large interactive workshops, in-depth thematic sessions and other meetings.
Key findings / issues		[Please outline the key findings or issues regarding a policy / strategy] Cited from pp. 12-13: - "Skills imbalances can negatively affect economic growth through their effects on increased labour costs; lower labour productivity growth; and slower adoption of new technologies"; - "Creating a culture of lifelong learning is crucial to ensuring that individuals actively participate in adult learning after leaving the compulsory education system"; - "The effective use of skills in workplaces has potential benefits for employers, employees and society as it can help raise productivity and innovation in businesses, and help increase wages and job satisfaction for employees. Public policy makers can work with employers to help create the conditions or provide direct support for strengthening skills use in workplaces"; - "Effective governance arrangements are essential to support Northern Ireland's performance in developing and using people's skills. The success of skills policies typically depends on the responses and actions of a wide range of actors (e.g. government, educators, workers, employers)"
Key Recommendations		[what are the key recommendations of policy / strategy?] Cited from pp. 11-13: - "Reduce skill imbalances"; - "Create a culture of lifelong learning"; - "Transforming workplaces to make better use of skills"; - "Strengthening the governance of skills policies"

	Key Actions	[what are the key actions of policy / strategy, either planned or implemented?]
	Methodology	[Please outline what methodology is used / relevant (if applicable)?] Expert consultation, stakeholder consultation
	Data / statistics	[Please provide any data that is relevant e.g. data regarding the current provision / state of play of relevant services and supports provided / available in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy]
Identification of approaches used:	**Strategic approach to Literacy (literacy in its totality)**	[What strategic approach has been used? For example, whether any of these are evident: the Whole of Government approach, involvement of multiple stakeholders, public consultation being conducted and methods , involvement of social partners, involvement and role of non-governmental sector etc.? Is literacy, numeracy, digital literacy strategy an integral part of broader social and economic strategies, etc.] Stakeholders including "departments, government agencies, employer associations, trade unions, education and training providers, research institutions, and many more" (p. 238) contributed to the project through large interactive workshops, in-depth thematic sessions and other meetings. The project included basic skills in maths, English and information and communication technology (ICT), as part of the discussion.
	Governance / coordination	[Are there any coordinating structures in place? Is there any evidence of collaborative approaches or efforts?] OECD; they engaged with multiple stakeholders and experts for consultation.
	Approaches regarding provision of services and supports	[What approaches are used regarding provision of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy for adults ? E.g. integrated approaches vs. standalone literacy, numeracy, digital literacy provision / training / skills development; is Literacy provided within the mainstream upskilling and development? Are there different approaches used in different settings / different programmes? What supports are provided and if applicable, what cohorts of society are targeted and how?] "For those lacking basic skills in maths, English and information and communication technology (ICT), the Essential Skills programme, run by the DfE, provides free courses to improve

<table>

		competencies in these core areas. The Essential Skills courses are open to individuals 16 and over and are delivered by FE colleges and voluntary and community training organisations" (p.99).
	Terminology / language used	[How is literacy in its totality referred to, what terminology is used by key players / agencies / providers? E.g. core foundational skills , basic skills, essential skills, "reading & writing" etc. ; any relevant information regarding literacy being discussed in the public discourse can be included] basic skills, essential skills
	Any other relevant issues themes identified	[Please add in anything else deemed relevant e.g. are there any other relevant issues or themes identified within the approaches to Literacy in its totality that are deemed relevant or useful?]
Annotated bibliography items	**2**	Type: International Policies, strategies and approaches of relevance to the ALND Strategy
	[country or supranational organisation / body] Scotland, UK	"The Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan 1 has established Scotland's overarching vision for all learners – to raise standards of literacy for all from the early years through to adulthood" (p. 4).
	Title	Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Strategic Guidance.
	Citation	Scottish Government. 2011. *Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Strategic Guidance*. https://www.gov.scot/publications/adult-literacies-scotland-2020-strategic-guidance/ (accessed 20 November 2020).
	Key actor	Government of Scotland

Aims/Targets	[Please list the main aims and objectives and if applicable, targets]	
	Cited from p.4:	
	- "improved access to literacies learning opportunities";	
	- "high quality learning and teaching";	
	- "improved infrastructure";	
	- "evidence of impact"	
Stakeholders	[Please list key stakeholders involved and briefly describe their roles]	
	adult literacies stakeholders provided information and advice.	
Key findings / issues	[Please outline the key findings or issues regarding a policy / strategy]	
	"With our new knowledge from SSAL 2009, plus information and advice from adult literacies	
	stakeholders and national and international research, we	
	recognise that not only does literacies development benefit the individual learner, but it can also	
	make a positive difference to families, our economy	
	and society as a whole" (p. 9).	
Key Recommendations	[what are the key recommendations of policy / strategy?]Cite from p.14:- "Scotland's adults have	
	access to literacies learning opportunities in which they can achieve their goals and progress";-	
	"Adult literacies learners receive high quality learning and teaching so they can achieve their	
	goals";- "Scotland has a coherent and effective adult literacies infrastructure that enables and	
	supports continuous enhancement of provision";- "There is evidence of the impacts and the value	
	of literacies learning for individuals and society"	
Key Actions	[what are the key actions of policy / strategy, either planned or implemented?]	
	Too long to list here; please refer to pp. 16-25 in the document	
Methodology	[Please outline what methodology is used / relevant (if applicable)?]	
	survey (Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009)	
Data / statistics	[Please provide any data that is relevant e.g. data regarding the current provision / state of play	
	of relevant services and supports provided / available in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and	

		digital literacy] Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009
Identification of approaches used:	**Strategic approach to Literacy (literacy in its totality)**	[What strategic approach has been used? For example, whether any of these are evident: the Whole of Government approach, involvement of multiple stakeholders, public consultation being conducted and methods , involvement of social partners, involvement and role of non-governmental sector etc.? Is literacy, numeracy, digital literacy strategy an integral part of broader social and economic strategies, etc.] involvement of stakeholders
	Governance / coordination	[Are there any coordinating structures in place? Is there any evidence of collaborative approaches or efforts?]
	Approaches regarding provision of services and supports	[What approaches are used regarding provision of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy for adults ? E.g. integrated approaches vs. standalone literacy, numeracy, digital literacy provision / training / skills development; is Literacy provided within the mainstream upskilling and development? Are there different approaches used in different settings / different programmes? What supports are provided and if applicable, what cohorts of society are targeted and how?] An integrated approach to literacy and numeracy (no explicit reference to digital literacy but implied)
	Terminology / language used	[How is literacy in its totality referred to, what terminology is used by key players / agencies / providers? E.g. core foundational skills , basic skills, essential skills, "reading & writing" etc. ; any relevant information regarding literacy being discussed in the public discourse can be included] adult literacies
	Any other relevant issues themes identified	[Please add in anything else deemed relevant e.g. are there any other relevant issues or themes identified within the approaches to Literacy in its totality that are deemed relevant or useful?]
An not ate	**3**	Type: International Policies, strategies and approaches of relevance to the ALND Strategy

[country or supranational organisation / body] Wales, UK	"This policy statement sets out the Welsh Government's priorities for adult learning during this Assembly Term; and explains how it contributes to the ambition outlined in Taking Wales Forward which is of a Wales that is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, united and connected" (p. 3)
Title	Adult Learning in Wales
Citation	Welsh Government. 2017. *Adult Learning in Wales*. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/adult-learning-in-wales.pdf (accessed on 20 November 2020).
Key actor	Welsh Government
Aims/Targets	[Please list the main aims and objectives and if applicable, targets] "support adults to play an active role in the economy and society through enhancing their learning opportunities" (p. 3)
Stakeholders	[Please list key stakeholders involved and briefly describe their roles] providers; for their (expected) roles, please see the section "Key Recommendations" below.
Key findings / issues	[Please outline the key findings or issues regarding a policy / strategy] - "significant reductions in funding for adult learning over the past few years. Future funding for the sector remains vulnerable to additional cuts" (p. 3) - "the inequalities in the funding and provision available across Wales, and the lack of a coherent and clear strategy from the Welsh Government" (p. 3)

	Key Recommendations	[what are the key recommendations of policy / strategy?]Cite from p. 10:"Providers will be expected to":- "Ensure funded provision is targeted at those in greatest need with a clear emphasis on addressing Essential Skills, Digital Literacy and ESOL needs";- "Work with the Welsh Government to develop a funding and delivery structure that ensures public funding reaches those in greatest need";- "Work together in formal or informal partnerships (including the Regional Skills Partnerships) to ensure local needs are identified and addressed";- "Continue to share good practice through the Adult Learning Partnership Wales Network to ensure the sector continues to improve and challenge itself";- "Continue to evaluate outcomes using statistical data, RARPA and learner views to ensure that quality of provision and delivery remains high";- "Work together to eradicate duplication and improve learning opportunities and progression pathways"
	Key Actions	[what are the key actions of policy / strategy, either planned or implemented?] Cited from pp. 9-10: "The Welsh Government will:" - "In consultation with the sector, introduce a new funding and delivery structure to ensure public funding reaches those in greatest need"; - "Work collaboratively with the different departments within the Welsh Government to join up policy initiatives relating to employability, health, and communities"; - "Work with the Third sector to ensure learners have access to all provision available to them and that there are clear progression routes into mainstream provision where appropriate"; - "Work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus (JCP) and the new Work and Health Programme provider in Wales to align support and maximise the benefits for learners in Wales to ensure a smooth transition into employment"; - "Continue to develop performance measures and benchmarking data to help Adult Learning providers to evaluate learner outcomes; build on RARPA principles to support the measurement of 'soft' outcomes for non-accredited learning";

		- "Work with Higher Education Institutions, in particular the Open University, to ensure that there are improved progression pathways from adult learning to and through higher education"
	Methodology	[Please outline what methodology is used / relevant (if applicable)?] commissioned reviews
	Data / statistics	[Please provide any data that is relevant e.g. data regarding the current provision / state of play of relevant services and supports provided / available in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy]
Identification of approaches used:	**Strategic approach to Literacy (literacy in its totality)**	[What strategic approach has been used? For example, whether any of these are evident: the Whole of Government approach, involvement of multiple stakeholders, public consultation being conducted and methods , involvement of social partners, involvement and role of non-governmental sector etc.? Is literacy, numeracy, digital literacy strategy an integral part of broader social and economic strategies, etc.] An integral part of the broader strategy Taking Wales Forward (https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-08/taking-wales-forward.pdf)

	Governance / coordination	[Are there any coordinating structures in place? Is there any evidence of collaborative approaches or efforts?] work collaboratively with other departments within the Welsh government and with third-parties
	Approaches regarding provision of services and supports	[What approaches are used regarding provision of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy for adults ? E.g. integrated approaches vs. standalone literacy, numeracy, digital literacy provision / training / skills development; is Literacy provided within the mainstream upskilling and development? Are there different approaches used in different settings / different programmes? What supports are provided and if applicable, what cohorts of society are targeted and how?] An integrated approach to literacy, numeracy, and digital skills
	Terminology / language used	[How is literacy in its totality referred to, what terminology is used by key players / agencies / providers? E.g. core foundational skills , basic skills, essential skills, "reading & writing" etc. ; any relevant information regarding literacy being discussed in the public discourse can be included] essential skills
	Any other relevant issues themes identified	[Please add in anything else deemed relevant e.g. are there any other relevant issues or themes identified within the approaches to Literacy in its totality that are deemed relevant or useful?]
Annotated bibliography items	**4**	Type: International Policies, strategies and approaches of relevance to the ALND Strategy
	[country or supranational organisation / body] UK / England	Skills for Life is to "ensure adults of working age are able to gain the skills they need to find and keep work and participate fully in society" (p. 5)
	Title	Skills for Life – the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills: Delivering the vision 2001-2004
	Citation	Department of Education and Skills. 2004. *Skills for Life – the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills: Delivering the vision 2001-2004*. DfES Publications. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7187/ (accessed on 23 November 2020).
	Key actor	Department of Education and Skills, UK

Aims/Targets	[Please list the main aims and objectives and if applicable, targets]
	Cited from p. 6:
	- "boost demand for learning through promotion campaigns and by engaging partners across Government and employers in identifying and addressing the literacy and numeracy needs of their clients and employees";
	- "ensure the capacity of provision by securing sufficient funding and co-ordinating planning and delivery to meet learners' needs";
	- "raise the standard and quality of literacy and numeracy provision";
	- "increase learner achievement through the new national learning infrastructure and by reducing barriers to learning"
Stakeholders	[Please list key stakeholders involved and briefly describe their roles]
	The list is not exhaustive as there are many stakeholders having several roles.
	- The Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress supported the government to "convince and enable employers to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of their workforce" (p. 3);
	- "Programmes for Jobseekers helped 5,000 adults to achieve a qualification" (p. 12);
	- "Jobcentre Plus has been one of the key partners in encouraging adults to re-enter learning" (p. 12);
	- learndirect "provide independent advice and expertise to potential learners" through "a free national learning advice line" (p. 16);
	- "Organisations such as the Learning and Skills Council, Ufl/learndirect, NIACE, Campaign for Learning, Jobcentre Plus, The Probation Service, amongst others, have engaged wholeheartedly with the Get On Campaign" (p. 17), the campaign that "aims not only to raise awareness, but also to reduce the stigma attached to English and maths skills needs, and to motivate adults to take action to improve their skills" (p. 16);
	- Learning and Skills Councils worked together with the government to "increase resources engaged in brokering relationships between employers and learning providers" (p. 19), and the "national LSC developed a delivery plan in support of Skills for Life and ensured that each local LSC

had robust plans and achievement targets in place to increase high quality provision in order to meet local needs" (p. 28);

- "Government Departments have worked to embed Skills for Life in their policies to engage adults who come into contact with their service provision," including "unemployed people and benefit claimants, offenders and those supervised in the community" (p. 22);

- "To support the introduction of [a] new [teaching and learning] infrastructure over 16,000 teachers were trained in using the core literacy and numeracy curricula" (pp. 38-40)

Key findings / issues	[Please outline the key findings or issues regarding a policy / strategy] - "It is estimated that poor literacy and numeracy skills costs UK industry £4.8 billion each year in inefficiencies and lost orders" (p. 18); - "The findings from the [Skills for Life] survey estimate that there are 5.2 million adults in England with literacy skills below Level 1 (16% of the total population aged 16-65)" (p. 13); - "For numeracy, the challenge is even greater, with the survey findings indicating that 14.9 million adults have numeracy skills below Level 1 (46% of the total population aged 16-65)" (p. 13);

	Key Recommendations	[what are the key recommendations of policy / strategy?] Equivalent to those listed in the above section "Aims/Targets"; in addition, the report states: "Skills for Life has proved enormously effective in providing learners with greater and more flexible access to learning and qualifications. If we are to take the next step forward we must extend the reach of the strategy including to those who do not recognise themselves as learners or who are disadvantaged because of their low skills levels. It is for this reason that we are extending our efforts to raise the quality of all teaching and learning, and are extending capacity by pursuing a broader range of learning contexts and settings. For example, we will be targeting the following key areas": "Reaching individuals through the workplace," "Supporting innovative delivery," "A new deal for skills," and "A professional workforce" (pp. 48-51)
	Key Actions	[what are the key actions of policy / strategy, either planned or implemented?]Equivalent to those listed in the above section "Aims/Targets"
	Methodology	[Please outline what methodology is used / relevant (if applicable)?] surveys (Skills for Life Survey published in 2003; Literacy, Numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages: a survey of current practices in post-16 and adult provision), longitudinal study
	Data / statistics	[Please provide any data that is relevant e.g. data regarding the current provision / state of play of relevant services and supports provided / available in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy] - Skills for Life Survey; - Literacy, Numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages: a survey of current practices in post-16 and adult provision
Identification of approaches used:	Strategic approach to Literacy (literacy in its totality)	[What strategic approach has been used? For example, whether any of these are evident: the Whole of Government approach, involvement of multiple stakeholders, public consultation being conducted and methods , involvement of social partners, involvement and role of non-governmental sector etc.? Is literacy, numeracy, digital literacy strategy an integral part of

		broader social and economic strategies, etc.] involvement of multiple stakeholders
	Governance / coordination	[Are there any coordinating structures in place? Is there any evidence of collaborative approaches or efforts?] "a co-ordinated cross-Government and multi-agency strategy" (p. 5)
	Approaches regarding provision of services and supports	[What approaches are used regarding provision of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy for adults ? E.g. integrated approaches vs. standalone literacy, numeracy, digital literacy provision / training / skills development; is Literacy provided within the mainstream upskilling and development? Are there different approaches used in different settings / different programmes? What supports are provided and if applicable, what cohorts of society are targeted and how?] an integrated approach to literacy and numeracy; no reference to digital literacy
	Terminology / language used	[How is literacy in its totality referred to, what terminology is used by key players / agencies / providers? E.g. core foundational skills , basic skills, essential skills, "reading & writing" etc. ; any relevant information regarding literacy being discussed in the public discourse can be included] skills for life
	Any other relevant issues themes identified	[Please add in anything else deemed relevant e.g. are there any other relevant issues or themes identified within the approaches to Literacy in its totality that are deemed relevant or useful?] While the strategy is not recent, it is very comprehensive.
Annotated bibliography items	**5**	Type: International Policies, strategies and approaches of relevance to the ALND Strategy
	[country or supranational organisation / body] UK / England	"The framework is intended to be used by everyone in the UK engaged in supporting adults to enhance their essential digital skills"
	Title	Essential Digital Skills Framework

Citation	Department for Education. 2018. *Essential digital skills framework*. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework (accessed on 23 November 2020).	
Key actor	Department for Education, UK	
Aims/Targets	[Please list the main aims and objectives and if applicable, targets] "Communicating," "Handling information and content," "Transacting," "Problem Solving," "Being safe and legal online"	
Stakeholders	[Please list key stakeholders involved and briefly describe their roles] "consultation across employers, charities, national and local government departments, academics and individuals"; "The consultation and update of the framework were coordinated by Lloyds Banking Group and the Tech Partnership, overseen by a steering group including Accenture, Amazon, BT, British Retail Consortium, Corsham Institute, DfE, DCMS, DWP, Federation of Small Businesses, Good Things Foundation, Greater London Authority, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, HMRC, Microsoft, NHS Digital, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisation and SSE."	
Key findings / issues	[Please outline the key findings or issues regarding a policy / strategy]	
Key Recommendations	[what are the key recommendations of policy / strategy?]	
Key Actions	[what are the key actions of policy / strategy, either planned or implemented?]	
Methodology	[Please outline what methodology is used / relevant (if applicable)?] "consultation across employers, charities, national and local government departments, academics and individuals"	
Data / statistics	[Please provide any data that is relevant e.g. data regarding the current provision / state of play of relevant services and supports provided / available in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy]	

Identification of approaches used:	**Strategic approach to Literacy (literacy in its totality)**	[What strategic approach has been used? For example, whether any of these are evident: the Whole of Government approach, involvement of multiple stakeholders, public consultation being conducted and methods , involvement of social partners, involvement and role of non-governmental sector etc.? Is literacy, numeracy, digital literacy strategy an integral part of broader social and economic strategies, etc.] involvement of multiple stakeholders
	Governance / coordination	[Are there any coordinating structures in place? Is there any evidence of collaborative approaches or efforts?] "The consultation and update of the framework were coordinated by Lloyds Banking Group and the Tech Partnership, overseen by a steering group including Accenture, Amazon, BT, British Retail Consortium, Corsham Institute, DfE, DCMS, DWP, Federation of Small Businesses, Good Things Foundation, Greater London Authority, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, HMRC, Microsoft, NHS Digital, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisation and SSE."
	Approaches regarding provision of services and supports	[What approaches are used regarding provision of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy for adults ? E.g. integrated approaches vs. standalone literacy, numeracy, digital literacy provision / training / skills development; is Literacy provided within the mainstream upskilling and development? Are there different approaches used in different settings / different programmes? What supports are provided and if applicable, what cohorts of society are targeted and how?] a standalone digital literacy provision
	Terminology / language used	[How is literacy in its totality referred to, what terminology is used by key players / agencies / providers? E.g. core foundational skills , basic skills, essential skills, "reading & writing" etc. ; any relevant information regarding literacy being discussed in the public discourse can be included] essential digital skills
	Any other relevant issues themes identified	[Please add in anything else deemed relevant e.g. are there any other relevant issues or themes identified within the approaches to Literacy in its totality that are deemed relevant or useful?]

	6	Type: International Policies, strategies and approaches of relevance to the ALND Strategy
	[country or supranational organisation / body] Scotland, UK	"This document sets out our determination to build upon the outstanding progress we are making already in developing world class digital connectivity" (p. 1).
	Title	Digital Participation: A National Framework for Local Action
	Citation	Scottish Government. 2014. *Digital Participation: A National Framework for Local Action*. https://www.gov.scot/publications/digital-participation-national-framework-local-action/
	Key actor	Scottish Government
	Aims/Targets	[Please list the main aims and objectives and if applicable, targets] "make high quality training in basic digital skills available to everybody who wants it, in a way and a place that suits their needs" (p. 20)
Annotated bibliography items	**Stakeholders**	[Please list key stakeholders involved and briefly describe their roles] The list is not exhaustive as there are many stakeholders. - Local authorities: The government's "national partnership-led delivery network benefits from the significant role played by local authorities in developing local strategies and providing strong leadership on digital participation in their areas" (p. 24); - Community Broadband Scotland (CBS): It is "playing an important role as a driver for digital participation in remote rural areas" (p. 24) - Skills Development Scotland and its partners: The government will "work with Skills Development Scotland and its partners to implement the recommendations of the Skills Investment Plan to meet current and future Digital/ICT skills gaps, increase uptake of ICT courses and address the current gender imbalance within the Digital/ICT sector" (p. 22); - Scottish Union Learning: The government will "work in partnership with Scottish Union Learning to support work by trade unions to promote digital skills in a range of work places" (p. 28); - Housing Associations and local authorities: The government will "encourage Housing Associations and local authorities to develop and use procurement frameworks to secure connectivity for existing homes, devices and services for tenants" (p. 30)

Key findings / issues		[Please outline the key findings or issues regarding a policy / strategy] "Across the world, digital exclusion is strongly associated with other forms of social deprivation. In its Interim Report, the RSE showed that Scotland is no exception to this rule, revealing a broadly linear relationship between the uptake of broadband and the Scottish Index of multiple deprivation (Figure 3). Within the most deprived 10% of the population, broadband uptake is 53%, whilst uptake rises to 81% amongst the least deprived 10% of the population" (p. 11).
Key Recommendations		[what are the key recommendations of policy / strategy?] Cited from p. 15: - "Infrastructure: Provide Scotland with a step change in the extent and quality of its digital infrastructure through the roll out of next generation broadband and ensure that the country has a world class digital infrastructure by 2020"; - "Participation: Grow levels of digital participation by businesses and individuals, so that Scotland has the highest rates of participation among UK countries by end 2015"; - "Economy: Encourage a vibrant and thriving digital economy where our research base and companies are recognised internationally and our future workforce have the digital skills they need to succeed" - "Public Services: Deliver a single, but not exclusive, point of entry to all digital public services at national and local level. Mygov.scot will make it easier and simpler to find information, provide a secure and easy way for individuals to access public services online, and define the standards by which digital services are developed in ways that meet user needs"
Key Actions		[what are the key actions of policy / strategy, either planned or implemented?] Too many to list here; please refer to pp. 19-36, where the subheadings "Action" can be found under each section
Methodology		[Please outline what methodology is used / relevant (if applicable)?]

	Data / statistics	[Please provide any data that is relevant e.g. data regarding the current provision / state of play of relevant services and supports provided / available in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy] Figure 4 of the document, "Use of the internet in Scotland by social group," whose source is the Scottish Household Survey 2012
Identification of approaches used:	Strategic approach to Literacy (literacy in its totality)	[What strategic approach has been used? For example, whether any of these are evident: the Whole of Government approach, involvement of multiple stakeholders, public consultation being conducted and methods , involvement of social partners, involvement and role of non-governmental sector etc.? Is literacy, numeracy, digital literacy strategy an integral part of broader social and economic strategies, etc.] involvement of multiple stakeholders
	Governance / coordination	[Are there any coordinating structures in place? Is there any evidence of collaborative approaches or efforts?] The Scottish government is (supposed to be) a coordinator for multiple stakeholders that help promoting digital skills
	Approaches regarding provision of services and supports	[What approaches are used regarding provision of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy for adults ? E.g. integrated approaches vs. standalone literacy, numeracy, digital literacy provision / training / skills development; is Literacy provided within the mainstream upskilling and development? Are there different approaches used in different settings / different programmes? What supports are provided and if applicable, what cohorts of society are targeted and how?] a standalone digital literacy provision
	Terminology / language used	[How is literacy in its totality referred to, what terminology is used by key players / agencies / providers? E.g. core foundational skills , basic skills, essential skills, "reading & writing" etc. ; any relevant information regarding literacy being discussed in the public discourse can be included] digital participation
	Any other relevant issues themes identified	[Please add in anything else deemed relevant e.g. are there any other relevant issues or themes identified within the approaches to Literacy in its totality that are deemed relevant or useful?]

AONTAS, The National Adult Learning Organisation
2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street,
Ranelagh, Dublin 6, D06 E0H1
www.aontas.com
01 406 8220

RCN 20013042
Chy. Reg. 6719
Co. Reg. 80958