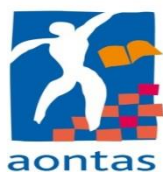
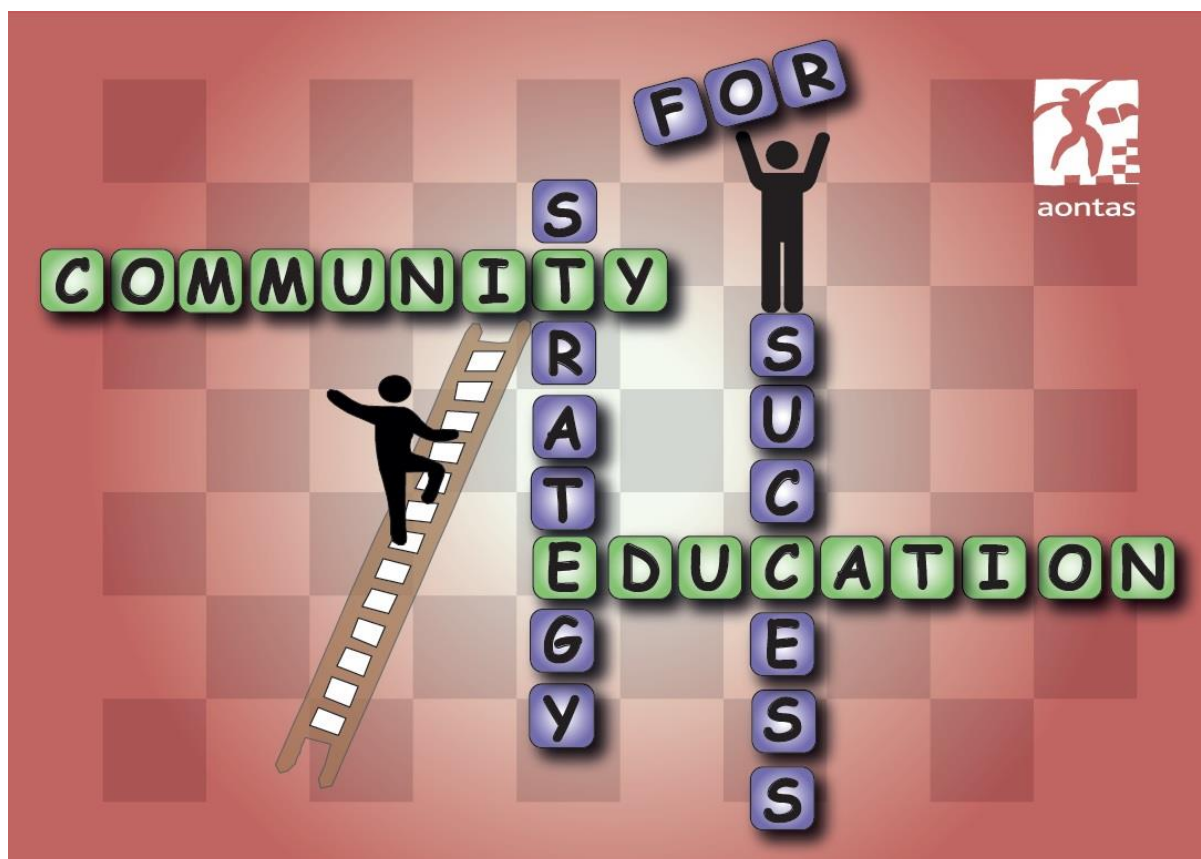


Aontas Community Education Network



Quality Assurance, QAI and Community Education

Shaping the Future



Wednesday 4th September 2013

Time 9-45am – 3 pm

Venue: Carmelite Centre, Aungier Street, Dublin 2

Summary

The 19th meeting of the Community Education Network (CEN) focussed on Quality Assurance and the evolving Quality and Qualification Ireland external environment for adult and further education in Ireland. Input and discussion with QQI Provider relations staff were followed by afternoon workshops which addressed the QQI Green papers which are open for consultation. In addition, there was an update on the latest news from the ever changing Further Education and Training landscape, and information about two upcoming events on Measuring the Outcomes of Community Education. As always the meeting included an update on the latest policy developments in Further Education and Training including the establishment of the ETBs and the development of a FET strategy.

Introduction

The Community Education Network offers an opportunity for independent community education practitioners to come together at a national level. The CEN is a key structure within the AONTAS membership which aims to be a -

- Community of Practice: demonstrating the value and outcomes of community education
- Community of Educators: continuous professional development for community education practitioners
- Community of Reflection: facilitating discussion on community education in a changing context - how to maintain its role and ethos
- Community of Advocacy: identifying and lobbying on specific issues relating to community education
- Community of Support: peer support, exchange and shared learning with other community education groups



Content of the Day

The agenda for the day was developed with the support of the CEN Steering Group¹ as follows:

10.15 - 10.25	Welcome, Introductions and overview of the day – Sara Bourke, AONTAS
10.25 – 11.40	Quality Assurance and Community Education Input from Trish O'Brien and Deirdre Stritch – Provider Relations QQI Small Group Discussion Question and Answer session
11.40 – 11.55	Coffee break/Networking
11.55 – 12.30	What are the latest developments in Further Education and Training? Niamh Farren – AONTAS Group Discussion
12.30 – 12:50	Measuring the Outcomes of Community Education – Dates for the Diary 9 October 2013 VITA Project 23rd and 24th October Training Programme in Measuring and Valuing Outcomes
12.50 – 1.30	Free Lunch/ Networking
1.30 – 3.30	CEN Input to QQI Consultation Process Small group discussion reviews of key policy areas . Input to CEN submissions to the QQI process.
3.30 – 3-45	Feedback and next steps
3-45	Close of Meeting

Quality Assurance and Community Education

QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland is the new agency which has taken over the functions of both FETAC and HETAC. This has meant that new policies must be devised for providers who wish to access QQI awards. To develop these papers QQI are in the middle of a consultation process which involves the production of Green Papers or discussion documents in two phases – one for response in June 2013 and the second in Sept 2013. The focus of this CEN was on responding to those documents from the perspective of independently managed community education providers.

¹ CEN Steering Group members: Catherine Alymer (LCEN), Avril Bailey (An Cosán), Camilla Fitzsimons (RESPOND! Housing), Colm Kilgallon (All Hallows College), Rachel Morrissey (D8 CEC), Colm Kilgallon (All Hallows College)

Trish O'Brien and Deirdre Strich of Provider Relations in QQI attended the meeting to explain the QQI position and to hear the views of CEN members. Sara introduced the CEN and made the following points re engagement with QQI.

- Community education offers a high quality pathway through the NQF which specifically targets people experiencing disadvantage, and supports people to further education, and jobs as well as personal and social benefits.
- Community education providers are learner centred and innovative
- QQI needs to ensure a diversity of providers and programmes to meet a diversity of learners and of needs
- Programmes need to meet social and cultural needs as well as those of the labour market
- Adult learners balance learning with life, and need flexible learning frameworks
- Community Education Providers do not have resources to pay fees, and fees should be waived for not for profit entities or else fees will have to be included in budget allocations via SOLAS.
- One size does not fit all and QQI procedures need to be proportionate to provider size and level. There is a fear that new QQI procedures will be too onerous for small providers and that they will be unable to continue to offer accredited programmes under their own QA.
- CEN want to engage positively with QQI to create a system which can value its ethos and enable it to continue to offer accredited programmes to learners using holistic supportive methodologies.

Deirdre and Trish then gave a presentation on the QQI consultation process to date which is available [here](#). The floor then opened for questions and answers. Some of the key areas are summarised below –

- The legacy policies (FETAC) and provisions remain in place until the new ones are approved. Keep checking the QQI website for information. The AONTAS weekly E Bulletin is also a good source of information. 3 policies have been agreed, Fees, Protection for Enrolled Learners, and Access for new providers.
- QQI accepts the need to maintain a diversity of providers and approaches, key issue is how to ensure that standards are robust and implemented across the full spectrum.
- Re Tutor qualifications: it is a providers responsibility to ensure that all tutors have the required skills for the subject and level they are tutoring. This concern should be raised in the response to the Green papers.
- Protection for Enrolled learners applies to all programmes over 3 months duration where learners pay fees. There was discussion on the difficulty of pairing programmes for PFEL especially in rural areas and where transport is an issue for learners.
- QQI are concerned and conscious of all the changes and how they will affect providers and learners. This is why they come to meet groups like the CEN. QQI doesn't have the capacity to provide the level of support to providers that they used to. They suggest that small

organisations look at other options if they feel they need a lot of support to meet the standards – partnering and consortium. They ask the question “Should every organisation that offers courses be an independent provider with an individual QA agreement with QQI?”

- CEN Response: Community Ed centres are innovative and struggle with limited resources. They work with target groups who need extra support, this should be recognised. If groups are linked with AONTAS and the CEN it could give them recognition. Networks have a great capacity to support each other – programme design etc. QQI could facilitate coming together – peer support.
- CEN members stated they consider that FETAC CAS awards are very prescriptive and set the course content unlike the HETAC model. In addition it favours summative over formative assessment. QQI responded that there is internal discussion on this and that feedback should be given to QQI in the response to the Green Papers.



In the afternoon, providers focussed on the individual Green Papers working in small groups. This was a very participative session and thanks to the facilitators who worked with the groups to bring them through the individual papers below:

- 4.1 Green Paper on Awards and Standards
- 4.2 Green Paper on Certification
- 4.5 Green Paper on Access Transfer and Progression (ATP)
- 4.7 Green Paper on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- 4.8 Green Paper on Monitoring and Dialogue
- 4.10 Green paper on Quality Assurance
- 4.12 Green Paper on Data
- 4.13 Green paper on Programme Accreditation
- 4.14 Green paper on Re-engagement with legacy providers

The feedback was gathered and was recirculated to the network members to support them in developing their own submissions to QQI. It was also used as the basis of the AONTAS CEN submissions on the Green papers available [here](#).

What are the latest developments in Further Education and Training?

Niamh Farren – AONTAS

Niamh Farren presented on the latest developments in FET, and her presentation is available [here](#). She also signposted upcoming activities of interest such as the PIAAC report which will give detailed information on literacy and numeracy in Ireland compared with other OECD countries.

Training Opportunities for measuring the Outcomes of Community Education.

Members were informed of two upcoming training opportunities which are of direct relevance.

Vita Validation of non-formal and informal learning competences

VITA Grundtvig project Final Conference

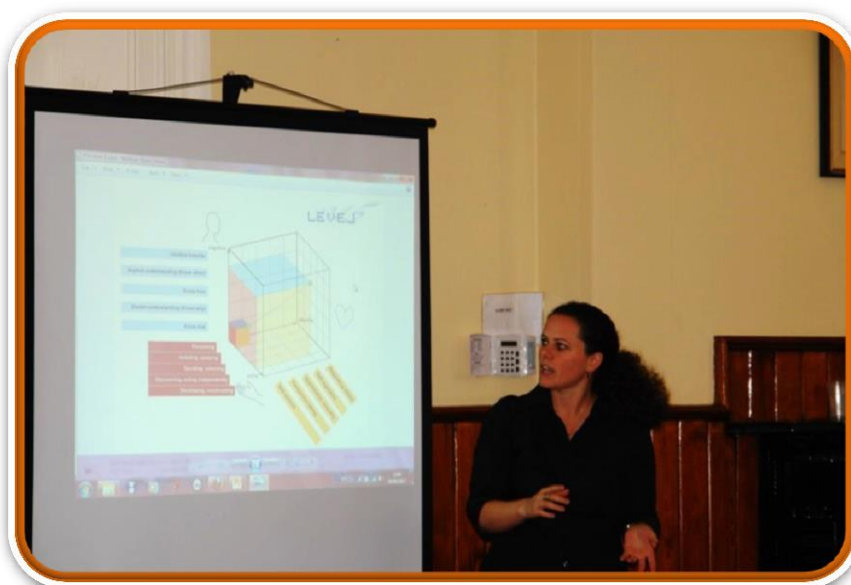
All Hallows College - 9th October 2013, 9.30-16.00

- Learn a new way of measuring non formal and informal learning outcomes: VITA level 5.
- Hear about pilot projects experiences across Europe including a community ed setting in Ireland.
- Training provided in the afternoon, for free!

More information available on www.vita-eu.org/

Please contact Eleonora at eperuffo@aontas.com to book your place or ring 014068220.

Book your place online: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XJP2P22>



23-24th October 2013

Training Programme in Measuring the Outcomes of Community Education

Eilis Lawlor – Just Economics

- Theory and rationale
- Qualitative methods and engaging stakeholders
- Outcomes-based theories of change
- Quantitative methods and data collection
- Measuring impact
- Valuation and monetisation

Book your place online: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SVYYD9C>

For further information contact dlarkin@aontas.com or phone 01 4068220