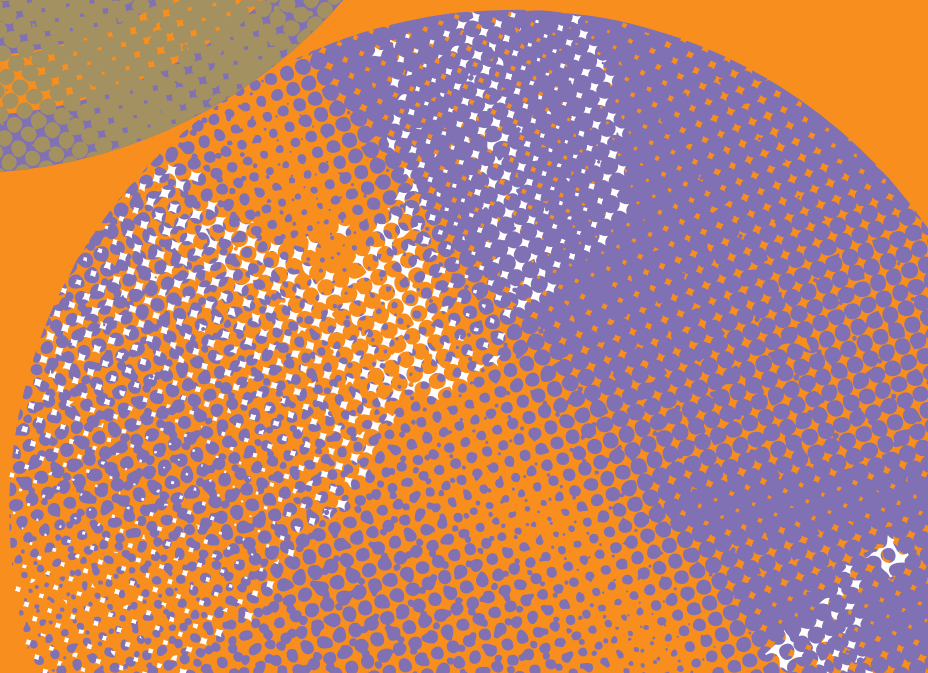
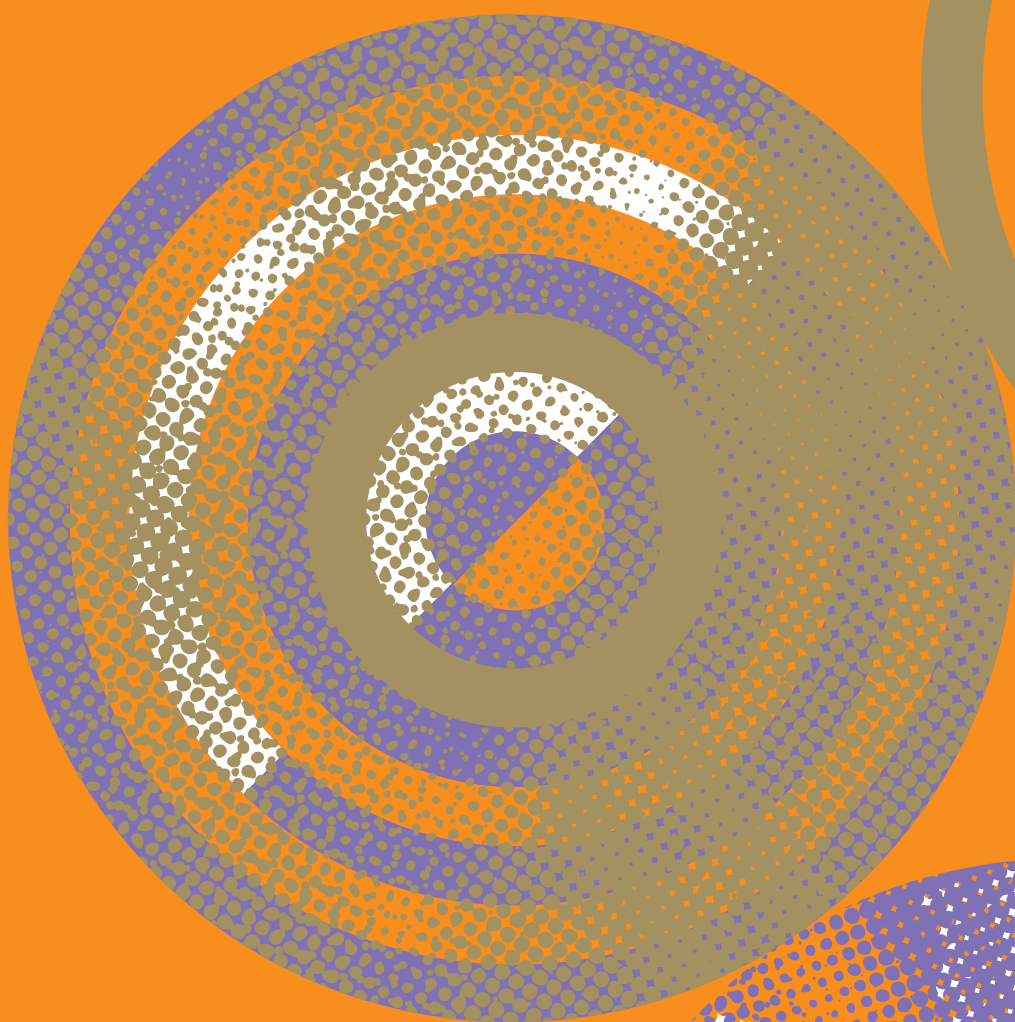


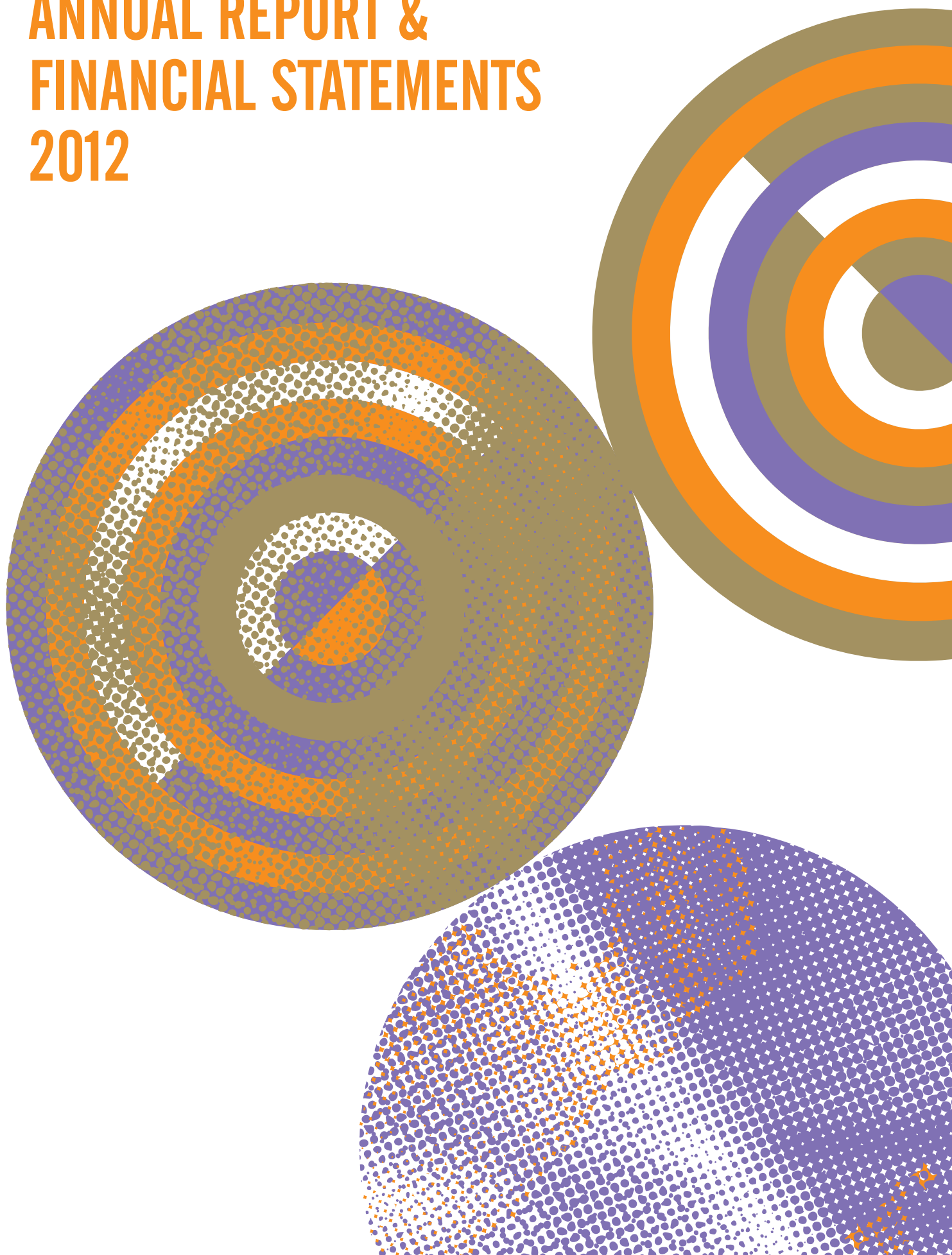
AONTAS ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2012

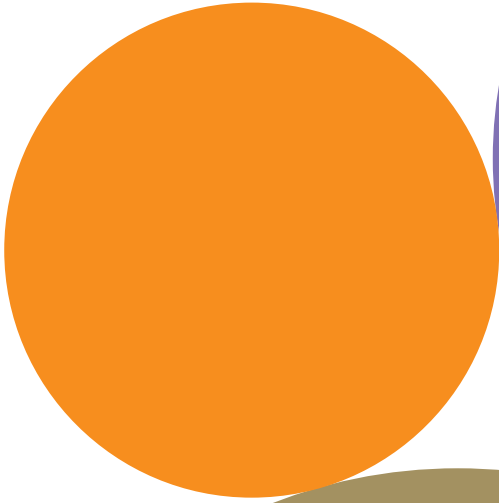
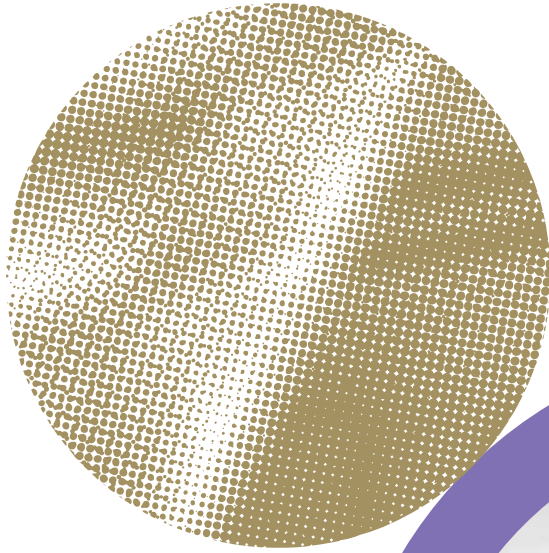


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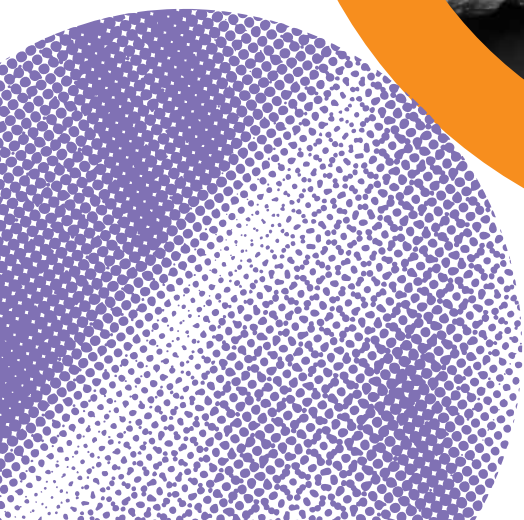
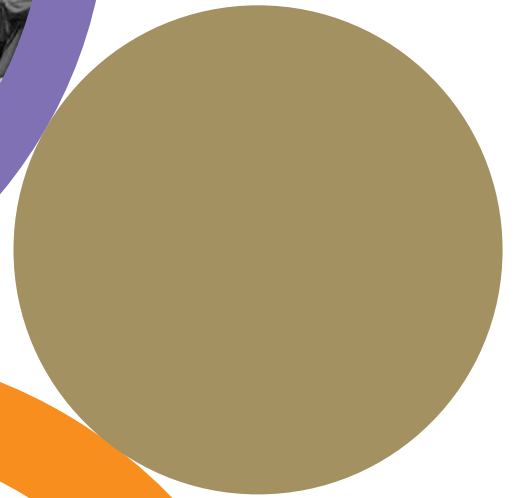
**AONTAS
ANNUAL REPORT &
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2012**





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FOREWORD

Ireland remains in the grip of a profound recession, the impact of which continues to reverberate in the lives of most of our citizens. However research indicates that the burden of the adjustments and cuts that have been imposed on Ireland have fallen disproportionately on the most vulnerable while those at the top have increased their wealth. Currently unemployment runs at 14.6% across the state but in some areas of disadvantage this rises well above 20%. We are all agreed that supporting women and men to re-gain employment is the cornerstone of recovery. Education is at the heart of that process.

AONTAS is fully cognisant of the pivotal contribution adult and community education can and must make to the national economic recovery, and the organisation continues to make a significant contribution to the development of national policy on this issue. AONTAS understands that through education women and men can achieve the life they aspire to, but for those denied access, it is a life sentence of unemployment and poverty.

However while education provides a path out of poverty and into employment there are many different starting points, different paths and many different ways to make that journey. For some it is a welcome opportunity to up-skill, re-train or gain an important qualification. For others it is a fearful and challenging path. Individuals want to take it but lack confidence in their own worth and ability. In such circumstances adult and community education must be able to respond to the diverse paths people need to follow.

AONTAS understands the importance of diversity of educational pathways for adults, we acknowledge,

promote and support this reality. This is particularly evident in our support and promotion of the unique contribution of community education in reaching and supporting the most marginalised as they take the first steps on their personal educational pathway. AONTAS also promotes the important role community education has to play in directly supporting 30,000 students access and progress through the national framework of qualifications into further education and employment.

AONTAS's commitment to make the learner the central focus of adult and community education, and policy, is at the heart of all of the work we undertake. This organisation supports and affirms the voice of adult learners and takes the lead in bringing the voice of learners into a public and policy context as demonstrated in particular by the Lobby for Learning Day with Ministers and senior civil servants but also by The Star Awards, *What Next* information booklet on Adult Education in Ireland and the Adults Learner Forums.

AONTAS has identified the key elements of a quality adult and community education service, it supports the continuous professional development of adult and community education practitioners through its networks and CDP programmes.

AONTAS continues to successfully engage with policy makers as the critical voice for the adult and community education sector, contributing to policy development and lobbying for recognition and resources for the sector. This is amply demonstrated by the range of submissions and policy papers we have developed in particular those related to SOLAS and the Further Education and Training Act.

AONTAS remains at the forefront of ensuring adult and community education makes its contribution to the reshaping of our nation for the future. As President of AONTAS it is my privilege to work alongside the committed, engaged and erudite staff team led so well by Berni Brady, Director.

Elizabeth Waters,
President, AONTAS



OVERVIEW

Introduction

2012 has been a year of many changes for the adult and community education sector and AONTAS has concentrated on responding to those changes as we worked through the second year of our strategic plan. We have focused our energies very carefully on the key themes of our plan; Voice, Value and Visibility; we have maximised our resources and concentrated on our key message that all adults have a right to quality learning and, as such adult and community education has a unique role to play in addressing the enormous challenges currently facing Irish people.

Contributing to the Development of SOLAS

One of the key changes currently under way is the establishment of SOLAS as the new Further Education and Training Authority whose core role will be overseeing and co-ordinating the new integrated Further Education and Training (FET) service. At the beginning of the year we submitted a response to the Department of Education and Skills's policy paper requesting feedback from stakeholders about the shape of the new service. AONTAS's response was both broad and deep, focussing on the learner and making a strong case for a multi-faceted service which should serve the myriad needs of adult learners. We also made a case for the recognition and support of community education as a vital part of the new service. Throughout the year we have worked to ensure that there was a continuous flow of information about SOLAS developments and we took every opportunity we could to feed in to the process.

As part of the Adult Learners Festival we organised, in partnership with NALA, an event which brought together a group of learners to discuss the key elements of the new FET Service from their point of view. The event was attended by Minister Ciaran Cannon, Mr. Paul O'Toole, CEO FAS, Fiona Hartley, then CEO of Wicklow VEC representing the IVEA and Seamus Hempenstall, Principal Officer of the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills. The engagement proved to be highly successful in bringing the concerns of the learner to the attention of policy and decision makers. A report of the event is available on the AONTAS website.

An update of the work of the SOLAS Implementation Group was presented to the Annual General Meeting in May by Seamus Hempenstall and discussion groups were organised for AONTAS members at the meeting to inform themselves about, and contribute their views to the process. A learner only discussion group was also facilitated at this meeting. Later in the year at the Autumn general membership meeting Fiona Hartley, who had been appointed Executive Director designate of SOLAS in September gave a comprehensive overview of developments with a particular emphasis on community education. She was joined by Penny Lamb, Head of Policy at NIACE/UK who presented the findings of research done in the UK on the qualitative outcomes of adult education. This was of great interest to AONTAS as we had contributed to the work of a group established by the DES on the wider benefits of community education and had completed our own research on that subject.

The Role of AONTAS Members

AONTAS regards its membership as a key resource and we endeavour to engage with them consistently in relation to both policy and practice. We are also very much aware that the major changes affecting the whole sector will also affect our organisation. In preparation for those changes we engaged in a major survey of members seeking their views on a wide range of issues and on how AONTAS supports them in their work. This received a very positive response as well as some suggestions for how we can develop our services and recruit new members. Overall there was a very positive endorsement of the three key priorities of our strategic plan; Voice, Value and Visibility. New membership application forms have been designed as a result of membership feedback, outlining the benefits of being an AONTAS member and can be accessed from the website.

Through organising membership events and synthesising the feedback received from members we were able to develop a number of policy and position papers on a range of issues of concern to both adult and community education learners and providers. In particular AONTAS is a strong champion of community education and through the work of the Community Education Network we have built up a huge range of knowledge of the sector. AONTAS staff used this to engage throughout the year in meeting with a range of stakeholders as well as political spokespeople and other decision makers with a view to sharing our position on the development of the new FET service and seeking support for it.

A key collaborative process has been established with the National Adult Literacy Agency with whom we met four times during 2012 to exchange information and to identify and collaborate on common areas of work. An example was the joint event mentioned earlier. We shared our views on the development of SOLAS and we drew up a Memorandum of Understanding to support our collaborative work.

Supporting the Learner Voice

Learner voice is a key priority for AONTAS and during the year we configured a new role of Learner Supports Officer within the organisation. Katie O'Rourke who was already working in AONTAS was assigned to that role and will be responsible for the learner voice strategy adopted by AONTAS in September 2012. This strategy includes facilitating many ways of engaging learners, from contributing their stories for case studies and role models to advocacy and representation at the highest levels. We were very pleased to have been asked to nominate a learner representative to the new board of Qualifications, Quality Ireland (QQI) and we will be supporting Una Buckley, a former Executive Committee member and learner ambassador, in that role for the duration of her term of office. Learners were well represented at our STAR Awards ceremony which launched the Adult Learners Festival in February during which over four hundred events took place all over the country. We were honoured to have as our guest the new President of Ireland, Micheal D. Higgins who was given a warm welcome and who spoke eloquently about the importance and value of adult and community education as both an economic and social endeavour. The Festival is now well established on the adult and community education calendar and has gone from strength to strength over the past seven years.

AONTAS continues to provide an Information Referral Service to adult learners with callers and visitors to the website increasing each year. As well as providing the service AONTAS staff participated in adult education fairs and events throughout the country promoting the information booklet, *What Next*. The booklet which is updated twice a year is available in hard copy from the office or it can be accessed on the web. During the year AONTAS worked closely with the Department of Education and Skills to assist in the development of a proposal for the implementation of the European Agenda on Lifelong Learning. The application was successful and the Department established a Steering

Committee to advise on the project which will run until 2014. The Steering Committee includes representatives from AONTAS, NALA, the NCGE and the IVEA. As part of the project AONTAS will be running an enhanced helpline for adult learners and developing, in collaboration with other stakeholders an online calendar of promotional events.

Representing Adult and Community Education

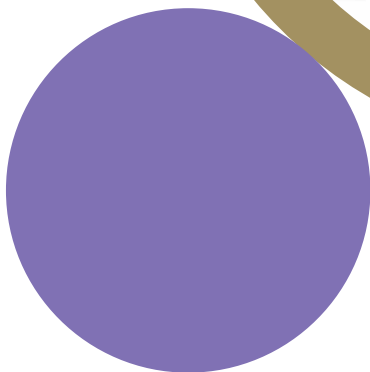
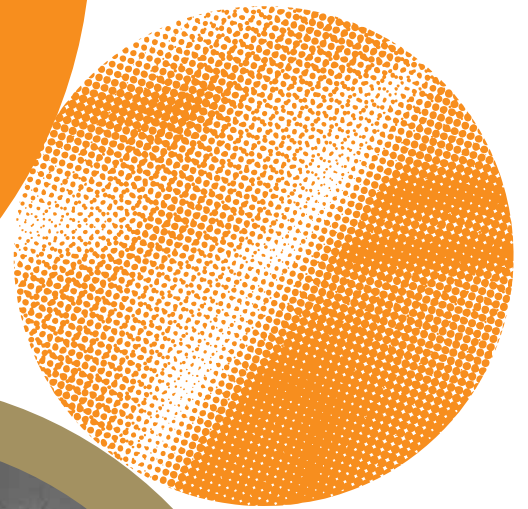
AONTAS continues to represent the interests and issues of adult learners at a national and international level and as such we have both hosted delegations from all over Europe and have participated in events at a European level. In 2012 we concluded a transnational partnership project funded by Grundtvig which focused on the development of promotional events for adult learning. AONTAS is an active member of the European Association for Education for Adults and is represented on the board by Niamh O'Reilly, our Head of Membership services. We are also a partner in the Grundtvig-funded INFONET project which is designed to promote and inform about adult education across Europe. Both staff and Executive Committee members attended and participated in a variety of events at national level as well as representing AONTAS in the national and local media.

Conclusion

As always throughout the year AONTAS has endeavoured to work with other stakeholders in the sector and we have built strong relationships with both the Minister of Training and Skills Ciaran Cannon and with colleagues in the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills. We acknowledge the continuing support of the Department without which we would be unable to do our work and we endeavour to use our experience and expertise to feed into the development of the Department's policy and decision making. Our Executive Committee, headed by Chair, Liz Waters has provided strong leadership, a wealth of expertise and strong support for the staff team throughout the year. We look forward to continuing our work in 2013 and being an active contributor to the whole change process as it unfolds.

Berni Brady,
Director, AONTAS



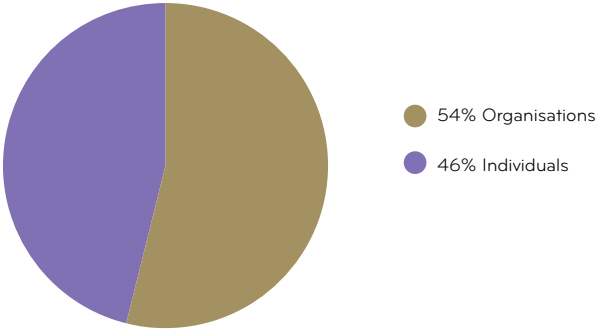


SECTION 1

VALUING ADULT LEARNING

AONTAS Membership

As of 31st December the AONTAS membership comprised 475 members. The breakdown of membership illustrated in the pie chart below, now comprises 254 organisations, 219 individuals and 2 associate members. A full list of AONTAS members is available online at www.aontas.com/membership/



In percentage terms membership type can be broken down as follows: 54% organisations and 46% individual members. However, many adult educators or learners who are part of organisations subscribe as individual members and these account for 16% of the total individual membership.

Geographical Representation of Members

Dublin members account for 35% of our total membership with 168 members. Other areas with high membership include Cork (35 members) and Galway (28 members), followed closely by Limerick and Kildare (26 members in each county).

The areas with lowest membership are Tyrone, Monaghan and Mayo, with only 2 members in each of these counties.

Membership Recruitment Strategy

AONTAS has developed a recruitment and retention strategy to ensure that existing members are retained and to increase the membership base. As part of the recruitment strategy a full review of all AONTAS members was carried out in 2012. The analysis looked at membership categories, geographical spread of membership and the type of programmes provided. This information highlighted areas with low membership and the types of organisations that could be targeted for membership. The amalgamation of the VECs was also taken into consideration along with the overall effect of the current economic changes on AONTAS membership.

Membership Survey

Following the analysis, a survey was compiled to get feedback on how AONTAS membership services can be improved and ways to increase membership. The survey included questions on how to improve membership events, the range of services offered and how useful members found the AONTAS website, publications and social media. The survey was sent to all members and 130 responses were received from both individual and organisational members. The feedback received will inform the recruitment strategy and membership work plan for 2013.

AONTAS will initially focus on recruiting new members from areas where membership is low. Recruitment plans include:

- Updating recruitment tools and promotional material including membership information leaflet, email flyer and video testimonials from members.
- Inviting prospective members to AONTAS meetings and events.
- Holding regional meetings to enable consultation with members and inviting prospective members to attend.
- Asking existing members to promote the benefits of membership.
- Making better use of the Adult Learners Festival and the STAR award applications to encourage new groups and organisations to join.
- Using of social networking for recruitment.

According to the trend in member applications, the largest number of individual and organisational membership applications was made in October. This could be attributed to the Adult Learners Festival, STAR awards nominations. The nominated projects were encouraged to join AONTAS using links from the information bulletin and phone calls prior to the closing date for nominations.

Lapsed Members

As a result of the survey and the membership analysis it was noted that many members had not paid their fees to date. These members were contacted and those who did not wish to continue membership were lapsed. The total number of members lapsed during 2012 was 98 members – 18% of the total membership; this was double the number lapsed in previous years. Lack of funding and the closure of organisations were the main reasons given for ceasing membership. The number of new members that joined AONTAS in 2012 was 77, representing 16% of the current total membership.



Membership Meetings

The AONTAS Annual General Meeting took place on 9th May in Dublin with over 70 members attending. Seamus Hempenstall, Principal Officer from the Department of Education and Skills gave an input about the SOLAS consultation process and members took part in discussions about moving forward with this process. Elections for the Executive Committee took place and six new members of the AONTAS Executive Committee were welcomed at this meeting:

- Mary Farrell – Longford VEC
- Lorraine Hennessy – Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- Colm Kilgallon – All Hallows College
- Jim Prior – Limerick Community Education Network
- Lorraine Cunningham – Blayney Blades
- Tara Farrell – Longford Women’s Link

Over eighty members of AONTAS attended the General Meeting on November 14th at the Ashling Hotel in Dublin. Fiona Hartley, Executive Director (Designate) of SOLAS gave an update on progress to date on the establishment of SOLAS and some of the challenges ahead especially for community education providers. Penny Lamb, Head of Policy Development in NIACE (the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) UK gave a presentation about its work in the UK on measuring outcomes. Participants discussed the value of measuring the outcomes of adult and community education, the challenges, opportunities and benefits of this approach and how it can be implemented at local level. Two workshops specifically for learners were also held at this event in order to explore how AONTAS can meaningfully represent the diversity and issues of learners at a policy level.

Community Education Network

The Community Education Network, which was established in 2007 as a political platform of independent community education groups within the AONTAS membership addresses the actions under all three themes of the AONTAS strategic plan. This unique network seeks to increase visibility, raise the voice of, and promote the value of community education through a collective process of participatory meetings which capitalises on the expertise within the sector as well as supporting new organisations. The work of the network is guided by a steering group for its overall development and direction. With membership of over 115 community education organisations it is the largest network of independent community education groups, and the only structure at national level which is dedicated to this distinct form of education provision.

Community Education Network (CEN) work in 2012

In its fifth year the main focus of the CEN was to clearly document issues facing the community education sector, develop strategic alliances with appropriate agencies in order to address such issues and to meet the developmental needs of the network. The key CEN activities for 2012 included: hosting four national network meetings; providing a new professional development training programme for members with a focus on the social action model of community education; and producing position and issue papers pertinent to the sector.

Outcomes

1. **Four national meetings were held with full reports available to download online:**
<http://www.aontas.com/commed/meetings.html>
 - **1st February 2012:** Supporting the Community Education Network: Continuous Professional Development, Policy, Research and FETAC.
 - **18th April 2012:** Community Education in a Time of Change: Utilizing our collective knowledge for action – SOLAS, Social Justice Advocacy, Research and FETAC.
 - **3rd October 2012:** Strengthening community education through social action and shaping the future of community education within SOLAS. With Development Education afternoon workshop in conjunction with Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS).
 - **24th November 2012:** Measuring the outcomes of community education – various models and the role of accreditation.
2. **Five meetings of the expanded CEN steering group which supported the development, direction and action of the Network. CEN Steering group members: Camilla Fitzsimons (RESPOND! Housing), Avril Bailey (An Cosán), Suzanne Kyle (Limerick Community Education Network), Colm Kilgannon (All Hallows College) and Rachel Morrissey (D8CEC).**
3. **The Wheel: Training links Programme, Continuous professional development for social action model of community education for CEN participants.**

The AONTAS Community Education Network successfully secured funding from The Wheel Training Links programme in order to develop and deliver a CPD training course for a social action model of community education. What made this course different is that a pre-set programme was not offered; rather it was developed according to what the CEN considered its priorities to be. Although custom made to this group of practitioners it can also be used, added to, and developed by other

organisations. An accompanying handbook, online Power Point supports and recorded video sessions for use by practitioners were developed in the course of the training programme. The training programme was as follows:

- **10th May:** Module 1, Community education for social action – bringing the theory to practice.
- **24th May:** Module 2, Community education for social action – learner centred teaching methodology.
- **7th June:** Module 3, Community education for social action – incorporating teaching methodology the impacts the community.
- **21st June:** Module 4, Integrating continuous professional development for social change into your work – how to deliver the course at your centre.

Other CEN work during 2012 included:

- *Taking the credit* banner available on loan to CEN members showcasing learner progression through all levels of the NFQ within a community education context.
- A series of AONTAS blogs written by CEN members focusing on challenges facing the community education sector <http://www.aontas.com/blog/>

Issues Papers

- Concerns articulated by the AONTAS Community Education Network regarding new FETAC Processes and the Position of Community Education in the context of the new Authority – Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).
- Concerns for the Community Education Sector in a Time of Change.
- Position Paper on challenges the CEN sees facing the Community Education sector.
- Issues regarding the implementation of the new Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) Operational Guidelines 2012 and its implications for the CEN.

SECTION 2

RAISING THE VOICE OF ADULT LEARNING

Learner Support Work

Learners are central to the work of AONTAS and we are committed to supporting the capacity of learners to articulate issues of concern to them and to influence policy and practice in adult and community education. In 2012 following the departure of the Learner Advocacy Officer, AONTAS set about reviewing its work with learners. We reconfigured the role of a learner support worker to include the integration of the information referral service and a fresh learner capacity building strategy. Katie O'Rourke who was already a member of AONTAS staff took up the new role of Learner Supports Officer in September 2012.

The learner support work in 2012 has focused on developing a learner strategy. It builds on the existing work and experience to further develop the voice of adult learners, and highlight the main issues that learners are facing. AONTAS is developing a clear relationship with learners that will strengthen and deliver a two way benefit system. We will establish, develop and maintain a wide range of partnerships and networks to reach learners and communicate their voice and views. The learner support work includes a range of options to enable learners to actively participate in, feed into and support the policy promotion and membership strategy of AONTAS.

Learner Involvement in AONTAS Events

Learners were supported to be at the heart of key AONTAS events over the course of 2012, such as the General Meeting, Lobby for Learning Day as well as contributing to issues of Explore and learner testimonies on the website. At the Annual General meeting in May a learner only workshop

ensured a strong voice for adult learners. The discussion session took place to gather ideas from learners on what processes we could use to best support meaningful representation. We used this information to help shape the AONTAS learner support work plan for 2013.

Lobby for Learning Day

The purpose of the Lobby for Learning day was to bring to the attention of government the important role of adult and community education and to make a case for its support. In our response to the SOLAS process we focused on the learner and so we took the opportunity of the Festival to organise, in collaboration with NALA, an event which would give voice to adult learners and facilitate them to contribute to the development of the new integrated Further Education and Training service. A description of the day is included under the report of the Adult Learners Festival and a report of the event is available on the website. The contribution of 27 learners made a huge impact on the Minister for Education and Skills and his colleagues, about which he has spoken in public on many occasions since.

Learner Appointed to the Board of Quality and Qualifications Ireland as Adult Learner Representative

AONTAS was delighted at the appointment of Úna Buckley to the Board of the QQI in 2012. Earlier in the year the Minister expanded the membership of the Board to include a student representative from USI and a learner from the adult and further education sector. Úna joined AONTAS as an individual adult learner in 2007 and has been a strong advocate for the benefits of adult learning

and for greater representation of adult learners across a range of stakeholders. She has served two years on the AONTAS Executive and was a member of the Adult Learners Forum of Ireland (ALFI) steering group. AONTAS is looking forward to working closely with Úna in her role as Board member, in meeting the overall objective of the QQI to ensure greater opportunities for learners to participate in high quality education and training in Ireland.

Information Referral Service

Through the Information Referral Service as well as fairs and expos AONTAS has made strong connections with learners in order to expand our learner database. We have identified emerging trends in learner demands and used this information to feed back into the policy work of AONTAS. We produced two editions of our information booklet (one in February 2012 and one in May 2012) to ensure that the information is relevant and up to date and caters to learners needs. In 2012 we also worked on transforming the online format of the information booklet to make it more user friendly for learners.

The AONTAS Information Referral Service provides both direct and referral information on adult education, training and supports to individuals and groups. AONTAS receives calls, emails and website visits from prospective and current learners seeking information on courses, entitlements, funding and other supports as well as government labour activation initiatives. Many more people now seek information via the web but are more likely to follow up with a telephone call having done some initial research online.

Telephone Contact

There has been a 25% increase in the number of people contacting the AONTAS Information Referral Service by telephone in 2012 showing the continuing need for clear information for adults who wish to explore their training and education options.

- Top three most popular queries were general queries about how to return to education, funding and the doing the Leaving Certificate.
- Information requests consisted of 72% female and 28% male.
- Information requests peaked in January, May, August and September and declined in April, June, November and December.
- The top reasons for adults returning to education are in order to gain employment and to gain a new skill.
- 35% of people received a hard copy of the information booklet while many others accessed it through the website.
- Dublin, Cork, Kildare, Laois and Mayo were the top 5 counties for adults seeking information in 2012.
- 41% of people contacting the service in 2012 reported the Leaving Certificate or equivalent as their level of education to date and 21% have the Junior Certificate or equivalent.
- The two biggest obstacles reported in returning to education were lack of information and lack of suitable courses.
- 64% of people reported living in an urban area and 36% lived in a rural area.
- In 2012 26% of people contacting the service were long term unemployed with 29% of people in either full time or part time employment while 14% reported themselves to be not actively economic/homemaker.
- In 2012 50% of people contacting the service were looking for full time education options.

Website Contact

The information section, except for the homepage, was the most visited section of the website in 2012 with 36,580 viewings. Peaks of interest were registered during the usual times of the year where there is an increase in demand for education and training:

- **February:** 5467 visits – (Adult Learners Festival and CAO) there is a direct link to the information service for learners on the ALF website: these data highlight the importance of the Adult Learners Festival not only as a celebration for adult learning but also as a way of directing people to the service/course they are looking for.
- **August:** 4704 visits – (Leaving Cert results, Whichcourse and beginning of new school year).
- An interesting surge of interest was on December 5th – 305 visits – with an update about changes in financial supports for adult learners announced in the budget. <http://www.aontas.com/newsandevents/latestnews/2012/12/05/how-does-budget-2013-affect-further-education-and/>

The most visited sections in the information section on the website were:

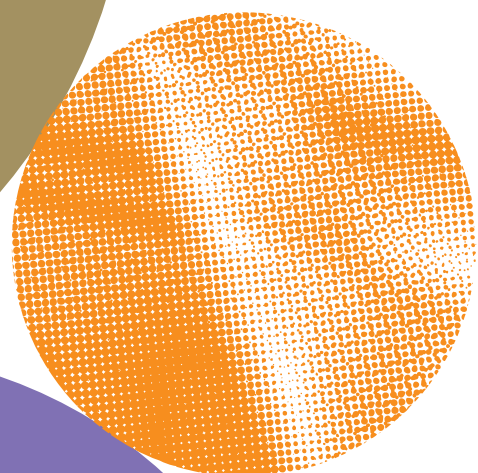
- **FAQs:** 12,869 pageviews, of which the top 3 were:
 - How to become a counsellor
 - How to upskill
 - How to become a teaching assistant
- **How to get involved:** 10,867 pageviews, of which the top 3 were:
 - Second chance
 - Basic education
 - Distance learning
- **Financial supports:** 3,580 pageviews, of which the top 3 were:
 - BTEA
 - Other financial supports(scholarships, bursaries, grants etc.)
 - Higher education financial supports

In August the information booklet was successfully integrated on the website and it is now available on PDF and on a specific section: www.aontas.com/whatnext/ More than 5000 people accessed the “What next?” section of the website in the last trimester of 2012.

Fairs and Expos Attended by AONTAS Staff in 2012

- **February 2012:** Ilac Centre Library, AONTAS Information stand.
- **February 2012:** Blanchardstown EURES Fair.
- **March 2012:** USI Mature Student Conference.
- **April 2012:** Wexford EURES Fair.
- **April 2012:** NWICN Celebration of Learning, AONTAS Information stand.
- **June 2012:** Mayo Training & Education Fair, Castlebar.
- **June 2012:** Galway EURES Fair.
- **August 2012:** Whichcourse EXPO.
- **September 2012:** Polish information meeting.
- **September 2012:** Ballymun Whitehall Education Fair.
- **September 2012:** Blancharstown Area Partnership, Info morning.
- **October 2012:** Mayo Training & Education Fair, Ballina.





SECTION 3

MAKING ADULT LEARNING VISIBLE

Adult Learners Festival 2012

The seventh annual Adult Learners Festival took place from the 20th – 24th February 2012. Each weekday was themed while the overarching Festival message was ‘Love to Learn’. The slogan ‘Love to Learn’ helped promote the positive message that adult learning brings many benefits to our society.

Themed Days

Monday, 20th February: Celebrate Learning

Tuesday, 21st February: Green Learning

Wednesday, 22nd February: Learning Communities

Thursday, 23rd February: Learning for Work

Friday, 24th February: Lobby for Learning

STAR Awards Ceremony

The STAR Awards Ceremony marked the start of the AONTAS Adult Learners Festival 2012 with a celebration of adult learning. Over 250 guests from adult learning projects throughout the country attended the event in the Burlington Hotel. AONTAS received 119 nominations in five categories i.e. Munster, Leinster, Connaught, Ulster and Nationwide. Nominations were received from a range of organisations and groups including VECs, the voluntary and community sector and private enterprises. These were then shortlisted to 41 projects. In early February, the five judging panels travelled around the country to meet with these projects face to face and to choose their five winning projects.

The five outstanding adult learning initiatives for 2012 were:

- Age Action Ireland for their ‘Getting Started’ programme.
- Croí na Gaillimhe Resource Centre (a St Vincent de Paul centre in Galway).
- Limerick Community Education Network.
- Knockmay Women’s Quilting Project from Portlaoise.
- ‘Destined’ – a bespoke learning and development programme for people with intellectual disabilities delivered by NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action).

The awards and certificates were presented to the groups by President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins.

Lobby for Learning Day – SOLAS: Serving Adult Learners

The purpose of the Lobby for Learning day was to bring the attention of the government to the important role of adult and community education and to make a case for its support. The Minister of Education and Skills, Ciaran Cannon was invited to attend along with two other members of the SOLAS Implementation Group, Paul O’Toole, CEO of FAS and Fiona Hartley, CEO of Wicklow VEC and IVEA representative. Seamus Hempenstall, Principal Officer of the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills also attended.

AONTAS invited NALA to work with it to source learners for the event. The aim was to have a representative spread of learners from around the country, particularly those with experience of

accessing or who are currently participating in further education from Levels 1-6. Some learners had also progressed beyond Level 6, achieving third level qualifications. 27 learners were invited to participate in the event and were seated at round tables. Each round table focused on a different theme related to Further Education and Training, as follows:

- **Table 1:** Accessing Further Education and Training (Learner needs at point of entry).
- **Table 2:** How we learn (Learner supports while involved in the learning process).
- **Table 3:** Taking the next steps (Learner needs at the point of exit).

The discussion at each table was facilitated by an AONTAS/NALA member of staff, who helped structure the dialogue using a number of questions which were designed to assist learners to articulate how the system can work best from their perspective. Learners drew from their own experience to illustrate what can help them access, stay and progress within Further Education and Training. Members of the Implementation Group participated in a listening capacity, spending thirty minutes at each table and also had an opportunity to ask questions of the learners. A report of the event is available on the AONTAS website.

Festival Events

Four hundred and fifteen events took place throughout the country during the Festival. This figure demonstrates that the AONTAS Adult Learners Festival has become a firm fixture on Adult Education calendars over the last six years. The fact that the number of events has remained as high as they are, is a testament to the organisations who carry out these events during a time of economic recession. This year 64.5% of events were collaborative, showing that while resources are limited, new partnerships are being forged in an effort to promote and celebrate adult learning

There was a huge range of events to cater to all tastes, interest and skills levels – from informal learning opportunities in unlikely places to

exploring life as a mature student on a university campus. The events were held by a range of providers including libraries, VECs, adult education providers, community groups, museums, galleries and private businesses. AONTAS developed new partnerships with businesses and groups such as B&Q, St. Patrick’s Cathedral and the National Museum among others.

‘Love to Learn’ Bus

As part of the Adult Learners Festival launch AONTAS gave adult learners a unique opportunity to be part of the launch by visiting some of Dublin’s most treasured cultural attractions on the ‘Love to Learn’ bus. Dublin Bus donated the bus which brought 25 lucky adult learners to some of Dublin’s museums and cultural attractions to visit their collections and see what they had to offer. Experts gave exclusive guided tours to the lucky participants. NEAR FM produced a podcast of the ‘Love to Learn Bus’ tour.

Local Contacts and Festival PROs

The Festival website provides details of 42 local contacts throughout Ireland who have organised events for the Festival in the past. These contacts are willing to share their event organiser experience with other interested parties. AONTAS wanted to develop a network that built on the local contacts by appointing a Festival PRO in each county. This role was vital in acting as a local media contact, promoting what was happening in their county and assisting anyone looking for information about Festival activities. There were 23 Festival PROs for 2012.

Adult Learners Festival Website

AONTAS has a separate Adult Learners Festival website which is linked to the homepage: www.adultlearnersfestival.com. This is updated daily during the lead up to the Festival and then monthly throughout the year. The top three viewed pages were the Festival event breakdown by county, followed by the Festival map and then general information about the Festival.

E-Bulletins

Festival e-bulletins were sent out once a month during the months March 2011 to October 2011 to our mailing database of over 5,000. From October until the beginning of March 2012 they were sent out weekly.

Social Media Activity

AONTAS used an integrated social media campaign which used Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. AONTAS uses social media to share content, promote the Festival and to strengthen alliances and partnerships with other organisations.

YouTube

For 2012 AONTAS created a short promotional video about the STAR Awards and what it meant to previous award winners. This was used to launch the STAR Awards nomination process. It helped lead to an increase of 41% on nominations received.

Three different learners, Alan, Francis and Louise, shared their adult learning experiences with us. AONTAS circulated these short 30 second you tube videos with their stories in the lead up to the Festival.

AONTAS also compiled a short STAR Awards video to provide a snapshot of what happened during the ceremony by profiling some of the award winners and what winning the award meant to them.

Twitter

Our Twitter following increased to 1266 and the Adult Learners' Festival had its own hashtag [#ALF2012](#) for the festival.

Facebook

The Adult Learners Festival has a dedicated Festival Facebook page. 6341 people viewed posts or comments related to the Festival during the month of February 2012.

Media Coverage

Our event organiser evaluation showed that 54.5% of events gained media coverage. There were 130

Festival related articles in the local press. From the Clare Champion to the Kerryman and the Limerick Leader to the Wicklow Times the local newspapers featured information on events, advertisements and articles on STAR Award winners. The AONTAS 'Love to Learn' Bus was featured in the Irish Times as were the events taking place in Donegal.

Radio Coverage

Interest in the Festival generated radio coverage in the form of 20 local and national interviews, event notices and reporters being sent to cover events.

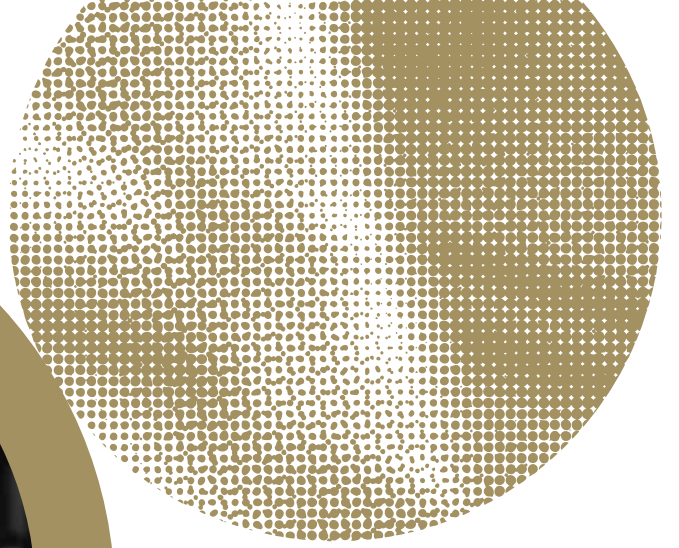
Internet Coverage

The AONTAS Adult Learners Festival was featured widely on the internet. The free Dublin event guide included information about events and the website. Information about the Festival was included on websites such as Activelink, NWCI and Qualifax.ie. Events were also listed on cultural websites such as CultureFox, Discover Ireland, Entertainment.ie and Dublin.ie.

Television Coverage

STAR Awards ceremony footage was shown on Sky channel 201 on a programme called 'Out and about in Ireland'.





SECTION 4

PROMOTING ADULT LEARNING AT HOME AND ABROAD

Influencing Policy and Promoting Adult Learning

2012 was a busy year with many changes in the external environment. A significant reform agenda informed the policy promotion activities of AONTAS throughout the year.

The Policy Environment

Key policy developments in the external environment which informed our work in 2012 included the following:

- A consultation process on the development of SOLAS, the new Further Education and Training Authority.
- The Education and Training Boards Bill (2012) which proposes to establish 16 LETBs (Local Education and Training Boards) in place of the existing 33 VECs.
- The passage of the Education and Training Act (2012) which provided for the establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The QQI includes representation from two learners, one from Higher Education and one from the Further Education and Training sector.
- The establishment of Intreo (the National Employment and Entitlements Service) by the Department of Social Protection.
- The implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

These developments provided an interesting and highly challenging context for our policy and promotion work. We strengthened the policy promotion work of the organisation through the following actions:

- Engagement with media: resulting in a strong media presence in the lead up to and during the Adult Learners Festival and good media coverage in August and September in the adult education supplements of national newspapers.
- Development of our policy work and knowledge: through monitoring Oireachtas debates, producing papers and submissions which we sent to the Oireachtas Committee, Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Training and Skills.
- Relationship building: we engaged with decision makers and influencers and continued to build relationships with the Minister and education spokespeople as well as developing new relationships with SOLAS and FÁS.
- Development of our online marketing strategy through blogging, social media and upgrading both of our websites, resulting in increased levels of traffic to both sites.

Media Relationships

Engagement with mainstream media is a key part of AONTAS promotional strategy and this continued throughout 2012. AONTAS issued 15 press releases to the media during the year.

Specific outcomes included:

- Media coverage of the Adult Learners Festival, from the initial STAR Awards shortlisting through to the Festival launch and the Lobby for Learning day. National media coverage included the Irish Times, the Irish Daily Star and RTE's Drivetime programme.

- Local media coverage was consistent with 2011 and all five STAR awards secured significant local media coverage. Age Action, winner of the Nationwide award featured on RTE2 news.
- Other mainstream media coverage during the year included the Irish Times, Irish Independent magazines (Health, Mother and Babies) and RTE's Drivetime programme.
- Extensive coverage in the adult education supplements in August and September (including the Irish Independent, Evening Herald and the Sunday Business Post).

Explore

Explore magazine profiles the work of the organisation and our members, analysis of policy development and examples of practice from the sector. Each issue profiles an inspiring adult learner.

- We produced 3 issues of Explore during 2012, including a special Festival edition. Hard copies of each issue are disseminated to approximately 1,000 organisations and individuals and the magazine is also available for download via the AONTAS website.
- We also formed a new production team for Explore, which allows for the generation of new ideas and staff development.

Websites and Online Marketing

During 2012 we reviewed both www.aontas.com and www.adultlearnersfestival.com. We planned a redevelopment of both sites based on feedback and to take account of the increasing number of people accessing our sites via mobile phone and smartphone. The Festival website www.adultlearnersfestival.com received a complete makeover, while www.aontas.com will be redeveloped in 2013. Both of our sites are now mobile accessible.

Our online presence is important to our members but also to potential learners seeking information about their learning options. In 2012 we developed a special online edition of *What Next*, which can be navigated by section and shared via social media.

This interactive version of *What Next* allows us to provide visitors to www.aontas.com with the most up to date information about their learning options, and complements the existing hard copy publication.

Our online marketing strategy also developed in 2012 through the use of Facebook, Twitter and blogging. During 2012 we increased our Facebook following by 180 people (to 580) and our Twitter followers by 500 (to approximately 1600). We published 10 blog entries throughout the year which included contributions from staff and members.

Visits to our website are monitored regularly through Google Analytics which allows us to tailor our content and identify relevant and popular searches.

Policy/Advocacy Work and Outcomes

Reform within the Further Education and Training sector provided an important backdrop for our policy promotion work. We produced four papers responding to key developments in the sector including:

1. A submission to the SOLAS consultation process (January 2012).
2. A report on the Lobby for Learning event during the Adult Learners' Festival (March 2012).
3. A paper on learner representation '*Meaningful Representation for Adult Learners*' (August 2012).
4. A Pre-budget position paper '*Maximising Resources*' (December 2012).

All papers were disseminated to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection, Minister for Education and Skills, the Minister for Training and Skills, officials within the Department and other relevant stakeholders.

In January 2012 our SOLAS submission emphasised the need to actively consult with adult learners in the development of an integrated Further Education and Training service. The submission also outlined

the potential of community education to make a unique contribution to the development of the service.

Using the Learner Voice to Influence Policy

AONTAS provided a space for adult learners to speak directly to the Minister for Training and Skills along with members of the SIG during the closing event of the Festival. During the event SOLAS – *Serving Adult Learners*, learners spoke to the Implementation Group about their experience of accessing, progressing through and moving on from further education and training. AONTAS received strong positive feedback from the event, and a report capturing the issues raised helped us secure a series of meetings with key stakeholders where we continued to promote the learner voice. The need for SOLAS to be learner centred was one of three key themes emerging from the SOLAS stakeholder consultation process.

A new learner strategy along with these developments allowed us to focus on our own role in supporting adult learners to engage with the services. Our paper *Meaningful Representation for Adult Learners* proposes a number of mechanisms to achieve this. In August 2012 following the publication of this paper AONTAS was consulted and asked to assist the Department in proposing an adult learner representative to sit on the Board of the QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland). In November 2012 Una Buckley, an individual member of AONTAS with a strong background in learner advocacy and experience of further education was appointed to the QQI Board.

In advance of Budget 2013 we engaged with the education spokespeople, as well as both Ministers in the Department of Education and Skills. Our paper *Maximising Resources* made four proposals to strengthen the Further Education and Training services.

These themes will continue to inform our work during 2013.

Stakeholder Engagement

AONTAS continued to engage with key stakeholders in the sector and to collaborate where appropriate.

- 1. Department of Education and Skills:** The Department consulted AONTAS as part of the development of an application for the implementation of the European Agenda on Lifelong Learning. The application was successful and the Department established a Steering Committee to advise on the project which will run until 2014. The Steering Committee includes representatives from AONTAS, NALA, the NCGE and the IVEA. AONTAS also contributed to the review of the guidelines for BTEI, Community Strand, DES Working Group on the wider outcomes of learning and the Adult Literacy Review Group.
- 2. Elected representatives:** During the year AONTAS met with the education spokespeople from both Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin. AONTAS also communicated regularly with the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills through circulating briefing papers and the AONTAS e-bulletin.
- 3. NALA:** AONTAS organised the Lobby for Learning Day in collaboration with NALA to close the Adult Learners Festival. Our partnership with NALA helped us to identify a range of learners at various stages of the qualifications spectrum who communicated their experience to the Minister for Training and Skills and other members of the SIG (SOLAS Implementation Group). Throughout the year AONTAS staff held four meetings with NALA staff to focus on our policy promotion work. We developed a Memorandum of Understanding which outlines our commitment to collaborating on common issues while understanding our differences as organisations.
- 4. IVEA:** AONTAS held two joint meetings with the IVEA to share information about recent developments in the sector. We developed a Memorandum of Understanding which outlines

our commitment to collaborating and sharing information about common issues.

5. **FÁS/SOLAS:** AONTAS met with FÁS in late 2012 to discuss how we might collaborate and engage with the training sector in the context of the establishment of SOLAS. Fiona Hartley, Executive Director Designate of SOLAS gave a presentation at the AONTAS General Meeting, and other FÁS staff attended.
6. **NCGE/AEGAI:** AONTAS met with the NCGE and liaised regularly with members of the AEGAI. AONTAS continued to promote the value of Adult Guidance through our policy papers during the year. Our paper *Maximising Resources* highlighted the contribution and value of a quality adult education guidance service.

Publications

Since 2000 all AONTAS publications are available on the website and the Publications and Links section is the one most frequently visited after the Information Section. AONTAS also maintains a small collection of library resources which are used by AONTAS staff and Executive members to assist them in the completion of submissions, policy papers and research. Public requests usually come from students and researchers in adult and community education.

Publications most often downloaded for 2011 included the information booklet, *What Next*, *The Adult Learner Journal*, the *White Paper on Adult Education (2000)*, and the report “*SOLAS: serving adult learners*” about the policy event in February 2012.

Information Communication Technology

AONTAS is undergoing an IT upgrade which involves the transfer of its data into a client relationship management system. Staff will be enabled to manage contacts and handle information in a more efficient way. The process started in 2012 and will finish in early 2013.

Representing Adult Learning Issues

AONTAS’s key work in influencing policy, promoting the value of adult and community education and representing the interests of adult learners has been done in a mixture of ways during the life of our current strategic plan. Many of the working/advisory/steering groups which proliferated during the 2000s are now defunct as government has centralised policy making and closed, or no longer funds agencies that had a broad social partnership representation. This has meant our work has become more fluid and strategic, allowing us to focus on particular issues as they arise. In 2012 our policy work has focused on meeting with key policy makers and stakeholders on a regular basis as described earlier.

Groups/organisations where AONTAS currently represents the interests of adult and community education:

- Advisory Group on Access to Higher Education.
- QQI learner representative.
- National LLL Steering Group, DES.
- European Association for Education for Adults, Board member.
- INFONET, Grundtvig European Information Network.
- International Council for Adult Education.
- Governing Authority, University of Limerick.
- NALA/AONTAS.
- VITA, European project on measuring outcomes of adult learning.
- Issue-focused working groups set up by DES from time to time; e.g. Literacy Review, Developing Guidelines for Community Education, Wider Benefits of Learning etc.
- Age and Opportunity joint working group on research.

Current working groups: Usually comprise a mixture of staff, Executive and AONTAS members:

- CEN Steering Group.
- Adult Learners' Forum of Ireland.
- Judging panels, ALF.
- Adult Learner Journal Editorial Board.
- Membership working group.
- AONTAS review and Strategic planning group.

European Representation

Niamh O'Reilly represents AONTAS and its members on the board of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). Through active participation at three board meetings AONTAS contributed to the membership subgroup of the EAEA with its resulting membership strategy, and influenced key areas of European policy pertaining to adult learning. Over the course of 2012 AONTAS has been engaged in a number of key areas of European lobbying work including the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning, and influencing the proposed changes to the Erasmus for All programme in order to ensure that adult learning has visibility and will be adequately funded in the new programme.

Increasing the visibility of AONTAS is also a central part of our work and, through presentations and moderation at the EAEA General Assembly as well as contributions to the EAEA conference on Active Ageing, AONTAS and adult learning in Ireland achieved European recognition and exposure whilst influencing the European policy agenda. On behalf of the EAEA AONTAS is represented on the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) which comprises 25 European networks working in education and training. One key outcome of this work was the contribution of articles by both Niamh O'Reilly and a learner from Warrenmount Community Education and Development to the EUCIS-LLL special education magazine on the validation of informal and non-formal learning. It is available for download here: <http://www.eucis-lll.eu/eucis-lll/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/EUCIS-LLL-LLL-Mag-Validation.pdf>

International Projects

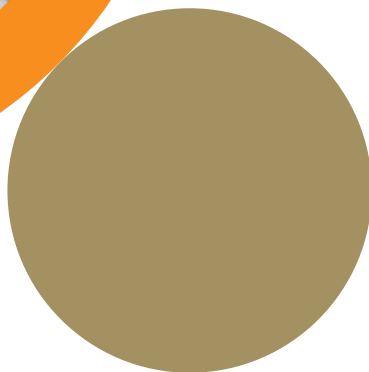
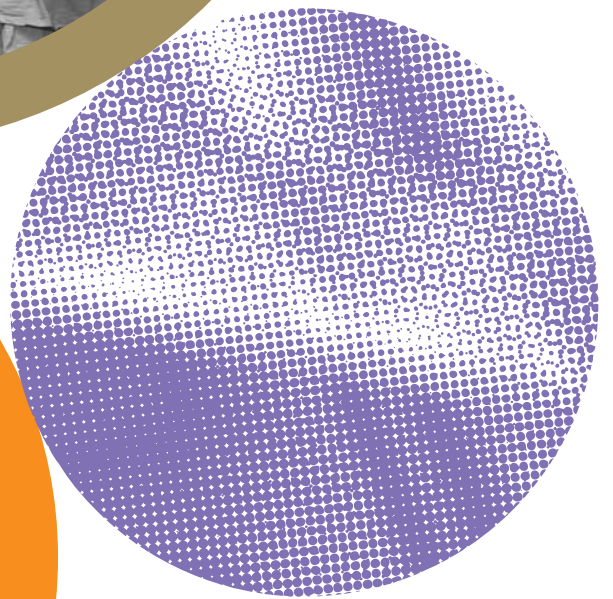
AONTAS is a partner in the European project 'VITA: Validation of service-oriented learning outcomes with LEVEL5 as innovative IT-based Assessment and Evidencing system'. In line with our work in contributing to, and sharing information about methods for measuring the outcomes of adult learning, AONTAS is involved in piloting and disseminating the results of this project. In the last quarter of 2012 AONTAS:

- Distributed an online survey to Irish education practitioners.
- Researched IT based tools for measuring competences.
- Prepared a country report with needs analysis.
- Interviewed two practitioners in the community education sector.
- Analysed the results of the Irish survey and prepared a report for the project newsletter.

AONTAS participated in the preparation of the frameworks needed to measure each competence and made contact with a local adult learner group to pilot the project during 2013. The project aims and objectives were disseminated through the e-bulletin, Explore (the AONTAS magazine), the website and at stakeholders meetings.

Full details of this project are available online on www.vita-eu.org or from Eleonora Peruffo, AONTAS Resources Officer.

AONTAS is also a partner in the INFONET project which has been revitalised after receiving new Grundtvig funding in 2012. Details of the project are available online at www.infonet-ae.eu



AONTAS

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2012

Registration Number 80958

Charity Number 6719

Company Information

Directors	Ms. Elizabeth Waters (<i>President</i>)	Auditors	Anne Brady McQuillans DFK Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors Iveagh Court Harcourt Road Dublin 2
	Ms. Maria Gorman (<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>)		
	Ms. Ruth Smith (<i>Hon. Secretary</i>)		
	Ms. Deborah Brock		
	Ms. Mary Hilda Cavanagh	Business Address	83-87 Main Street Ranelagh Dublin 6
	Ms. Lorraine Cunningham		
	Ms. Mary Farrell (<i>elected May 2012</i>)	Bankers	Bank of Ireland Lower Baggot Street Dublin 2
	Ms. Lorraine Hennessy (<i>elected May 2012</i>)		
	Mr. Liam Kilbride	Solicitors	P.J. Walsh & Company Solicitors 12 Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2
	Mr. Colm Kilgallon (<i>elected May 2012</i>)		
	Mr. James Prior (<i>elected May 2012</i>)	Registered Office	83-87 Main Street Ranelagh Dublin 6
	Ms. Gillian Wild		
	Ms. Marian Duffy (<i>term completed May 2012</i>)		
	Mr. Michael Murray (<i>term completed May 2012</i>)		
	Ms. Loretta Needham (<i>term completed May 2012</i>)		
	Mr. John Ryan (<i>term completed May 2012</i>)		
Secretary	Ms. Ruth Smith		

Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

The directors present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2012.

Principal Activities, Business Review and Future Developments

The principal activity of the company is to advocate for the right of every adult in Ireland to quality learning.

The company is limited by guarantee and not having a share capital.

The directors expect that the present level of activity will be sustained for the foreseeable future.

Results

The (deficit)/surplus for the year after providing for depreciation and taxation amounted to €(15,819) (2011 – €64,491).

Going Concern

The company is dependant on income provided from government funders, membership and donations. As with many government funded charities, the company is affected by both the budgetary constraints implemented by the national government and the deteriorating external economic restraints. The directors have reviewed all relevant information and are confident that the company has adequate financial resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Consequently, the directors consider it appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

The Executive Committee constitutes the Board of Directors of the company under the terms of Article 28 of the Articles of Association of the company:

Ms. Elizabeth Waters (*President*)

Ms. Maria Gorman (*Hon. Treasurer*)

Ms. Ruth Smith (*Hon. Secretary*)

Ms. Deborah Brock

Ms. Mary Hilda Cavanagh

Ms. Lorraine Cunningham

Ms. Mary Farrell

Ms. Lorraine Hennessy

Mr. Liam Kilbride

Mr. Colm Kilgallon

Mr. James Prior

Ms. Gillian Wild

There were no changes in members between 31st December 2012 and the date of signing the financial statements.

Books of Account

The measures taken by the directors to ensure compliance with the requirements of Section 202, Companies Act, 1990, regarding proper books of account are the implementation of necessary policies and procedures for recording transactions, the employment of competent accounting personnel with appropriate expertise and the provision of adequate resources to the financial function. The books of account of the company are maintained at the business address.

Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The directors have assessed the risks and have taken measures to manage these risks in AONTAS as follows:

Market Risk

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

Fraud Risk

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

Auditors

The auditors, Anne Brady McQuillans DFK, have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of Section 160(2) of the Companies Act, 1963.

Companies (Amendment) Act, 1986

The reporting requirements of the Companies (Amendment) Act, 1986 relating to Financial Statements do not apply as AONTAS is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital.

Events after the Balance Sheet date

There have been no circumstances or events subsequent to the year end, which require adjustment to or disclosure in the financial statements or in the notes thereto.

On behalf of the Board

Ms. Elizabeth Waters
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Date: 27th April 2013

Statement of Directors' Responsibilities

The directors are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable Irish law and Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland including the accounting standards issued by the Accounting Standards Board and published by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland.

Irish Company Law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit of the company for that year.

In preparing those financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

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

The directors are responsible for keeping proper books of account which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements are prepared in accordance with accounting standards generally accepted in Ireland and with Irish statute comprising the Companies Acts, 1963 to 1983 and 1990 to 2012, and all Regulations to be construed as on with those Acts.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence, for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the directors are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the company's auditors in connection with preparing their report) of which the company's auditors are unaware; and
- the directors have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.

On behalf of the Board

Ms. Elizabeth Waters
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Date: 27th April 2013

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of AONTAS

We have audited the financial statements of AONTAS for the year ended 31st December 2012 which comprises the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein.

Respective Responsibilities of Directors and Auditors

As described in the Statement of Directors' Responsibilities the company's directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and generally accepted accounting practice in Ireland including the accounting standards issued by the Accounting Standards Board and published by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland).

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

This report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with section 193 of the Companies Act, 1990. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinion we have formed.

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland and are properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Acts 1963 to 1983 and 1990 to 2012. We also report to you whether in our opinion: proper books of account have been kept by the company and whether the information given in the Directors' Report is consistent with the financial statements. In addition, we state whether we have obtained all the information and explanations necessary for the purposes of our audit, and whether the financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

We report to the members if, in our opinion, any information specified by law regarding directors' remuneration or directors' transactions is not disclosed and, where practicable, include such information in our report.

We read the directors' report and consider implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements within it.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of AONTAS

Basis of Audit Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland), issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the directors in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

We have undertaken the audit in accordance with the requirements of the APB Ethical Standards including the APB Ethical Standard, Provisions Available for Small Entities.

Opinion

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, of the state of the company's affairs as at the 31st December 2012 and of its net incoming resources and cashflows for the year then ended: and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Acts, 1963 to 1983 and 1990 to 2012.

We have obtained all the information and explanations we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit. In our opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the company. The financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

In our opinion, the information given in the directors' report is consistent with the financial statements.

Section 40(1) of the Companies (Amendment) Act 1983 does not apply as the company is limited by guarantee.

Natalie Kelly (Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of

Anne Brady McQuillans DFK
Chartered Accountants
& Registered Auditors
Iveagh Court
Harcourt Road
Dublin 2

Date: 27th April 2013

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2012

		2012	2011
	Notes	€	€
Income			
Restricted And Unrestricted Funds	3	917,720	1,149,839
Resources Expended			
Administration			
Salary costs		163,047	169,798
Pension scheme		23,384	26,441
Staff training and expenses		11,071	13,185
Sundry staff costs		2,436	2,930
Postage and courier services		15,706	19,666
Stationery		4,065	5,483
Telephone		6,484	7,472
Travel and subsistence		8,742	5,841
Executive and general committee expenses		8,094	8,186
Legal fees		393	7,945
Audit and accountancy fees		6,850	6,748
Bank interest and charges		953	681
Representation and affiliation		13,652	12,975
Miscellaneous		-	536
Rent of venues and equipment		958	825
Computer costs		-	1,345
Research and projects apportionments		(2,758)	(23,126)
		263,077	266,931
Premises			
Light and heat		3,918	3,692
Rent and rates		78,307	78,817
Repairs and maintenance		15,714	20,037
Leasing charges		4,413	4,341
Insurance		6,945	6,589
Cleaning		3,547	4,233
Depreciation of computers and office equipment		6,053	10,634
Deficit on disposal of tangible assets		-	320
		118,897	128,663

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2012

	2012	2011
Notes	€	€
Development		
Salary costs	329,781	348,363
Pension scheme	47,477	39,231
Consultants and contract staff	-	65
Accommodation and subsistence	2,841	2,761
Printing and publications	34,993	44,026
Conferences/seminars/membership meetings	10,434	57,202
Public relations strategy	2,982	4,092
Adult Learners Festival	97,054	92,967
Information resources	4,836	2,226
Recruitment	360	90
Childcare	275	275
	531,033	591,298
Research And Projects		
Research	9,347	21,687
Quality Assurance Framework	-	62,963
Grundtvig Sowing the Learning Seeds	4,258	13,806
Wheel Training Links	6,927	-
	20,532	98,456

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2012

		Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Total	Total
		2012	2012	2012	2011
	Notes	€	€	€	€
Incoming resources					
Incoming resources from restricted activities	3	12,488	-	12,488	96,187
Incoming resources from unrestricted activities	3	-	905,218	905,218	1,050,531
Total incoming resources		12,488	905,218	917,706	1,146,718
Resources expended					
Total resources expended		(12,488)	(921,051)	(933,539)	(1,085,348)
Operating (deficit)/surplus					
Operating (deficit)/surplus		-	(15,833)	(15,833)	61,370
Interest receivable and similar income		-	14	14	22
Net (deficit)/surplus resources for year	12	-	(15,819)	(15,819)	64,491

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

The notes on pages 41 – 47 form part of the financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 27th April 2013 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Elizabeth Waters
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Balance Sheet as at the 31st December 2012

	Notes	2012		2011	
		€	€	€	€
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	8		17,359		4,080
Current assets					
Debtors	9	23,322		22,161	
Cash at bank and in hand		92,265		97,517	
		115,587		119,678	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	(9,165)		(8,292)	
Net current assets			106,422		111,386
Total assets less current liabilities			123,781		115,466
Accruals and deferred income	11		(24,134)		-
Net assets			99,647		115,466
Funds					
Unrestricted funds	12 & 15		99,647		115,466
Total funds			99,647		115,466

The notes on pages 41 – 47 form part of the financial statements.

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Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31st December 2012

		2012	2011
	Notes	€	€
Reconciliation of (deficit)/surplus to net cash (outflow)/inflow from operation activities			
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources (before interest)		(15,833)	64,469
Depreciation		6,053	10,954
(Increase)/decrease in debtors		(1,161)	(10,509)
(Increase)/decrease in creditors		873	(199,512)
Government grant released		(3,866)	-
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(13,934)	(134,598)
Cash flow statement			
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(13,934)	(134,598)
Returns on investments and servicing of finance	13	14	22
Capital expenditure	13	8,668	(2,906)
Decrease in cash in the year		(5,252)	(137,482)
Reconciliation of net cash flow to movement in net funds (Note 14)			
Decrease in cash in the year		(5,252)	(137,482)
Net funds at 1st January 2012	14	97,517	234,999
Net funds at 31st December 2012		92,265	97,517

The notes on pages 41 – 47 form part of the financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 27th April 2013 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Elizabeth Waters
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Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

1. Accounting Policies

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

1.1. Accounting Convention

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention and with reference to the recommendations of the revised Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) Accounting and Reporting by Charities issued by the Charity Commissioners in 2005.

1.2. Tangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

All tangible fixed assets are initially recorded at historic cost.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets at rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation, less residual value, of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment	– 20% Straight Line
Computer equipment	– 20% Straight Line
Office equipment	– 20% Straight Line

1.3. Leasing Commitments

Rentals payable under operating leases are charged against income on a straight line basis over the lease term.

1.4. Income Resources

Grant income receivable from the Department of Education and Science and grant income receivable from TUI, NQAI and Teagasc are treated as being restricted as the incomes are applied for particular purposes. All other income receivable is treated as being unrestricted.

Voluntary income including donations, gifts and legacies and grants from the Department of Education and Science that provide core funding or are of general nature are recognised where there is entitlement, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability. Such income is only deferred when:

- The donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or
- The donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

1.5. Resources Expended

Expenditure is recognised when a liability is incurred. Contractual arrangements and performance related grants are recognised as goods or services are supplied. Other grant payments are recognised when a constructive obligation arises that result in the payment being unavoidable.

- Costs of generating funds are those costs incurred in attracting voluntary income, and those incurred in trading activities that raise funds.
- Charitable activities include expenditure associated with the educational programmes include both the direct costs and support costs relating to this activity.

1.6. Pensions

AONTAS operates a defined contribution scheme and pension benefits are funded over the employees' period of service by way of contributions from the company and employees. Contributions are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

2. Going Concern

The company is dependant on income provided from government funders, membership and donations. As with many government funded charities, the company is affected by both the budgetary constraints implemented by the national government and the deteriorating external economic restraints. The directors have reviewed all relevant information and are confident that the company has adequate financial resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Consequently, the directors consider it appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

3. Sources of Income	2012	2011
	€	€
Restricted funds		
Department of Education & Skills Grants:	3,866	-
Research	-	14,067
Quality Assurance Framework Project	-	56,710
NQAI Festival sponsorship	4,000	4,000
Teagasc Festival sponsorship	-	1,000
TUI Festival sponsorship	1,000	1,000
ASTI Festival sponsorship	-	500
The Wheel Training Links Grant	-	4,000
Bluebrick Festival sponsorship	-	750
Grundtvig Sowing the Learning Seeds	3,622	14,160
	12,488	96,187
Unrestricted funds		
Department of Education & Skills:		
Grant in Aid (Core Funding)	887,000	1,013,472
Members' subscriptions	17,889	20,568
National conference	(744)	16,491
Bank interest received	14	22
Miscellaneous	1,073	3,099
	905,232	1,053,652
Total income	917,720	1,149,839

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

	2012	2011
	€	€
Included in income above is deferred income from the prior year as follows:		
Department of Education & Skills Grants:		
Grant in Aid (Core Funding)	-	48,736
S.P.I.D.A.S. supplement	-	68,736
Department of Education & Skills Grants:		
Research	-	14,067
Quality Assurance Framework Project	-	54,575
Grundtvig Sowing the Learning Seeds	-	13,788
	-	199,902
In summary		
Income received in the year	917,720	949,937
Deferred income from prior year	-	199,902
	917,720	1,149,839

4. Net Incoming/(Outgoing) Resources for the year

	2012	2011
	€	€
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year is stated after charging		
Depreciation of tangible assets	6,053	10,634
Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	-	320
Operating lease rentals		
- Office equipment	4,413	4,341
Auditors' remuneration	6,850	6,748

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

5. Employees

	2012	2011
Number of employees		
The average monthly numbers of employees during the year were	9	9
	2012	2011
	€	€
Employment costs		
Wages and salaries	492,828	518,161
Other pension costs	70,861	65,672
	563,689	583,833

6. Pension Costs

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions are made by both the employee and the employer. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the company in an independently administered fund. The pension cost charge represents contributions payable by AONTAS to the fund and amount to €70,861 (2011 : €65,672).

7. Taxation

No charge to current or deferred taxation arises as the company has been granted exemption by the Revenue authorities in Ireland.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

8. Tangible Assets

	Computer equipment	Office equipment	Fixtures, fittings and equipment	Totals
	€	€	€	€
Cost				
At 1st January 2012	64,622	11,713	49,519	125,854
Additions	19,332	-	-	19,332
At 31st December 2012	83,954	11,713	49,519	145,186
Depreciation				
At 1st January 2012	62,296	9,959	49,519	121,774
Charge for the year	4,447	1,606	-	6,053
At 31st December 2012	66,743	11,565	49,519	127,827
Net book value				
At 31st December 2012	17,211	148	-	17,359
At 31st December 2011	2,326	1,754	-	4,080

9. Debtors

	2012	2011
	€	€
Other debtors	16,358	15,197
Prepayments	6,964	6,964
	23,322	22,161
	2012	2011
	€	€
Included in other debtors is the following		
Membership fees	5,525	15,197
Wages and salaries	3,240	-
Trade creditors overpaid	7,593	-
	16,358	15,197

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

10. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2012	2011
	€	€
Trade creditors	1,665	792
Accruals	7,500	7,500
	9,165	8,292

11. Accruals and Deferred Income

	2012	2011
	€	€
Government grants		
Increase in year	28,000	-
Released in year	(3,866)	-
At 31 December 2012	24,134	-

12. Reconciliation of Movements in Funds

	Statement of Financial Activities	
	2012	2011
	€	€
Fund balance at beginning of year	115,466	50,975
Net movement in funds	(15,819)	64,491
Fund balance at end of year	99,647	115,466

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

13. Gross Cash Flows

	2012	2011
	€	€
Returns on investments and servicing of finance		
Interest received	14	22
Capital expenditure		
Payments to acquire tangible assets	(19,332)	(2,906)
Receipt of grant	28,000	-
	8,668	(2,906)

14. Analysis of Changes in Net Funds

	Opening balance	Cash flows	Closing balance
	€	€	€
Cash at bank and in hand	97,517	(5,252)	92,265
Net funds	97,517	(5,252)	92,265

15. Reserves

	Balance at beginning of year	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfer to designated reserve	Balance at end of year
	€	€	€	€	€
Specific funds					
Restricted grants	-	12,488	(12,488)	-	-
Unrestricted grants	70,466	905,232	(921,051)	(10,000)	44,647
Designated reserve	45,000	-	-	10,000	55,000
	115,466	917,720	(933,539)	-	99,647

At the year end the directors decided to transfer an additional €10,000 from unrestricted reserves to a designated reserve. The designated reserves is to be used for the following purposes:

- Research project €50,000
- Professional fees in relation to the premises €5,000

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2012

16. Non-Audit Services Provided by Auditors

In common with many other businesses of our size and nature we use our auditors to prepare and submit the financial statements.

17. Status

The liability of the members is limited.

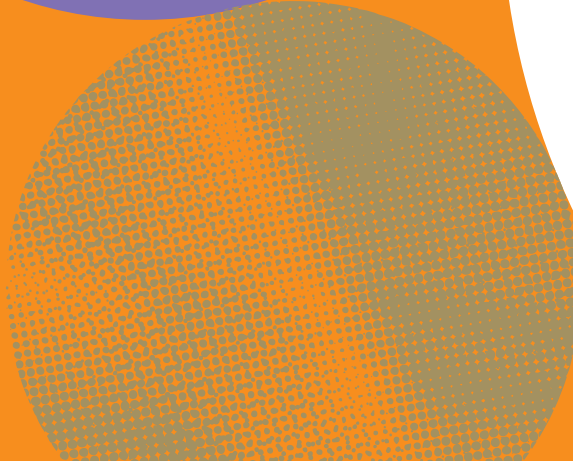
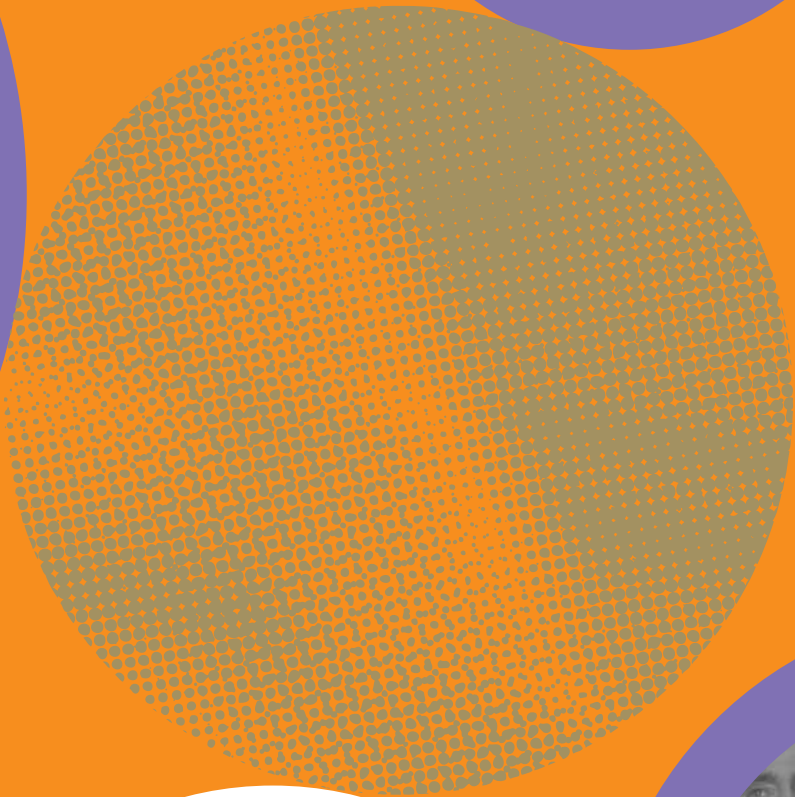
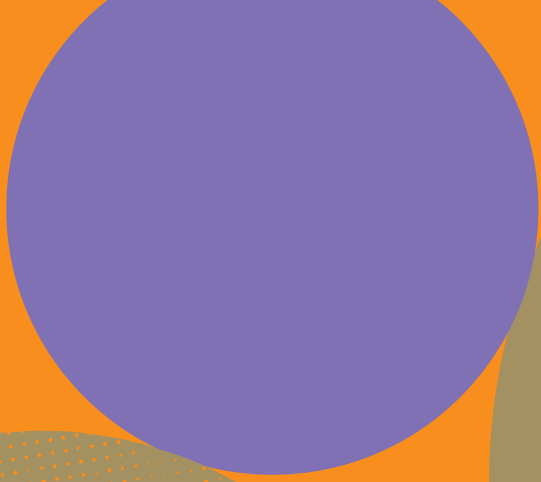
Every member of the company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the company in the event of its being wound up while they are members or within one year thereafter for the payment of the debts and liabilities of the company contracted before they ceased to be members and the costs, charges and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

18. Approval of Financial Statements

The financial statements were approved by the Board on the 27th of April 2013 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Elizabeth Waters
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer





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