



LEARNER EXPERIENCE &  
CREATIVITY in COMMUNITY ED.

APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup> 2021



Community  
Education  
Network  
Meeting



APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup> 2021 | 11:00 AM - 12:40 PM 2021

- 11.00 Welcome and updates:  
Suzanne Kyle,  
AONTAS
- 11.05 Advocacy updates:  
Dearbháil Lawless,  
AONTAS
- 11.10 FET Learner Forum –  
Community Education  
Learner Experience  
  
Kalianne Farren and  
Akisato Suzuki,  
AONTAS
- 11.45 Creativity and  
Change Workshop  
Chriszine Backhouse
- 12.40 Wrap-up and Close  
Suzanne Kyle

# Community Education Network Meeting



## INTRODUCTION



SUZANNE

\*UPCOMING TRAININGS! QQI

\*THREE-PILLAR GROUP WEBINAR SERIES exploring

COMMUNITY EDUCATION VALUES & PRINCIPLES

During this AONTAS CEN meeting members were invited to participate in an interactive taster session that modelled creative methodologies that can be used in community education in an online context. ‘The Awesome Solution’ by Creativity and Change was an experiential workshop using imagination and creativity, through art and storytelling, to explore solutions to global justice issues. Drawing on research, we discovered the elements of an “Awesome Solution”

and learnt how generating longing for change is the first step in developing real change.

At this meeting, we also heard about the AONTAS FET Learner Forum and what community education participants have been saying about their experiences of learning. This was of interest to all community education providers as the information can be used to inform practice and advocate for community education learners.

27 Attendees

23 Organisations

11 Counties



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### Key Advocacy Updates

*Dearbháil Lawless (Head of Advocacy, AONTAS) provided an update on key advocacy areas:*

- AONTAS is working on a **Submission for the Public Consultation on the SUSI Grant Scheme** and advocating for a more inclusive approach to include recommendations such as making the grant available to part time learners and ensuring the funding amount is reflective of true cost of learning
- **New QQI Early Learning & Care Awards**  
The CEN QA Community of Practice Group have met to discuss the implications of this new programme for community education providers and look at our next steps in terms of support for the sector

Community Education Network Meeting

## UPDATES



DEARBHAIL

3

### SUBMISSIONS

- REFORM of HEA LEGISLATION
- GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION STRATEGY
- RIA HIGHER ED. FUTURES GROUP

# ADVOCACY



### FORTHCOMING:

SUBMISSION on SUSI GRANT SCHEME

AVAILABLE for ALL ADULT LEARNERS incl. PART-TIME

MODEL of TRUE COSTS  
↳ HIGH RENTS  

- **QQI Reengagement Fees**  
AONTAS Advocacy Team will use the community of practice meeting space to review the issue of QQI fees

*CEN members are encouraged to liaise with Dearbháil around of these issues if they have any feedback or areas they would like to highlight. You can contact Dearbháil on [dlawless@aontas.com](mailto:dlawless@aontas.com)*

[Click to email](#)

### FET Learner Forum – Community Education Learner Experience

Kalianne Farren (Research Officer, AONTAS) presented quantitative and qualitative data on community education participants experiences of learning, particularly throughout Covid-19 pandemic. Some key observations are recorded below:

- Tutor support was strong during this time especially when transitioning to the online learning environment and learners reported an increase in digital skills and independence
- The face to face setting was greatly missed and barriers to learning included poor internet connection, a lack of digital skills, and challenges of completing assessments remotely



- Learners missed the social aspects of the face to face classroom setting
- To increase voices in the FET National Learner forum, CEN members suggested providing learners with greater access to technology and the skills to use it so they can engage effectively online
- CEN members asked for more notice of the dates of National Learner Forum from Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to allow adequate time to recruit learners



The Research Team will review any feedback and suggestions gathered at the meeting. More information on the AONTAS National FET Learner Forum can be found here

[Click to open link](#)

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CREATIVITY in COMMUNITY ED.

CREATIVITY & CHANGE workshop

**Creativity and Change Workshop – ‘The Awesome Solution’**

*Chriszine Backhouse from Creativity and Change led this workshop with her colleague Claire Coughlan, which gave CEN members the opportunity to create their own ‘awesome solution’ by using poetry to express how they feel about social justice issues close to them. Using the words ‘What if...’ participants wrote one poetic line in the chat about what they would like to see change for the better in this world. This was then read out by Chriszine as a poem, as captured below:*  
 During the workshop, CEN members had the space to reflect on the possibilities for change through a participatory art activity and also heard about initiatives aimed at highlighting social injustices through public art projects around the country.



**What if...**

The resources of the world were shared with the many, rather than the few?  
 We all respected our land  
 Love was our first response always  
 Water was clean and free for all  
 People celebrated difference instead of fearing it?  
 Where you are from didn't impact on your potential  
 Everyone realised that we don't live on the planet rather we are the planet  
 We replaced tarmac with grass  
 Our seas were not being dredged of its life?  
 Women were safe and equal in their homes, family and community.  
 Greed did not exist  
 People shared empathy instead of judgement  
 Everyone had sufficient food to thrive  
 Services were inclusive and accessible for all  
 Everyone was cherished equally  
 All could see the beauty of the other  
 We felt we are all good enough  
 Resources were shared more equally  
 We choose to invest in eco solutions and divest from fossil fuel giants  
 We could see through the eyes of a child  
 We mow the lawn less and encouraged wildflowers and weeds



For more information on 'Creativity and Change please go to:

[Click to open link](#)

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## UPDATES



DEARBHAIL

### 3 SUBMISSIONS

- REFORM of HEA LEGISLATION
- GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION STRATEGY
- RIA HIGHER ED. FUTURES GROUP

FORTHCOMING:

SUBMISSION on SUSI GRANT SCHEME

AVAILABLE for ALL ADULT LEARNERS incl. PART-TIME

MODEL of TRUE COSTS → HIGH RENTS

## ADVOCACY

## LEARNER EXPERIENCE

### FET LEARNER FORUM

KALIANNE FARREN & AKISATO SUZUKI

NATIONAL and REGIONAL EVENTS with the ETBs

YOUR VIEWS on the FET SERVICE

8 EVENTS

#LEARNERVOICES

1657 LEARNERS REACHED

COMMUNITY ED. LEARNERS = 9-11%

LEARNING at HOME?

MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTED

MOTIVATION = STRUGGLE!

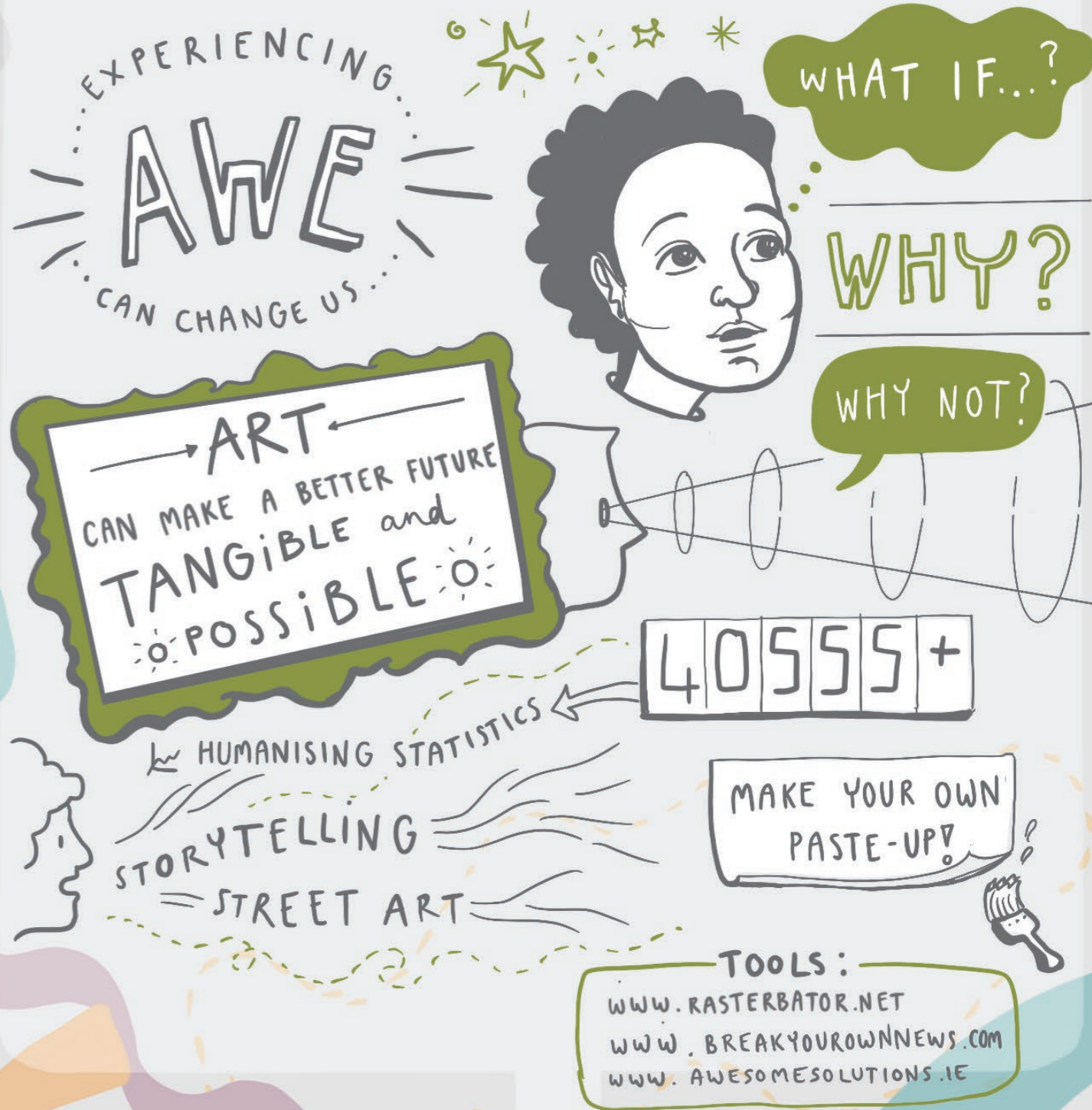
LACK of STRUCTURE

MIXED RESULTS



## CREATIVITY in COMMUNITY ED.

### CREATIVITY & CHANGE workshop



## CLOSE

WORKSHOPS TRAINING

DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY EDUCATION

PLEASE CHECK OUT

SAOLTA

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## Conclusion

The meeting drew to a close with Suzanne thanking everyone for coming. The purpose of the meeting was to provide members with key advocacy and research updates and to have the opportunity to explore the fundamental role creativity plays in learning. The Creative Solution exercise provided members with the unique experience of using creativity and collaboration to consider ways to live in a more just and equal world. The approach can be used in the work of community education providers and give members food for thought about how they can build their own 'awesome solutions' into the work they do with learners.





AONTAS

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**AONTAS would like to thank** our guest speaker Chriszine Backhouse, her colleague Claire Coughlan and all our CEN members whose knowledge and contributions make the CEN what it is today. AONTAS would also like to say a particular thank you to our CEN Steering Group members for guiding and supporting the work of the CEN:

Anne Flannery,  
Larkin Unemployed Centre

Catherine Aylmer, LCEN

Cathleen McDonagh Clarke,  
Exchange House

Ciarán McKinney, Age & Opportunity

David O'Brien, Soilse

Lia Clarkson, Warrenmount CED

Mary Maher, DALC

Maura Kearney, Acorn Project


Rachel Morrissey, D8CEC

Community  
Education  
Network  
Meeting

We recommend that AONTAS CEN members join EPALE (the European Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) so that you can be included in our CEN EPALE groups and receive more information on our CEN meetings, including presentations and other relevant news and events.

*You can register on EPALE by clicking here:*

[Click to open link](#)



**For more information**  
on the AONTAS Community  
Education Network, or to become  
a member, please click here:

[Click to open link](#)