



The Voice of
Adult Learning

Community Education Network

Meeting via Webinar Platform Zoom

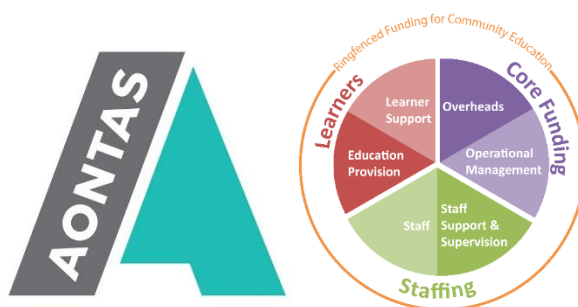


MARCH 2020

Meeting Report



AONTAS Community Education Network Meeting



Date: Thursday, 19th March 2020

Time: 09.45am – 12.00pm

Meeting via Webinar Platform Zoom
Moderated by John Hurley, H2 Learning



AGENDA

9.45 – 10.00	Set up and technical support
10.00– 10.30	Introduction to Development Education and how the Saolta Project can support your work Meliosa Bracken, Research Officer, Development Perspectives Stephanie Kirwan, Project Officer, Development Perspectives
10.30 – 11.50	QQI information sharing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reengagement – the learning from the process so far<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programme Development and Validation• Coronavirus COVID-19 – QQI response<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Q&A Session Colette Harrison, Manager of Awards and Certification, QQI Walter Balfe, Head of Awards, QQI
11.50 – 12.00	AONTAS response to Coronavirus COVID-19 crisis Niamh O’ Reilly, CEO, AONTAS

Introduction to Development Education and how the Saolta Project can support your work



Empowerment for a better world through
Adult and Community Education.



While this CEN meeting was originally scheduled to take place in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in Dublin, AONTAS took the decision to move this meeting online because of the COVID -19 pandemic. For many AONTAS members, meeting online was a new experience and so we enlisted the technical support of H2Learning to aid us in this transition, and the meeting ran very smoothly.

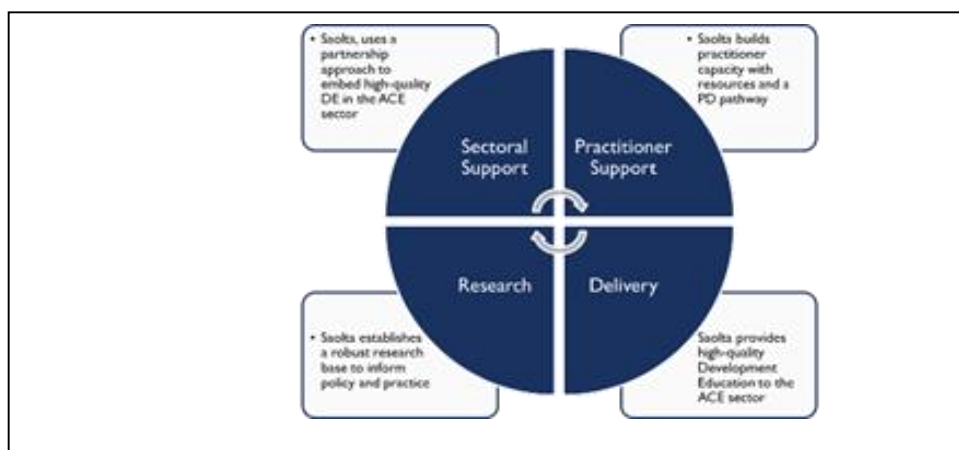
Stephanie Kirwan and Meliosa Bracken of Development Perspectives spoke first about the Saolta project its relevance for community education providers, and how they would see development education within their own practice.

CEN members heard that the Saolta Project is a strategic partnership with Irish Aid to ensure:

‘Increased accessibility, quality and effectiveness of development education within the adult and community education sector’.

Saolta was established in 2019 and is due to run to the end of 2021. The project is led by Development Perspectives (DP) and is a partnership between DP, AONTAS, Irish Rural Link, Concern Worldwide, Irish Aid, and the Dept. of Adult and Community Education of Maynooth University.

The **Saolta strategic priorities** are outlined in the graph below:

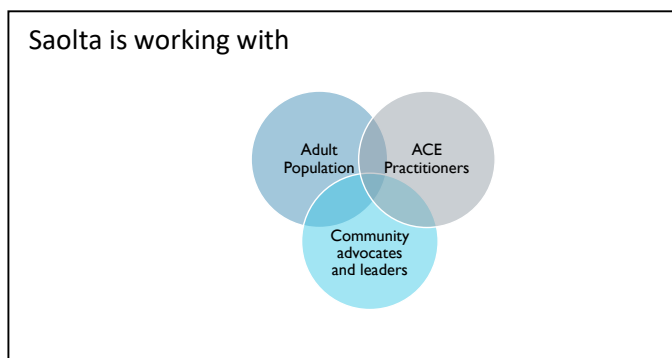


Elements of the Saolta Project

1. SDG Advocate Training:

The SDG Advocate Training offers 26 active citizens an opportunity to become one of Ireland's SDG Advocates through this innovative project. This training course will allow the advocates to deepen their understanding of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, represent the project internationally and lead transformative change in Ireland. It's a shared learning space with the idea of practitioners bringing the learning back in to their practice and engaging with the SDGs in their communities. For more information go to

<https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/advocate.html>



2. Training of Trainers:

The Training of Trainers will offer Adult and Community Education Practitioners across Ireland an opportunity to deepen their understanding of Development Education in Ireland, to develop an idea on how (and why) to implement it in their daily practice, and to explore pathways to lead transformative change in Ireland. For more information go to

<https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/training-of-trainers>

3. Practitioner Resources

- Training of Trainers: A toolkit for active learning in the adult and community sector
- Stepping Stones for the Sustainable Development Goals: A workbook for community and adult education providers
- Understanding the Sustainable Development Goals: A workbook for Further Education institutions
- Evaluation toolkit: A workbook for community and adult education practitioners
- Information packs on each of the Sustainable Development Goals

To access these resources go to: <https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/saolta-resources>

4. Research

Evidence-based research is being developed, collated and disseminated to inform Development Education policy and practice in the Adult and Community Education sector in Ireland. Research projects include an interactive map to highlight Development Education provisions across the adult and community sector.

For more information go to <https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/saolta-research>

5. Further Education College Workshops

Saolta offers the following for Further Education institutions:

- Free SDG training for teachers/staff at Further Education Institutes/Centres across Ireland.
- Distribution of free resources to Further Education Institutes to provide support in the delivery of SDG training and/or the implementation of Development Education elements into their teaching practice.
- Support to FE staff in the aligning of strategies and work plans to the SDGs.

For more information go to <https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/further-education-institutes>

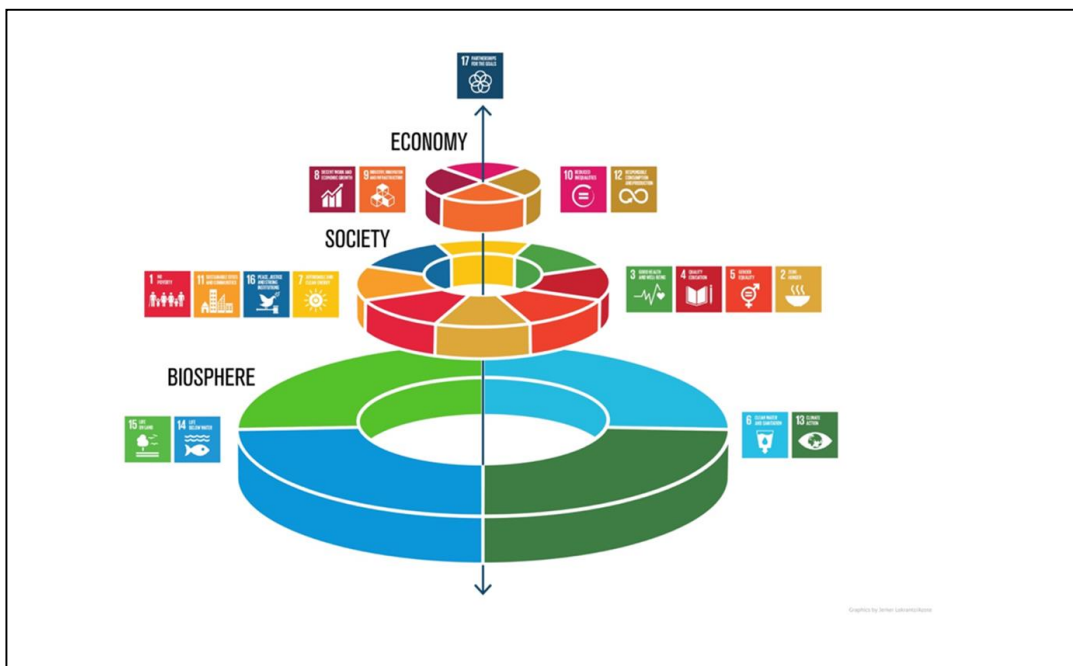
6. Workshops

Monthly interactive SDG workshops are hosted across Ireland. These workshops aim to increase participants awareness of specific SDGs and support groups to integrate the SDGs into their practice and respective communities. For more information go to:

<https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/saolta-workshops>

7. Public Participation Networks:

Ireland's National Implementation Plan (<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/DCCAE-National-Implement-Plan.pdf>) for the SDGs identifies the crucial role that Local Authorities have to play in translating the SDGs into practical action at a local level. Throughout the lifetime of Saolta, Development Perspectives will be working to support Public Participation Networks (PPNs) across Ireland in integrating the SDGs into County Development Plans. Development Perspectives will also be supporting PPNs in mapping their goals to strategic SDG actions.



“A PPN is a network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups across the country” (Gov.ie, 2019).

In its work with PPNs, the Saolta project offers:

- Free SDG training for staff and members of individual PPNs across Ireland.
- Distribution of free resources to PPN members to support community groups in the delivery of SDG training.
- Support to PPN staff in the aligning of strategies and workplans to the SDGs.

For more information go to: <https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/public-participation-network>

8. Networking Events including the following:

- Launch of the Saolta project which took place in the Mansion House Dublin on January 30th
- AONTAS Lifelong Learning Summit which took place on November 18th 2019

Launch of the Saolta Project: Left to right: Michael Dorley (Concern Worldwide), Bobby McCormack (DP), Suzanne Kyle (AONTAS), Tom Collins (Public Water Forum), Orla McBreen, (Department of



Stephanie Kirwan and Margaret Downey of Development Perspectives at the AONTAS Lifelong Learning Summit



During the meeting, Stephanie asked the CEN members present the following question:

'What words come to mind when we say the words Development Education?'

The responses included the following:

- Working across borders
- Global education
- Empowerment
- Linking local to global
- Social justice
- Linking local and global
- Bettering the community through lifelong learning
- Working across countries
- Broad thinking
- Exploring global issues in a local context
- Inclusion
- Learning for all
- Global linking
- Working together
- Participation
- Community education
- Personal development and community development and empowerment and progression
- Empowering most at risk

Stephanie used a graph developed by Trócaire explain Development Education in more detail. This graph highlights the three elements of development, namely: Exploring, thinking, and acting.

These elements are underpinned by the following principles:

Empowerment, action, justice perspective, active and creative learning, nurturing imagination, making connections



Trócaire definition of Development Education:

Development Education (DE) is an active and creative educational process that aims to increase awareness and understanding of the world we live in. It challenges perceptions and stereotypes by encouraging optimism, participation and action for a just world.

Development Education empowers people to analyse, reflect on and challenge at a local and global level the root causes of injustice. In exploring global issues, Saolta uses the following four pillars:

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Systems Thinking, Active Citizenship

These key values are also highlighted:

Empathy, Global Solidarity, Partnership

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Stephanie and Meliosa took the opportunity at the meeting to highlight the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the importance of Development Education in their implementation. The SDGs are a collection of 17 interlinked goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". The SDGs were set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. They are included in a UN Resolution called the 2030 Agenda or what is colloquially known as Agenda 2030. Ireland has signed up



The 17 goals are: (1) No Poverty, (2) Zero Hunger, (3) Good Health and Well-being, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality, (6) Clean Water and Sanitation, (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, (10) Reducing Inequality, (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, (14) Life Below Water, (15) Life On Land, (16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, (17) Partnerships for the Goals. The SDGs are a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all

Each goal has a number of targets, and in all there are 169 targets.

193 countries have adopted the SDGs, including Ireland

SDG 4: Quality Education: The work of Saolta is particularly linked with Target 4.7 which aims that by 2030 to ensure all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

Key concepts associated with Development Education:



Linking Development Education to Community Education

The connections between development education and community education were highlighted, including the following:

- Recognition of diverse perspectives, inclusion of marginalised voices
- Working with grassroots organisations to empower local decision making and acting for change
- Participatory, transformative learning processes and a focus on awareness-building and action for positive change
- Recognition of injustice and action and learning to tackle its causes, rather than its symptoms

Linking local to global and global to local: Exploring COVID-19 as a global issue that is felt intensively at a local level

A discussion around how community education organisations could local communities could understand and respond to COVID-19 and the following points were raised:

- Social media can be used to share information
- Traditional media is also important for those with low digital literacy e.g. posting information on windows of local businesses
- There is considerable concern about linking with older people or those who don't have access to technology
- Development education and community education is around thinking of everyone, not just those who have most access to the most resources

- COVID-19 has highlighted how interconnected we all are globally so the issue of interdependence is at the forefront
- SDG 3: Good health and well-being is very important at this time also. Using the community approaches and applying them to issues like this can be effective

When member were asked: 'Can you identify one aspect of your practice that is linked to Development Education?' the following responses were shared:

EPALE platform which is managed by Léargas, 'connects adult educators across Europe. Themes including environmental awareness and sustainability...and an online discussion about how adult and community educators can bring DE in to their work'.

'Lots of great initiatives from Community Organisations e.g. Age & Opportunity, Siel Bleu Ireland, (Workouts online), Lust for Life (are hosting a discussion on mental health and well-being) who are doing online broadcasts on their Facebook pages.

'Local area very active in WhatsApp but also communicating to neighbours who are not on it and may be nervous about going out'

'In our centre we are proving meals on wheels to older people in the community and making calls to those who are isolated'.

Inishowen Development Partnership 'set up Changemakers linking local development and development education'

LWL 'have a number of projects that link into the community and Education , eg Women's manifesto, women in decision making etc.'

'For my heritage classes, the students prepare walking tours of local areas, this helps them connect with past communities'

'Work with schools on SDGs and with WWGS. Also biodiversity projects with local communities and envisioning the future'

'Context of immigration and emigration which has always been part of parcel of Dublin'

'SDCP has started a Peer Group in which participants become involved in local projects, whilst also learning to value and make sense of their own experience and expertise'

When asked, CEN members identified the following supports which would help to incorporate Development Education in to their practice:

- **Trainer Toolkit**
- **Project ideas**
- **Training and resources**
- **Case studies**

The open call for Training of Trainers programme was highlighted and CEN members were encouraged to apply. Also highlighted again were the Saolta resources to be found at <https://www.developmentperspectives.ie/saolta-resources>. CEN members were also encouraged to get in touch if they would like a Saolta workshop in their area and reminded members that Saolta training is free of charge.

Poll: How relevant is Development Education to your work in Community Education:

Very relevant: 81% Somewhat relevant: 15% Don't know: 4%

QQI information sharing

Colette Harrison, Manager of Awards and Certification at QQI, and Walter Balfe, Head of Awards at QQI attended this CEN meeting to provide updates and answer questions in relation to COVID-19, reengagement, and programme development and validation. A summary of the main points raised is captured below.

Online delivery during the COVID-19 crisis:

- Local quality assurance has increasing importance during the COVID19 crisis
- Flexibility is very important, but the integrity of the process must be maintained
- This is a force majeure situation, there is no choice, classes can't go on as they normally would.
- Where groups have the resources and wherewithal to move classes online, even if not validated to do so, they should do so. It is a temporary measure that has to be taken in the current circumstances.
- After the crisis a lot more providers will consider online provision but it shouldn't be done in an unplanned or unstructured way.
- QQI requests that providers take in to account the guidelines on the quality assurance of blended learning and implement them with any programmes that have been delivered online.
- There are implications for learner experience in the current crisis. Learner isolation needs to be taken in to account, and the capacity of teachers to teach in this environment.
- When things go back to normal, providers can look to get approval for blended learning through validation
- Assessment: Skills demonstration is a big part of assessment in the FE sector, how you do this online and quality assure the integrity of assessment is difficult and not to be taken lightly. Providers are advised that where they can defer assessment do so. If it's not possible to defer, use alternative methods.
- Where it's not possible to deliver courses online, providers are encouraged to maintain contact with learners even if the course isn't running, try and maintain the cohesion of the group, let them communicate and interact, don't bring things to a complete halt, keep learners connected and informed.
- A CEN member raised the point that there may be GDPR implications for providers using WhatsApp as they can't guarantee where their information and data will go with WhatsApp as messages can be forwarded from groups to others.
- Protection for enrolled learners: QQI doesn't recognise this situation as a PEL situation – it's an unusual situation and programmes are being deferred rather than being stopped
- If people have specific queries about specific people put the question in to CRM
- More info can be found on QQI's COVID19 FAQ section of there website which can be accessed [here](#).

Certification:

- QQI is focused on the learner experience and ensuring that they are certified in a timely manner
- When issues arise or things go wrong, providers are encouraged to contact QQI as soon as possible to ensure that they are resolved before it's too late
- The CAO process is on hold in the colleges. Once QQI has results they will be dealing with the CAO directly in relation to learners using courses to access college places through the CAO.
- Certification period: QQI will continue with April certification. June certification may or may not go ahead depending on whether people can assess and submit. QQI can put in certification systems when required so will watch the national situation and communicate
- The certificate is important but the system gives you a final statement of results and that is available to all centres four days after certification. If you distribute that to learners they are certified from that time. QQI intends to meet its issuing deadline but if centres are closed there is no point in issuing certs. QQI may not be in a position to print them if they have staffing issues. Nonetheless the learner is recorded as awarded and will have the document to prove that (i.e. the final statement of results).
- QQI recommends that providers look at learners' history as there have been cases of learners who think they have their major award but on review by QQI find out this is not the case. A problem may be highlighted when a centre is being inspected and people who thought they had their major award but actually do not.

Reengagement:

- QQI will have to revisit reengagement schedules, and be practical and realistic, but the schedule will be disrupted.
- Providers in the process of reapplying could have it set up and ready for a panel, but QQI won't be setting up any new panels until this situation settles down.
- QQI are not changing the schedule for groups scheduled to reengage in the next quarter, but each case will have to be looked at individually. QQI may have to look at the possibility of a new target date.
- All this will be looked at in the context of the current situation given the time and resources going in to supporting students, so reengagement may be delayed.
- Where organisations plan to reengage with QQI but significant changes have been made to the nature of their organisation e.g. they've merged with another org or changed their name they must inform QQI, and details of the new organisation must be put forward when applying for reengagement.
- A change of ownership is a different situation. Programmes cannot be sold, they are not transferrable, because a big part of programme validation is who the provider is. Where the nature of the provider changes QQI needs to know and then that can be formalised through reengagement.

Changes to Childcare awards:

- The Department of Education has issued new standards and guidelines for Childcare awards from Levels 5 – 8. The idea is that there will be consistency as to how the programmes are delivered and a seamless progression route between the levels on the NFQ.

- The guidelines have been developed by a Standards Development Group made up of all relevant stakeholders including representatives of childcare service providers, childcare training providers, relevant government departments and Tusla.
- Two of the most significant messages are that there is a need for more practice based learning, and that the sector is recognised as a professional sector
- The new standards will involve demonstration of knowledge, skill and competence in a professional setting and learners will be mentored and assessed on the job
- The recommendation from the standards group, supported by the department, was the following:
 - There should be a national programme
 - The curriculum should be consistent and more or less the same irrespective of the provider
 - There should be one such curriculum developed
 - Other providers could apply to use that programme and deliver it in their context but must get differential validation
 - Differential validation involves using the same content but specifying what's different about your programme, details about your provision, your staffing, structure etc. i.e. showing capacity to deliver the programme
- When that programme comes to be reviewed in five years after it is validated, the lead provider will have to lead that process again and will have to ensure that the providers using that programme follow in any changes and contribute to the review.
- Responsibilities go along with using the programme including keeping in line with changes to the programme in the short term or down the line with the five year review.
- There will be part time versions of the programme for learners who wish to do it over a longer period but the previous practice of doing a piece at a time over a very long time won't fit the new model so well. It's possible that the old system of eight components making a major award won't apply, there may be a number of minor awards but possibly only two or three
- Information about the new awards and deactivation of the old awards will be provided via the QQI website
- For more information on the new Childcare awards click [here](#).

AONTAS response to Coronavirus COVID-19 crisis

AONTAS CEO, Niamh O'Reilly was invited by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to play an influential role on the recently formed DES COVID-19 Tertiary Education Steering Group. Tertiary education includes further and higher education. In addition, Niamh O'Reilly is charged with chairing a subcommittee called the Mitigating Educational Disadvantage including Community Education during the COVID-19 Crisis Working Group (MED Group).

This news is significant because it means that AONTAS members, and all adult and community education learners, now have a voice to raise the full range of challenges currently at hand and directly feed this into DES. Every effort is being made to ensure that the issues facing adult and community education, providers and learners, are heard and acted upon.

Furthermore, AONTAS is committed to delivering on our vision for educational equality for all adults and is working with key stakeholders and experts on the MED Group to identify solutions to the crisis in the short and medium term. Additionally, AONTAS is working with and on behalf of

members through a range of communications: member phone calls, surveys, online meetings, weekly webinars with AONTAS CEO, AONTAS newsletter and through social media.

We welcome engagement with members as we believe practitioners offer valuable insights that will offer solutions to the immediate questions facing the sector as a whole, as well as planning for the range of long-term ramifications that lie ahead.

For more information please click here: <https://www.aontas.com/aontas-covid-19-response>

Members Quotes

- Thanks so much, I loved learning more about development ed. So critical -- especially at a time like this
- Thank you very interesting!
- Great job everyone very interactive
- Looking forward to the trainer toolkit
- Thank you all for a very informative session. Stay safe
- Thanks so much, great session and great experience with zoom
- Thanks to everyone for the session today. Good to connect with our community in these challenging times. Stay safe, We are in this together
- Thanks, great information and a great introduction to zoom
- Very good session. Thanks to everyone
- Brilliant by all, thank you for a great morning of information.
- Thanks for a great session
- Great session, thank you. Keep safe everyone
- Thanks, everyone fantastic session
- Very useful, thank you
- Thanks very much, lovely to see/hear everyone!
- Very informative, thank you all



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