



The Voice of  
Adult Learning

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025







STAR AWARDS  
2025

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Choir

Voice of  
Adult Learning

www.aontas.com



## **AONTAS**

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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON JOHN D'ARCY

AONTAS has a unique voice in Ireland.

A voice that speaks for adult learners, their learning communities and the people that support them. A voice that is informed by our members, individuals, and organisations right across our island – north, south, east, and west.

With this first-hand knowledge and direction, AONTAS staff have built and delivered strong messages to Ministers, officials and funders in Dublin and Belfast – not just about the needs of learners but also about the wider societal challenges facing them as citizens wherever they live.

The past year has seen much progress on our advocacy work for learners but there remains much to be done especially given pressures nationally and internationally, coupled with the speed of technology's impact on all of our lives.

I'd like to thank the staff and the Board of AONTAS, and our members for their boundless commitment and energy in addressing our mission and our values. I look forward to our forthcoming work on our new strategy which will build on our successes.

Key achievements I'd like to note in this short foreword are a small number of examples of the work of AONTAS.

One example is our significant research report, "Community Education for Social Transformation", which took an all-island lens to how community education is an effective and underutilised mechanism for tackling disadvantage, strengthening communities, and revitalising democracy.

A second example is *The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: The Adult Learner*. The 2025 edition contained 11 contributions covering "Perspectives on Community and Lifelong Learning", "Case Studies on Improving Practice", and "Book and Policy Reviews". Thank you to all our contributors and to the Editorial Board for another excellent edition of this unique journal.

Finally, a third example is the AONTAS Adult Education Summit, held in November 2025 at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin. With an excellent array of keynote speakers, panel sessions and a full house of delegates, the Summit provided a tangible opportunity to share best practice across Ireland, the UK, and Europe. The connections made at that event continue and show clearly the power of people working together to support and change lives through adult and community education.

Thank you for your support in everything AONTAS does.

**John D'Arcy**  
Chairperson, AONTAS





# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO DEARBHÁIL LAWLESS

In the past year, we have witnessed increasing anger, division, and isolation across the island of Ireland. This has brought significant challenges for our members, learners, and colleagues in adult and community education. Adult learners reflect a diverse and often marginalised section of society. And while we pride ourselves on the richness of this plurality, it means that when misinformation is being used to purposefully create tension and place blame on the “other” instead of those who hoard resources to increase their profits, frustrations run high. Adding to this is our ongoing housing crisis, the high costs of living, and global wars. As a result, these frustrations leak into our classrooms and flood an already under-resourced space at a rapid pace.

While the environment we work and live in continues to face such challenges, it is felt deeply because care, empathy, and compassion are embodied by our community. But one thing is certain: we are a force to be reckoned with! Adult learning is a social justice movement, and our team and members remained steadfast in their focus throughout 2025. While rooms flooded with trauma, anger, and exhaustion, we built rafts and lifted each other up, reminding ourselves that solidarity can, and does, counter isolation.

## ***Connecting Communities***

This year, we proudly welcomed 61 new members into the AONTAS community, reflecting the growing momentum and shared purpose across the sector. Our Community Education Network has also expanded by 20%, strengthening connections and creating more opportunities for collaboration, learning, and collective action. To support this growing network, we launched a new AONTAS website and an online Membership Hub, making it easier for members to connect, access resources, and engage with our work. We also brought together nearly 200 people from eight countries for our Adult Education Summit, and showcased community education through a dedicated exhibition during the event.

## ***Building the Profile of Adult Learning***

Our Adult Learners’ Festival celebrated adult learning across the island of Ireland, with 149 events held in 26 counties, helping local people identify opportunities and make new connections while showcasing the impact of adult learning programmes. Nationally, we led a National Day of Visibility for Community Education on 23 September and secured a media reach of 8 million, in addition to sending 174 campaign emails to TDs to influence political understanding and engagement.

## *Learner Voice*

Through the National FET Learner Forum, we worked in partnership with nine Education and Training Boards to gather the views of 2,274 learners over the academic year. These insights are vital in ensuring that learners' experiences are at the heart of decision-making and that they are recognised as key stakeholders in policy. Alongside this, we also provided Learner Voice training to 166 practitioners and learners, building capacity across the sector to meaningfully engage with and respond to learner perspectives.

## *Advocating for Change*

Advocacy was central to all our work this year. We delivered 13 major policy submissions to government and national bodies and continued our work on national representative groups, ensuring that the voices of our members and learners were represented in key decision-making processes. Our "Community Education: Local, Lifelong, Life-Changing" campaign mobilised collective action across the sector with community groups contacting local representatives, resulting in parliamentary questions being asked in the Dáil. We also facilitated Minister Marian Harkin meeting with the Community Education Network and attending a visit to the Women's Community Project and Women's Collective Ireland (WCI) in Mullingar. The AONTAS team emailed every TD and Senator, calling for greater recognition and support for community education, and we met with officials in the North and South on multiple occasions to ensure adult and community education is on their agenda.

Thank you to our members, our Board, our partners, funders, and all those who contribute to this important work. Together we are taking action to protect and strengthen Irish society, to drive equality and social inclusion in education, and ensure that love, connection, and compassion are central to our work.

**YAS ARE A SOUND BUNCH, FAIR PLAY!**

**Dearbháil Lawless**  
*CEO, AONTAS*





## INTRODUCTION TO AONTAS

AONTAS are the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation of Ireland, founded in 1969 and passionately working ever since to make education equal and accessible for all. Backed by our robust research and focused community work, we advocate and lobby for quality education for all adults, and raise awareness of the impact of adult learning on people's lives and on society. We work on behalf of our members, who connect with all communities across the island of Ireland. Our members and adult learners inform all our research and campaigns for social change.

In 2023, as part of our new Strategic Plan, we updated our Vision and Mission. These set out what kind of world we want to see (our Vision), and the part we can play in achieving this (our Mission).

### *Our Vision*

A world where the pursuit of learning for all adults is valued, equal, and strengthens communities.

### *Our Mission*

To advocate for empowering adult learning that drives social equality, justice, and collective action across the island of Ireland.

## The AONTAS Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Our [Strategic Plan](#), *Leading Collective Action for Social Change*, explores the changes we want to see in the coming years and how we are working to make these changes happen.

Our Strategic Plan and our work continues to be informed by our six guiding principles:



**SOCIAL JUSTICE**



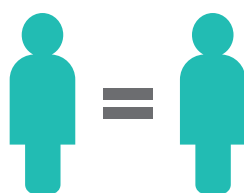
**SUPPORTING SOCIAL INCLUSION**



**PARTNERSHIP**



**VALUING DIVERSITY**



**ADVANCING EQUALITY**



**FEMINISM**

Our work is also underpinned by the realisation of [Public Sector Duty](#) and striving to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect the human rights of staff and people involved in the adult and community education sector. The work reflected in this report demonstrates how we live these principles. As a team, we are committed to excellence in governance, and our hard-working staff are highly skilled, well-informed, and passionate about social justice.

*Leading Collective Action for Social Change* is based in the understanding that adult learning has proven benefits for the personal and professional development and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and society. However, existing social inequalities prevent people from participating in adult learning.

In turn, this means that people are not aware of or are not being afforded the chance to reach their learning potential. This impacts the wider community and means that disadvantage and social exclusion are perpetuated.

Our 2023-2026 strategy is about AONTAS driving social change from a social equality perspective. This requires collective action to empower communities and wider society, not just the individual. It is about enabling the whole community to grow and flourish together. It is human-centred and rights-based. It encourages a society that respects and values all people, all learning types, and all learning journeys across the island of Ireland.

*Leading Collective Action for Social Change* has three objectives. Each one uses the word “change” to underscore how we can move closer to our vision of “a world where the pursuit of learning for all adults is valued, equal, and strengthens communities”.

## Objective 1.

## Connect and Engage the Sector to Enable Change

As a membership organisation, AONTAS have long and valuable experience in bringing people from across the adult learning and community education sector together. We know that listening to and supporting learners, providers, and all others involved in the sector, helps to form a collective voice to call for change. We have three goals under this objective.

**Goal 1:** Provide a structured platform for voices and input to be heard from across the sector.

**Goal 2:** Inform national research on the importance of social equality.

**Goal 3:** Build capacity within the sector by enabling professional development, sharing knowledge and strengthening networks.

## Objective 2.

## Advocate for Change

Based on the needs and experiences of our members and the wider sector, we advocate for changes that address social inequality that relates to adult learning. We have three goals under this objective.

**Goal 1:** Strengthen and develop the AONTAS organisational voice.

**Goal 2:** Evidence and highlight how adult learning is impacted by social inequality.

**Goal 3:** Inform and influence stakeholders and the wider public.

## Objective 3.

## Empower the Change

We recognise that to achieve our mission, we need to be a supportive environment that supports professional development and encourages new ideas. We have three goals under this objective.

**Goal 1:** Develop a socially inclusive framework for AONTAS as an employer.

**Goal 2:** Integrate a problem-solving culture.

**Goal 3:** Enhance organisational infrastructure and explore diversification of funding.

All our work is aligned clearly with these identified objectives and goals. In this Annual Report, we will explore our activities and outcomes for 202 and how they contribute to the achievement of the overall Strategic Plan to 2026. We present our programmes, events, and campaigns under the objective they most closely align with, but with the understanding that all our work intersects with multiple parts of the Strategic Plan.

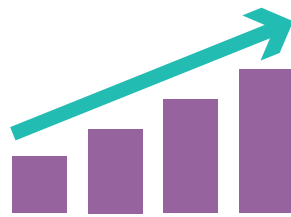
# OUR IMPACT IN 2025

**61** new members welcomed, bringing our total to



**20%**

growth of our Community Education Network



Launched a new **website** and new online **Membership Hub**

[www.aontas.com](http://www.aontas.com)

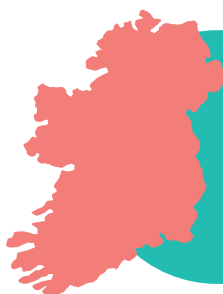
[www.membership.aontas.com](http://www.membership.aontas.com)



Held a **National Day of Visibility** for Community Education on 23 September



**149** events hosted across **26** counties in our Adult Learners' Festival



**9** regional National Further Education and Training **Learner Forums** hosted

**2,274** learners' views collected



**13** major policy submissions delivered to government and national bodies



**166** Learner Voice trainings delivered to practitioners and learners



Secured media coverage with a reach of **8 million** through our community education media campaign

Brought almost **200 people** together for the AONTAS Adult Education Summit, with representatives from **8 countries**



**174** lobbying emails sent to TDs about our “Community Education: Local, Lifelong, Life-Changing” campaign

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

It's been a very successful year for AONTAS. We've grown our membership, developed our digital platforms and delivered a busy programme of training and advocacy activities, all designed to raise and strengthen the voice of our members, and promote and enhance adult and community education.

The AONTAS programme of work is delivered by a team of professional staff through four key areas: communications, capacity building, advocacy, and research. This work is underpinned by social justice, equality, human rights, and Sustainable Development Goals.

## *Our Core Services and Activities*

- The Adult Learners' Festival
- The STAR Awards
- Policy Day
- National Further Education and Training Learner Forum
- *The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: The Adult Learner*
- Policy, advocacy and lobbying
- The Community Education Network
- Community Education Map
- Campaigns and events
- News, blogs, and social media
- Learners As Leaders programme
- Learner Voice training for staff and learners
- The AONTAS Adult Education Summit
- National Coordinator for the New European Agenda for Adult Learning
- Community education and equality driven research
- Representation in the field of adult and community education
- Creation of resources and training
- National and EU funded projects that benefit the Further Education and Training sector

# Monthly Highlights



• STAR Awards Judging Days



• *Measuring Impact of Adult Education in Northern Ireland* report launch

• Writers' Workshop

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

• Adult Learners' Festival  
★ STAR Awards  
• New AONTAS membership hub launched

• 55<sup>th</sup> AONTAS Annual General Meeting





- Learner Voice Digital Badge
- *Community Education for Social Transformation* research launch
- *Community Education Against Disinformation* workbook launch

- Community Changemakers Programme two-day residential

- Writers' Workshop

JUL

AUG

SEP

OCT

NOV

DEC



- New AONTAS website launched
- National advocacy campaign "Community Education: Local, Lifelong, Life-Changing"
- First ever National Day of Visibility for Community Education

- The AONTAS Adult Education Summit: Connecting Communities for Collective Action
- *Learner Voices Across Ireland* report launch
- *The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: The Adult Learner* launch
- Oireachtas Committee briefing on apprenticeships and learner voice



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The Voice of  
Adult Learning



#AdultEducationSumm

# OBJECTIVE 1: CONNECT AND ENGAGE THE SECTOR TO ENABLE CHANGE

## What We Do

AONTAS have been working to support adult education for nearly 60 years. We are highly experienced in bringing people and organisations together from across the adult and community education sector. This objective focuses on improving social equality by creating a space for collective action.

## Activity Highlights

Our Goals	Actions We Took	Our Impact in 2025
Provide a structured platform for voices and input to be heard from across the sector.	Hosted the 19 <sup>th</sup> annual Adult Learners' Festival and STAR awards.	<b>149 festival events</b> hosted across 26 counties.
	Grew our Community Education Network.	<b>112 award nominations</b> received, and <b>9 winners</b> across 8 awards. <b>20%</b> growth in membership of the Community Education Network.
	Developed our digital infrastructure.	Launched a <b>new AONTAS website</b> and <b>Membership Hub</b> . Added <b>50 new organisations</b> added to the online Community Education Map. Total social media reach of <b>745,940</b> .
Inform national research on the importance of social equality.	Ran the National Further Education and Training Learner Forum.	Hosted <b>9 regional forums</b> , collecting the views of <b>2,274 adult learners</b> . Collated national findings into our public report, <i>Learner Voices Across Ireland</i> .
	Published <i>The Adult Learner</i> journal.	Hosted <b>two Writers' Workshops</b> for applicants and received a record of <b>17 submissions</b> .
Build capacity within the sector by enabling professional development, sharing knowledge, and strengthening networks.	Hosted the AONTAS Adult Education Summit.	<b>195 attendees</b> joined us for the AONTAS Adult Education Summit, which saw the launch of the <i>Learner Voices Across Ireland</i> report, and <i>The Adult Learner</i> journal.
	Took part in European Union projects.	We took part in <b>4 European Union projects</b> , including acting as National Coordinator for the New European Agenda for Adult Learning.
	Ran various workshops and programmes.	Delivered Learner Voice training to <b>166 participants</b> and took <b>37 participants</b> through our new Learner Voice Digital Badge.

## Goal 1: Provide a Structured Platform for Voices and Input to be Heard from Across the Sector

We bring people and organisations from the adult and community education sector together to share information, support one another, and elevate their collective voice. We do this through key annual events, our digital infrastructure, and our Community Education Network.



### Adult Learners' Festival

At the beginning of March 2025 we hosted the 19<sup>th</sup> annual [Adult Learners' Festival](#), a major platform for engagement across the adult and community education sector. This year's theme was Connecting Communities (#LearnTogetherLiveTogether), and 149 events were delivered across 26 counties, including six events in Northern Ireland.

We were pleased to increase our geographic spread across the island and host events in multiple languages, including Irish-language events in Gaeltacht regions.

We launched the festival with our annual Policy Day, "[From Politics to People: A Culture of Care in](#)

[Community Education](#)" bringing together representatives from 65 organisations across Ireland to discuss policy and lobby policymakers.

Throughout the week learners were able to enjoy events on a wide range of topics, from yoga and mindfulness to flower workshops, and a session on how to use your smartphone.

The AONTAS team were out and about during the festival, visiting adult and community education groups and chatting with staff and adult learners. Our CEO, Dearbháil, headed to Bunclody for a paper flower workshop, hosted by Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB).



"I had a gorgeous time in Bunclody. The staff from WWETB were so welcoming and spoiled me rotten. I met loads of learners, took part in a paper flower workshop, and got to see the lads in action doing wood carving. They also baked cakes and we had a little tea party too!"

**Dearbháil Lawless,**  
AONTAS CEO



## STAR Awards

The AONTAS STAR Awards 2025 formed the closing event of the festival.

For over 20 years, the STAR Awards have recognised outstanding work in adult learning and created an opportunity for initiatives to spotlight their work nationally while bringing recognition to learners, staff, and organising bodies.

The STAR Awards Ceremony took place in Croke Park on Friday 7 March 2025 and engaged 180 stakeholders, including adult educators, learners, and wider stakeholders.

There were nine winners across the award categories:

- ★ **Social Inclusion:** Small/Medium-sized Initiatives
- ★ **Social Inclusion:** Large-Sized Initiatives
- ★ **Health and Wellbeing:** Small/Medium-sized Initiatives
- ★ **Health and Wellbeing:** Large-Sized Initiatives
- ★ **Third-level Access and Engagement**
- ★ **Learner Voice**
- ★ **Global Citizenship Education**
- ★ **European Social Fund Special Recognition Award**
- ★ **The Open University in Ireland's Shooting Star**

Nominations were judged over two in-person days by a panel of 20 independent judges drawn from key stakeholders, including the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), SOLAS (the Further Education and Training Authority), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and the Education and Training Boards Ireland.

The event kicked off with entertainment from The Bodhrán Buzz, and our guest speaker was writer and actress Pauline McLynn, best known as Mrs Doyle from Father Ted.



“I think sometimes people get afraid of the word education. It seems too big. But every day we’re learning something. We learn more than we think every day. To be curious – I think that’s what drives us forward and hopefully makes us better at dealing with different situations.”

**Pauline McLynn,**  
*STAR Awards guest speaker*

Participants also had a lot to say about the STAR Awards judging process and ceremony itself:



“Applying and winning the AONTAS STAR awards allowed us a platform to really showcase and celebrate the achievements we see every day with our participants and reflect on the impact not just our project, but other organisations have on people’s lives. We would highly recommend any project to apply and share their stories! From start to finish it was an incredible experience, I’m just so sorry we didn’t enter previously. Without a doubt one of the best days of the year!”

**Fiona Hågensen,**  
*Cork Simon Community*

### Adult Learners’ Festival and STAR Awards in numbers



**112**  
award  
nominations



**24**  
shortlisted  
initiatives



**9**  
award  
winners



**149**  
festival events

Events hosted in  
**24** counties



**4.4**  
million media  
reach (across  
broadcast, print,  
and online media)



**47**  
media  
pieces

**81,811**  
social media  
users reached





## Community Education Network

The Community Education Network (CEN) is a national network of independent community education providers who work collaboratively to share information, resources, and best practice. It aims to provide a collective space that enables the voices of members and their learners to be heard. This network helps to ensure that community education remains relevant, recognised, and positioned on the public agenda.

In 2025, we grew the membership of the network by 20%, expanding its geographical reach by bringing in new members in Northern Ireland. The CEN now comprises 95 members and met four times throughout the year to provide a space for peer learning, networking, and solidarity. We also made 149 engagement calls to members and 13 member visits where we collected member views, data, and evidence to strengthen the network's collective voice.

AONTAS acted on five key advocacy issues raised through the network, including funding for the sector and QQI accreditation.

Network members have also informed our research and advocacy work, including [Community Education for Social Transformation](#), the "[Community Education: Local, Lifelong, Life-Changing](#)" campaign, the [Just4All](#) European project, and the [AONTAS Adult Education Summit: Connecting Communities for Collective Action](#).

## Digital Communication

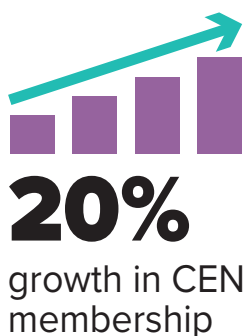
In 2025, we strengthened our digital infrastructure, supporting the sector to connect, access information, and contribute to shared conversations.

In March, we launched our new [Membership Hub](#), providing a dedicated space for members to share resources and connect through articles, event postings, and news. The hub has had 209 active users throughout 2025. In September, we followed this with the launch of our new website, designed to enhance accessibility and ease of access to information and resources.

Our [Community Education Map](#), which showcases learning opportunities and courses across the island, expanded in 2025 with 50 new community education organisations joining.

Throughout the year we maintained strong communication with our members by sharing funding opportunities, member spotlights, policy news, and other updates through 21 membership emails, six membership webinars, and 2968 social media posts.

## Our Impact in Numbers



**745,940**  
social media reach



**2,105**  
new social media  
followers (6.9% increase)



## ***Goal 2: Inform National Research on the Importance of Social Equality***

The AONTAS Research Team ensures that we have a robust evidence base for advocacy and for informing national policy and practice in the field of adult and community education. This evidence base ensures that we can continuously improve quality of provision, advance social justice and inclusion, and strengthen democratic participation in Irish civil society and policymaking.

### ***National Further Education and Training Learner Forum (NFLF)***

AONTAS run the National Further Education and Training Learner Forum (NFLF) in partnership with local Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The forums place learners at the centre of conversations about Further Education and Training (FET) and ensure that learner feedback directly informs improvement across the sector.

In 2025, the NFLF hosted nine regional forums and directly enabled 2,274 adult learners to share their voice through a mix of focus groups and surveys. Participants included adult learners from some of the most marginalised groups in Irish society, including people with disabilities, new migrants, Travellers, the long-term unemployed, and lone parents. A total of 10 regional reports were provided to partnering ETBs with findings and recommendations from their region, and 99.8% of forum participants reported having a positive experience.

After each forum event, a report is written up and distributed to the ETB partner so that learner feedback can be acted on. These regional reports are anonymised and collated into one public national report, [\*Learner Voices Across Ireland\*](#), which can be used to inform and influence policy. The 2025 report included 2,636 learners' views and was launched at the AONTAS Adult Education Summit.

Marian Harkin, Minister of State at DFHERIS, and Ian Getgood, from the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland, both welcomed the publication of the report and acknowledged the significance of Learner Voice research.

The work of the NFLF provides stakeholders with detailed evidence, independent analysis, and actionable insights concerning what learners say is working well and what needs improvement. As a result, over 400,000 FET learners indirectly benefitted from this work.



“These forums give learners the opportunity to be co-creators in the development and improvement of FET services in Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, ensuring that the learner is at the heart of everything we do. The feedback that we receive from learners today will help us further develop our teaching and learning, quality assurance, and inclusion strategies.”

**Martha Bolger,**

*Director of FET at Kilkenny Carlow ETB*

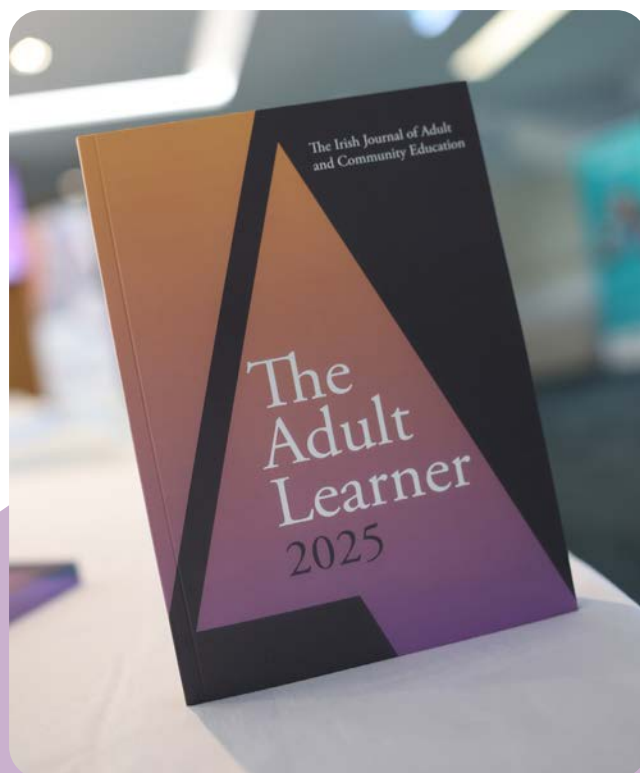
In 2025, the team also conducted an external evaluation of the forum engaging 41 NFLF stakeholders. The evaluation explored forum governance, institutional engagement, and collaboration. Results of the evaluation informed Learner Voice: 2030, our strategic plan for the NFLF to 2030.

### ***The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: The Adult Learner***

*The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: The Adult Learner* is Ireland’s leading peer-reviewed publication of adult and community education, featuring new ideas and research from experts in the field.

The [2025 special edition](#) was on the theme of “challenging racism and creating a more inclusive society” and was launched at the AONTAS Adult Education Summit. This year, the journal received a record of 17 submissions, which led to eight published articles.

To support participation and capacity building in writing and publication, AONTAS held two Writers’ Workshops, with approximately 20 participants registered at each.



## Goal 3: Build Capacity Within the Sector by Enabling Professional Development, Sharing Knowledge and Strengthening Networks

AONTAS support organisations and practitioners across the sector through professional development, knowledge sharing, and network-building. This work strengthens capacity, fosters collaboration, and supports the delivery of high-quality adult and community education.

### AONTAS Adult Education Summit

The [AONTAS Adult Education Summit](#) took place in November 2025 at the Aviva Stadium, Dublin. As one of the major highlights of the year, the annual summit acts as a key capacity-building and sector-connecting event.

This year's theme was "Connecting Communities for Collective Action" and featured a wide range of workshops, such as "Transformative Education in Times of Polarisation", "Anti-racism with Dignity Partnership" and "Storytelling for Connecting Communities".

195 attendees registered for the two-day event, with 20 exhibitors taking part and partner organisations joining us from Sweden, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Belgium, Malta, and France.

The AONTAS Summit was opened by Minister Marian Harkin from the DFHERIS. She commented, "As we open this year's summit, I want to underline just how essential adult learning and community education are for building inclusive, resilient societies. When people have real opportunities to learn, to connect, and to take part, our communities grow stronger."

Two key AONTAS publications were launched at the summit: [Learner Voices Across Ireland](#) and the [2025 edition of The Adult Learner](#) journal.



“At a time of widening social, political, and economic divides, adult and community education remains one of our most powerful democratic tools, helping to rebuild trust, counter misinformation, strengthen communities, and empower people to take action. It must be protected and properly funded. The summit creates a space to confront systemic inequalities, learn from one another, and work together to advance equality and social justice.”

**Dearbháil Lawless,**  
AONTAS CEO



## AONTAS Adult Education Summit in numbers



**195** registered attendees



**20**

exhibitors



**49,754**

social media reach



Organisations from **8** countries

## European Union Projects

In 2025, AONTAS worked on four European Union (EU) projects. Involvement with these projects allows us to connect Irish organisations with others throughout Europe, offering opportunities for shared learning and building on existing work. It also enriches the European space by bringing an Irish perspective on education and training.

We are the National Coordinator for the New European Agenda for Adult Learning (NEAAL) in Ireland, which seeks to promote and support adult learning across Europe. As coordinator, AONTAS implement a series of strategic projects and facilitates cooperation with other EU Member States and the European Commission.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, the theme for our European work has been “Building Stable Roots in a Sustainable Learning Ecosystem.” Over the two-year project period, we ran a total of 42 workshops (exceeding our target of 18), and engaged 666 participants directly in workshops, webinars, and other events.





We've also taken part in:

- [Just4All](#), an Erasmus+-funded project exploring the role of adult education in supporting a just transition to a low-carbon society, particularly for underrepresented groups.
- [ENHANCE](#), which develops tools and approaches to strengthen Learner Voice and participatory learning in education systems.
- [VOICES](#), a project focused on amplifying adult learners' perspectives in shaping policy and practice, a project focused on using oral history as an adult education methodology.
- Erasmus+ Key Action 1, a mobility project for staff and learners in adult education.

Part of our goal through our international work is to showcase Irish adult learning initiatives and share our learnings with other countries.

In September, our Head of Research presented "Dialogue or monologue? The role of Learner Voice in adult education in Ireland" to the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults conference at Charles University, in Prague. And in October, results from the Learners as Leaders - Community Changemakers programme were shared at the National Conference on Adult Learning in Slovakia.

## Capacity Building

AONTAS runs a range of capacity building programmes and workshops designed to support our members' development.

Across ETBs, we facilitated eight Learner Voice training sessions for 88 staff members, doubling our reach since 2024. Following the training, 90% of participants reported stronger understanding and greater practical knowledge of implementing Learner Voice practices.

To support learner participation and representation, we ran four Learner Voice training sessions for 78 learners. These sessions focused on building confidence, strengthening class representative skills, and helping learners identify issues and plan actions for change.

We piloted the **Learner Voice Digital Badge** in October, a four-week, self-directed programme designed to enhance staff capacity to develop Learner Voice structures in FET settings. Thirty-seven staff across 11 settings took part and feedback has been collected in preparation for a more extensive rollout in 2026.

A total of 13 people completed **Learners as Leaders - Community Changemakers**, a two-day residential training programme, designed to inspire and empower learners to lead meaningful change in their local areas.

The **Storytelling for Connecting Communities workshops** provided 38 educators from 22 different organisations and community groups with capacity building in storytelling as a methodological tool for engaging marginalised groups, fostering empathy, and strengthening social connection within communities. Resources from this programme have been shared with students in the University of Galway master's degree, specifically on The Theory and Practice of Advocacy (and Activism) module.







# OBJECTIVE 2: ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

## What We Do

As an established advocacy-based organisation, this objective allows us to redefine our advocacy goals to challenge and address social inequality in the context of adult learning, particularly in a time of sectoral change with the new unified tertiary education system.

## How We Do It

Our Goals	Actions We Took	Our Impact in 2025
Strengthen and develop the AONTAS organisational voice.	Grew our membership.	<b>61 new members</b> welcomed in 2025, bringing total membership to 474.
	Shared our policy and advocacy work with key stakeholders.	<b>13 major policy submissions</b> to government and national bodies.  <b>Two reports</b> in collaboration with other organisations.  <b>1 Oireachtas Committee briefing.</b>
Evidence and highlight how adult learning is impacted by social inequality.	Launched a report on <i>Community Education for Social Transformation</i> .	Launched findings at the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and <b>key government ministers</b> responded to the report.
	Created the <i>AONTAS Community Education Against Disinformation Workbook</i> .	Worked with <b>44 participants</b> to develop the workbook.
	Researched the impact measurement of adult education in NI.	<b>60 attendees</b> at the report launch in Stormont, including the NI Economy Minister.
	Evaluated the Reach fund.	<b>Secured improvements to Reach administration</b> , including earlier advertising of the fund.
Inform and influence stakeholders and the wider public.	Ran our national advocacy campaign “Community Education: Local, Lifelong, Life-Changing”.	Held a <b>National Day of Visibility for Community Education on September 23<sup>rd</sup></b> , secured a <b>media reach of 8 million</b> , and sent <b>174 campaign emails to TDs</b> .
	Hosted the annual Policy Day.	Brought together <b>83 representatives</b> from 65 organisations and distributed our pre-event policy paper to <b>over 500 organisations</b> .

## ***Goal 1: Strengthen and Develop the AONTAS Organisational Voice***

AONTAS welcomed 61 new members in 2025, bringing total membership to 474. As the collective voice of adult and community education, we use strategic communications, advocacy, and research to position ourselves as a strong, evidence-based voice, enabling us to influence policy and practice on behalf of our members.

### ***Policy and Advocacy***

We delivered 13 major policy submissions to government and national bodies, each designed to remove barriers and expand opportunities for adult learners and the providers who support them.

These submissions addressed a wide range of issues affecting learners, including employment, tertiary education, social inclusion, financial supports, transport, civic engagement, accreditation and micro-credentials, pre-budget priorities, and Ireland's 2026 European Union (EU) Presidency. Our pre-Budget submission led to parliamentary questions referencing adult and community education and AONTAS in the Dáil.

### ***Our 2025 Policy Submissions***

- Pathways to Work 2025
- Department of Rural and Community Development's Statement of Strategy 2025–2028
- Tertiary Education Strategy 2025
- Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2025
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Statement of Strategy
- Department of Social Protection Statement of Strategy 2025–2028
- Transport Strategy 2025–2028
- Successor Strategy to Sustainable, Inclusive, and Empowered Communities
- Electoral Commission Strategy
- Consultation on Access, Transfer, and Progression Policy
- Green Paper on Micro-credentials
- Pre-Budget Submission 2026
- EU Presidency Submission



We also partnered with leading organisations to influence key strategies on artificial intelligence and digital inclusion with The Wheel; on budget priorities with the Community Platform; and on EU Presidency priorities with the Community and Voluntary Pillar.

We produced two reports: one in collaboration with Saolta, Ireland’s global citizenship education strategic partnership programme, on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland; and another for the European Adult Education Association, highlighting Irish practice at EU level.

In November, we briefed the Oireachtas Committee on Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS), sharing findings from the National Further Education and Training Learner Forum (NFLF) and advocating for inclusive access to apprenticeships. Our recommendations were subsequently reflected in the Committee’s 2026 report on apprenticeships.

### AONTAS Speaking Engagements 2025

- Oireachtas Committee on Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- European Commission National Coordinator Meetings, Brussels
- National Community Education event led by the Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS)
- “Access, Transfer and Progression” consultation led by Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- “Shaping Skills, Shaping Society”, The Wheel
- Shared Island Innovators Conference, hosted by The Wheel and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
- ETBI FET Conference, Sligo
- Saolta Conference, Dublin (Keynote Address)
- National Skills Conversation, in partnership with the National Adult Literacy Agency
- Research launch at Stormont: *Measuring the Impact of Adult Education in Northern Ireland*



## Goal 2: Evidence and Highlight how Adult Learning is Impacted by Social Inequality

We gather and use evidence to show how adult learning is shaped by social inequality, and how community education responds to that inequality across the island of Ireland.

### All-Island Research to Evidence Social Inequality

In 2025, our research team worked hard to capture evidence of social inequality and the impact that community education can make. This work forms the basis of our lobbying and advocacy activity. It also plays a vital role in influencing government, as well as strengthening our sector and our collective voice. In this section we've outlined some of the key projects we worked on throughout the year.

### Community Education Against Disinformation

This year we recognised a strong demand among the adult and community education sector to counter the hateful and divisive impact of online disinformation, and in response we developed the AONTAS [Community Education Against Disinformation \(CEAD\) Workbook](#).

Working with 44 learners and practitioners through a series of storytelling workshops, our researchers were able to assess community needs around disinformation, anti-racism and inclusion.

This research was turned into a disinformation workbook, designed to address problems around online disinformation, and support providers in promoting solidarity and inclusion for diverse communities living side by side.



Designed for those working directly with learners, the workbook brings the challenge of misinformation into the room through conversation, reflection, and shared experience. Rather than offering simple answers, it guides groups through the messy reality of how we form beliefs, and creates space for people to question, connect, and make sense of the world together. Launched in October at the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), the project's funder, the workbook has gone on to be disseminated by partner organisations, including the National Adult Literacy Agency and SOLAS, through the Adult Literacy for Life Office Media Literacy Campaign.

The Matt Talbot Centre has also embedded the workbook into its programme and has reported positive impact, including changes in how learners engage with disinformation, along with stronger curiosity and critical reflection.

### ***Community Education for Social Transformation***

Alongside the launch of the CEAD Workbook, our research team presented the findings of the Community Education for Social Transformation (CEST) project, an initiative designed to explore the role that adult and community education can play in supporting social transformation.

From June to August 2025, our team collected evidence through a survey, focus groups, and interviews with community education practitioners and key policy stakeholders.

The report, [\*Community Education for Social Transformation\*](#), presented evidence around the vital role community education plays in supporting marginalised groups, and how sustainable funding is required to meet learner needs and maximise social impact potential.

The report also contains the stories of five community education learners, providing insight into the lived experience of those engaging in this personally and socially transformative practice.

**“Having battled a deep drug addiction for many years, my positive experience of education provided the spark that changed my life. Unsure of what to do with my time, I engaged with the prison school and found the teachers to be very much like the teachers at Youthreach, non-judgemental and compassionate. This opened my eyes to the power of education as a tool for self-exploration.”**

**Robert, learner, CEST participant**

Responding to the report Professor Bríd Connolly of Maynooth University congratulated AONTAS on the research: “Really amazing and powerful work, congratulations to all. It’s so heartening to witness the commitment to, and trust in, community education in these troubling times. Thanks to so many communities, practitioners and learners, but especially to yourselves”.

Key government ministers also responded to the report, noting its significance and recognising the challenging funding constraints it highlights.

## *Measuring the Impact of Adult Education in Northern Ireland*

On Thursday 10 April 2025, we joined 60 learners, practitioners and politicians in Stormont, Belfast to launch our research findings into adult education in Northern Ireland (NI), as part of the Belfast Learning City festival.

AONTAS and the Forum for Adult Learning NI were commissioned by the Alliance for Lifelong Learning, on behalf of the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland (DfE), to identify the current tools and processes used to measure the impact of adult education.

Data was collected over a five-month period, and included a survey of 48 organisations, as well as focus groups, and structured interviews with learners and providers.

[The report](#) highlighted the benefits of engaging in community education for those facing social inequality in Northern Ireland, and learner and practitioner friendly models for impact capture.

The launch was opened by Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald MLA, and chair of the Economy Committee Phillip Brett MLA. Attendees heard from a panel of learners who shared their experience of learning and of impact data capture. We continued to engage with these learners through other projects across 2025 to support capacity building and advocacy.

We also hosted a stakeholder panel with speakers from DfE, South Eastern Regional College, the Community Foundation NI, and the NOW Group.

In line with the report recommendations, DfE continues to work with the Alliance for Lifelong Learning to source funding for a Learner Voice Forum in Northern Ireland.



## Learner Voices Across Ireland

Every year our research team delivers extensive research into the learner experience in Further Education and Training (FET) through the National FET Learner Forum (NFLF).

Working in partnership with Ireland's Education and Training Boards (ETBs) we host regional focus group events and issue an accompanying learner survey. Our trained facilitators support participants to reflect on their experiences and discuss three primary questions: (i) "What has been working well in your course?", (ii) "What has not been working well?", and (iii) "How could your course experience be improved?".

The findings of this research led to 10 regional reports that are provided to partnering ETBs with findings and recommendations from their region, as well as one public national report, [Learner Voices Across Ireland](#).

The 2025 report was launched at the AONTAS Adult Education Summit: Connecting Communities for Collective Action, and made recommendations on the key findings, based on the following themes which emerged throughout the research:



Welcome, belonging and inclusion



Buildings and facilities



Communications



Course provision



Teaching and learning



Creating pathways



Learner support



Wraparound support





“This research matters because independent evidence is essential. It helps us demonstrate the impact of FET, ensures learners’ perspectives are listened to and documented, and it gives us a national picture for future planning.”

**Dearbháil Lawless,**  
AONTAS CEO

## Reach Fund Advocacy

The Reach Fund provides funding to community and voluntary organisations delivering education to adults who are furthest from participation.

In 2025, as part of our member engagement, we spoke to organisations in our Community Education Network (CEN), to explore their experiences of accessing the Reach Fund, and the successes and challenges in delivery of this community education grant.

This began with a national phone bank, directly contacting members to identify emerging themes affecting learners and providers. Insights from these conversations informed a more in-depth follow-up survey, which gathered detailed evidence on administrative barriers, timelines, and pressures connected to accessing the fund.

The findings were brought together in a focused report that informed targeted advocacy with officials and elected representatives. As a result, improvements to Reach administration were secured, including earlier advertising of the fund, enabling providers to plan more effectively, and engage more confidently with the application process.

## Member Engagement



Phone consultations with **18** members



Community Education Network meeting with **28** participants



Survey responses from **11** providers

## Goal 3: Inform and Influence Stakeholders and the Wider Public

We inform and influence stakeholders and the wider public through advocacy, communications and engagement. This work raises the profile of adult and community education and drives greater understanding and support for policies that improve access, inclusion, and outcomes for learners

### Community Education: Local, Lifelong, Life Changing Campaign

Our national advocacy campaign, "[Community Education: Local, Lifelong, Life-Changing](#)", ran from Monday 22 to Friday 26 September and raised awareness about the power of locally provided learning opportunities for adults.

The campaign was highly participative and member-led; a CEN subgroup directed the work, and we designed a wide range of actions to engage our members with the campaign.

We developed a campaign pack for supporters and contacted 137 sectoral organisations about the campaign.

A total of eight learner representatives engaged as campaign spokespeople and were recruited and supported to share their stories.

### 23 Sept 2025: First ever National Day of Visibility for Community Education

The campaign included the first-ever National Day of Visibility for Community Education, held on Tuesday 23 September. Providers across Ireland used this day as an opportunity to engage with and influence local media and political representatives.

And on Thursday 25 September we hosted a joint event, attended by 80 people, with the National Adult Literacy Agency presenting recent research and insights on educational disadvantage.


A total of 36 allies declared support for the campaign, including the Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI), several higher education institutions, and other national advocacy organisations such as AHEAD and Focus Ireland.

### Community Education Campaign 2025 in numbers

**8**   
million media reach

**174**   
campaign related emails sent to TDs

**137**   
organisations contacted about the campaign

 **1** new National Day of Visibility for Community Education launched

 **36** allies declared support

## Campaign coverage

- The Irish Times
- The Irish Independent
- iRadio
- Radio Nova
- Midlands 103
- Clare FM



## Policy Day

On Monday 3 March, the opening day of the Adults Learners' Festival, we hosted our annual Policy Day. This year's theme was "From Politics to People: A Culture of Care in Community Education".

Taking place in Richmond Barracks, this event focused on the model of a "culture of care" that is central to community education, and on how this model should be adopted and embedded in all education policymaking in Ireland.

The Policy Day brought together 83 representatives from 65 organisations across Ireland and attendees included members of DFHERIS, SOLAS, DfE in Northern Ireland and representation from nine different ETBs.

Keynote speaker at the event, activist Caoimhe Butterly, said, "Against the tempestuous storms of injustice and oppression that so many communities are facing - what is our response? Sometimes policies are reduced to metrics. But adult education is the opposite of that - it's about people, their lives, and their stories."

[A pre-event policy paper](#) was disseminated to 104 key sectoral contacts and over 400 AONTAS members, and findings from the day continued to inform our advocacy work throughout the year, in particular our community education campaign.



"Community education has transformed my life. After leaving school at 15, it was daunting to go back to education - but the kindness and compassion of the community educators shone through. They didn't walk in front or behind, but beside me."

**Finbarr Savage**  
*Community Education Learner*



**“Against the tempestuous storms of injustice and oppression that so many communities are facing - what is our response? Sometimes policies are reduced to metrics. But adult education is the opposite of that - it’s about people, their lives, and their stories.”**

**Caoimhe Butterly,**  
*Keynote speaker*



# OBJECTIVE 3: EMPOWER THE CHANGE

## What We Do

We recognise that to achieve our mission, we must be a supportive environment that champions professional development and encourages innovation and new ideas.

## How We Do It

Our Goals	Actions We Took	Our Impact in 2025
Develop a socially inclusive framework for AONTAS as an employer.	Ensured staff received regular supervision and support.	<b>Two staff fun days</b> and a Christmas event.  Overall <b>positive response to staff survey</b> and action plan for improvements.
	Improved staff workspace.	<b>A new shared library</b> in the office.
Integrate a problem-solving culture.	Embedded regular strategic review and reflective processes.	The leadership team met for <b>three in-person strategy days</b> .  <b>Reflection sessions</b> were held after key events, such as the AONTAS Adult Education Summit.
Enhance organisational infrastructure and explore diversification of funding.	Hosted our annual AGM.	<b>66 attendees</b> joined us for the AGM in May and members voted to create a <b>new Vice Chair role</b> .
	Dedicated time towards development and training.	We developed a new induction pack and onboarding training for the board which has led to <b>increased confidence among board members</b> .
	Developed new income streams.	Developed a plan for <b>paid-for training</b> ready to be rolled out in 2026, and secured <b>funding from the New European Agenda</b> .

## ***Goal 1: Develop a Socially Inclusive Framework for AONTAS as an Employer***

In 2025 we continued to prioritise staff wellbeing, inclusion, and a supportive working environment through structured policies, professional development, internal supports, and intentional team-building practices.

### ***Wellbeing***

All staff received regular “support and supervision” sessions and had access to an Employee Assistance Programme. We undertook ergonomic assessment to ensure workstation health and safety and maintained our hybrid working and flexitime policies to support work-life balance.

### ***Culture***

We aim to provide a supportive and positive working environment for staff. In 2025, a confidential staff survey was conducted to capture feedback, and measure employee satisfaction. Overall results were positive, with key insights informing a follow-up action plan.

Throughout the year, we supported team connection and wellbeing through two staff fun days and a Christmas event, recognising the contributions of staff across 2025. In February, we also hosted a joint board and staff session to support open communication and strengthen relationships across the organisation.

### ***Environmental and Social Responsibility***

We are mindful of our environmental impact and take practical steps to operate more sustainably across our day-to-day activities. In 2025, we made a number of improvements in our office environment and operational practices. We introduced compostable waste management in our kitchen, replaced fluorescent lighting with low energy LED panels to reduce energy usage, and sourced environmentally supportive suppliers for event materials. We also developed a shared library space for staff using repurposed furniture and responsibly sourced materials.

Processes were also put in place to strengthen our social impact. For example, we engaged a local social enterprise for catering services, supporting employment opportunities for people with disabilities and autism; and we ensured that accessibility was a core consideration in the design and development of the organisation’s new website.

### ***Public Sector Duty***

In line with our Public Sector Duty (PSD) obligations, equality and human rights considerations have been integrated into organisational planning processes, policy development, and risk management frameworks.

In 2025, we progressed our PSD Implementation Plan, which was informed by extensive research and consultation with key stakeholders, including adult learners. This approach ensures that PSD is embedded in a way that reflects the lived experiences of those it is intended to benefit.

We created a terms of reference for the PSD working group, published our PSD and values statement online, reviewed our employee handbook, and support and supervision documents, through a PSD lens.

We completed accessibility reviews for public-facing services and events, and made adjustments to lessen barriers for participation, particularly with groups at risk of discrimination. We also focused our attention on these groups for inclusions in projects and ensured our work refers to issues of discrimination where necessary.

We also held two staff information sessions on PSD and conducted a staff survey to gauge awareness and confidence in applying PSD principles. Training on PSD has been planned for 2026, which will focus on practical implication, and help staff to understand what good practice looks like.

## **Goal 2: Integrate a Problem-Solving Culture**

AONTAS worked to embed a culture of reflection, collaboration, and continuous improvement across the organisation, ensuring that learning from practice informs future delivery.

Throughout the year, the Leadership Team met for three in-person strategy sessions to support forward planning and alignment across the organisation. Regular “Morning Meeting” sessions, team meetings, and inter-team meetings were also held to facilitate strong communication and collective alignment.

Staff attended external events and conferences to support peer learning and knowledge exchange, and reflections were organised after key events, such as the [AONTAS Adult Education Summit: Connecting Communities for Collective Action](#), to capture learning and improve future experience and delivery.



## ***Goal 3: Enhance Organisational Infrastructure and Explore Diversification of Funding and Funding Diversification Planning***

We strengthened organisational systems, governance, internal processes, and staff capacity through a range of structural, operational, and governance-focused initiatives.

### ***Annual General Meeting***

The 55<sup>th</sup> AONTAS Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held in May at the Hilton Hotel, Kilmainham.

The event brought 66-member representatives together to discuss sectoral issues, vote for new board members, constitutional changes, and inform the future of our work. It featured a roundtable session on “Connecting Communities”, and a learner panel discussion.

Members voted in favour of creating a new Vice-Chairperson role and Dr Lilian Nwanze-Akobo was successfully elected in July. She is an Assistant Professor at the School of Adult and Community Education at Maynooth University and brings with her extensive experience in law and education research.

### ***Governance at AONTAS***

AONTAS is committed to maintaining strong governance, accountability, and transparency across all areas of the organisation. As the National Adult Learning Organisation, we recognise the importance of ensuring that our governance structures, systems, and practices support the delivery of our charitable purpose, uphold public trust, and enable the organisation to respond effectively to the evolving needs of adult learners, members, staff, funders, and stakeholders.

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the governance, strategic direction, and oversight of AONTAS. Throughout 2025, the Board further strengthened governance practices across the organisation, ensuring that decision-making, risk oversight, financial stewardship, and organisational culture remained aligned with the values and objectives of AONTAS.

### ***Board Structure and Leadership***

The AONTAS Constitution states that the Board must have a minimum of five members and may include up to fourteen members.

In 2025, a new Board Induction Pack and Board Induction Framework were developed, providing key information on AONTAS governance arrangements and board responsibilities. All Board members took part in an induction session, and new members were assigned a peer mentor to support them in their role.

Responsibility for the day-to-day management and operations of the organisation is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is accountable to the Board for the implementation of strategic objectives, operational delivery, and organisational performance. While the CEO attends Board meetings to provide updates and support discussions, they are not a member of the Board of Directors.

## Board Subcommittees and Oversight

The Board is supported by two subcommittees: the Audit and Risk Subcommittee (ARC) and the Governance Subcommittee.

These subcommittees support the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities in areas including governance oversight, financial management, organisational risk, internal controls, policy development, and compliance.

Each subcommittee operates under formal Terms of Reference approved by the Board. These Terms of Reference set out the purpose, delegated authority, membership, meeting arrangements, and responsibilities of each subcommittee and are reviewed periodically to ensure they remain aligned with organisational needs, governance requirements, and best practice.

## Board and Subcommittee Attendance

This year, we increased in-person sessions and introduced an additional meeting in December. This approach improved confidence among board members and supported engagement of learner representatives and new members. This has strengthened Board relationships and engagement and has set a new standard for AONTAS in 2026.

Board and Subcommittee attendance remained strong during 2025, reflecting the commitment of Directors to the governance and oversight of the organisation.



## **Board Recruitment, Induction and Development**

Over the course of the year, the Board demonstrated its ongoing commitment to strong governance through effective oversight, succession planning, Board renewal, and Director development opportunities.

Board members are recruited through the organisation's governance and membership structures in line with the Constitution. Each year, members are invited to submit nominations in advance of the Annual General Meeting (AGM), with elections taking place by vote of the membership.

Where vacancies arise outside of the AGM cycle, or where additional expertise is identified as beneficial to the work of the Board, the Board may co-opt Directors in accordance with the Constitution. Co-opted Directors hold office until the next AGM and are eligible to stand for election by the membership thereafter.

## **Board Training & Development**

During 2025, Board members participated in governance and organisational development opportunities including training in Risk Management, Cyber Security, and Financial Management.

## **Board Effectiveness Review**

The Chairperson oversaw the annual Board effectiveness review, incorporating a Board survey to evaluate performance, gather feedback, and inform continuous improvement. These annual reviews help in developing board training plans and our induction program for new board members.

## **Governance Standards and Compliance**

Throughout 2025, AONTAS continued to strengthen and review its governance practices through ongoing implementation and assessment of compliance with the Charities Governance Code.

The organisation actively applies and promotes the six principles of the Charities Governance Code across all aspects of its work: advancing charitable purpose, behaving with integrity, leading people effectively, exercising control responsibly, working effectively as a Board, and being accountable and transparent.

AONTAS is fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code and reports to the Charities Regulator under the additional standards set out for the category of a Complex Charity.



## **2025 Triple Lock Status Achieved**

We are proud to be members of the Charities Institute of Ireland (CII) and have again been awarded the Triple Lock status from the CII confirming our commitment to strong governance, ethical practices, transparency, and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) accounting standard for our accounts.



## ***Policies and Governance Developments in 2025***

During 2025, several policies and governance documents were reviewed, updated, or developed, to support good governance, organisational oversight, compliance, and operational effectiveness, as outlined below:

<b>Governance</b>
AONTAS Constitution
Board Induction Pack
Terms of Reference for the Governance and Audit and Risk Subcommittees

<b>HR</b>
Employee Handbook
Health and Safety Statement
Use of AI in the Workplace

<b>Financial Controls</b>
Credit Card Policy
Board Expenses Policy
Vouchers Policy

<b>Risk &amp; Compliance</b>
Risk Management Policy and Framework
Feedback and Complaints Policy
Gifts and Hospitality Policy
External Providers Register

### ***Conflict of Interest and Integrity***

AONTAS maintains a Conflict-of-Interest Policy to support Directors in identifying, declaring, and appropriately managing actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

Board members are required to complete annual declarations and any conflicts identified are recorded appropriately through Board procedures and registers.

### ***Risk Management and Internal Controls***

A comprehensive review and refresh of the organisational Risk Register was undertaken by the Board during 2025 to enhance oversight of key risks and ensure robust mitigation strategies are in place.

Principal risk categories monitored by the organisation include governance and compliance, strategic and external risks, financial risks, operational risks, and reputational and environmental risks.

### ***Independent External Audit of Accounts***

Our external auditors, Mazars, conducted a full review of our accounts and financial statements according to the SORP and our full accounts and Annual Report are published on our website.

### ***Stakeholder Engagement and Accountability***

AONTAS recognises the importance of maintaining strong engagement with members, learners, staff, partners, funders, policymakers and the wider adult and community education sector. Safeguarding and promoting the values and principles at the heart of AONTAS ensures the work we carry out on behalf of our members is in line with our mission and vision.

In 2025, the Board and staff continued to engage actively with members and stakeholders through a range of activities including the Annual General Meeting, the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival, National FET Learner Forum activity, policy and advocacy engagement, member communications and consultations, and sectoral collaboration and partnership work.

## **Team Capacity Building**

The Board and AONTAS CEO undertook risk management training, resulting in a re-developed our risk register and built-in regular reviews at the Audit and Risk Subcommittee. The leadership team have now also completed this training and participate in organisational risk management.

Throughout the year, coaching was provided to a range of staff to build capacity and confidence, and team breakfast sessions were held in early 2025 to enhance collaboration, trust, and relationships across the organisation. Staff engaged in continuous professional development throughout the year, including training on “Political Education and Anti-Racism”, “Critical Perspectives on EDucation”, “Cyber Security”, “GDPR” and “First Aid”, and preparations have been made for PSD training in 2026.

## **Systems and Processes**

In 2025, we redeveloped our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and developed new publications to improve consistency and inter-team working, including a new Standard Operating Procedure template, a Publications Guide, and a Publications Checklist.

Internal working groups, including a Membership Subgroup, helped to improve organisational infrastructure.

## **Funding Diversification**

In 2025, we strengthened our financial sustainability through funding diversification, strategic planning, and development of new income streams. We submitted a range of funding applications to Irish and European funders, developed a paid-for Education and Training programme which is due to be piloted in 2026, and successfully secured a 2026–2027 New European Agenda project.

## **Challenges**

While 2025 was a largely positive year for the AONTAS, it was not without its challenges. This included staffing capacity, funding, and the issues within the wider national and geopolitical context.

### **Staffing**

Several factors influenced organisational stability and capacity throughout the year, including staff leave, one staff departure, one staff recruitment, and the merging of two teams. In addition to these changes within the staff team, we experienced an increased demand for our services, in particular our Learner Voice training, and participation in new and additional steering groups.

Urgent societal issues noted below required our response, such as tackling misinformation and disinformation, which placed extra pressure on staff. The team have gone above and beyond during a challenging time, and the positive feedback we’ve received for our training programmes demonstrate the appreciation members have for the support they’ve received.

## Funding

We experienced a challenging funding environment this year, particularly in relation to staff costs. Adjustments to funding during periods of maternity leave, alongside limited flexibility within existing allocations, created constraints in how we could resource the organisation.

Within this context, we worked to balance financial sustainability with our commitment to staff. This presented challenges in fully aligning with standard salary scale progression and responding to cost of living pressures across the team.

## Wider National and Geopolitical Context

2025 was marked by a significant amount of instability both nationally and in the wider geopolitical sphere. This has had a direct impact on the operating environment of AONTAS and our members, and on the wellbeing of our staff, members, and learners.

In Ireland, we have seen significant funding challenges caused by the rising cost of living and government cuts. This has created insecurity for community education providers, cuts to funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes, and additional financial barriers for adult learners. This environment has weakened stability for staff in the adult and community education sector and has affected marginalised learners the most.

Ireland has also experienced an increase of division, hate crime, and fearmongering in 2025, and this has impacted our learners, members, and staff, particularly those from racial minority backgrounds.

In the wider geopolitical context, the genocide in Gaza, Russian invasion of Ukraine, and weakening democracy in the USA continues to impact wellbeing and global economies.

## Plans for the Future

In 2026, AONTAS will deliver the final year of our 2023–2026 Strategic Plan.

Our key areas of focus will involve continuing to diversify our funding sources, including piloting a paid-for education and training programme. We will continue to improve our operations, processes, and ways of working; and keep working towards educational equality by influencing and informing the sector.

We will also continue to deliver key services and activities, including:

- The Community Education Network (CEN)
- The Adult Learners' Festival
- The STAR Awards
- Lobbying, representation, and campaigns
- European engagement
- Membership support
- National Further Education and Training Learner Forum research
- The Learners As Leaders Programme



## The AONTAS Team



**Aisling Meyler**  
Research Officer Learner Initiatives

---



**Brian Desmond**  
Membership and Digital Engagement Officer

---



**Clare Fleet**  
Governance and Operations Officer

---



**Conor Thompson**  
Head of Advocacy and Policy

---



**Dearbháil Lawless**  
Chief Executive Officer

---



**Ecem Akarca**  
EU Projects Coordinator (until 18 February 2025)

---



**Eve Cobain**  
Senior Research Officer

---



**Giuliana (Peña) Mc Keown**  
Publications and Design Officer

---



**Karyn Farrell**  
Learner Voice Project Officer

---



**Kate Smyth**  
Strategic Communications Officer (until 30 May 2025)

---



**Larisa Sioneriu**  
Adult Education Initiatives Officer

---



**Lorraine O'Connor**  
Community Education Officer



**Marta Feragalli**  
Head of Environmental, Social and Governance

---



**Megan Fearon**  
Head of Impact and Engagement

---



**Megan O'Neil**  
Communications and Digital Media Officer

---



**Philip Finn**  
Research Officer

---



**Rachael Ryan**  
Head of Communications

---



**Rebecca Jackson**  
Policy and Advocacy Officer

---



**Ruby Cooney**  
Education Projects Officer

---



**Suzanne Kerr**  
Office Coordinator

---



**Thomas Murray**  
Head of Research

---



**Thomas Ogbemudia**  
Communications and Social Media Officer (since 3 September 2025)

---



**Traci Barton**  
Finance and Administration Officer



www.aontas.com

AONTAS the National Adult Learning and Literacy Awards 2023  
STAR Awards 2023  
In the award in the category of  
Great Literacy Centres  
For making an outstanding contribution to  
adult literacy and learning in Ireland

ow us:  
Registered Company Number  
HY (Revenue

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acronym	Definition
AGM	Annual General Meeting
CEAD	Community Education Against Disinformation
CEN	Community Education Network
CEST	Community Education for Social Transformation
CII	Charities Institute Ireland
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DfE	Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland)
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
IHREC	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
NEAAL	New European Agenda for Adult Learning
NFLF	National Further Education and Training Learner Forum
NI	Northern Ireland
PSD	Public Sector Duty
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	Further Education and Training Authority
SORP	Statement of Recommended Practice
STAR Awards	“Showcasing Talent, Awarding Recognition” Awards



# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025

The following section provides an overview of AONTAS's financial performance and activities during the reporting period, including the Financial Statements and Directors' Report.



# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

To the members of AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation, the Directors present this report together with the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2025.

AONTAS delivered an ambitious and impactful workplan within the framework of our strategic plan 'Leading Collective Action for Social Change' 2023-2026.

## About AONTAS

AONTAS was established in 1969. The principal activity of the Charity is to ensure that every adult in Ireland has access to appropriate and affordable learning opportunities throughout their lives, thus enabling them to contribute to and participate in the social, economic and cultural development of Irish society. The Charity is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital.

## Board of Directors



**Deirdre Arnold**  
Director

---



**Chidiogo Blessing**  
Director (co-opted July 2025)

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**Fergus Craddock**  
Director

---



**John D'Arcy**  
AONTAS Chairperson/ Director / Governance Sub Committee Chairperson

---



**Martin Flynn**  
Treasurer/ Director/ ARC Committee Chairperson

---



**Imelda Gaffney**  
Director / ARC Committee Member

---



**Charis Hughes**  
Director



**Stephanie Kirwan**  
Director (co-opted July 2025)



**Pamela Latimer**  
Director / Governance Sub Committee Member



**Lilian Nwanze**  
AONTAS Vice-Chairperson / Director



**Deborah Oniah**  
Director



**Cora Rafter**  
Director / ARC Committee Member



**Lynn Simpson**  
Director



**Anne Whelan**  
Director / ARC Committee Member

### **Secretary**

Marta Feragalli

### **Registered Office and Business Address**

AONTAS  
2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street  
D06 E0H1, Ranelagh  
Dublin

### **Company Number**

80958

### **Charity Number**

20013042

### **Charity Revenue Number CHY**

6719

### **Auditors**

Forvis Mazars  
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Audit  
Firm,  
Harcourt Centre  
Block 3, Harcourt Road  
Dublin 2.

### **Bankers**

Bank of Ireland  
50-55 Lower Baggot St.  
Dublin 2

### **Solicitors**

Ken Kennedy Solicitors  
31 Heytesbury Lane  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4

# SECTION ONE: STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE, AND MANAGEMENT

## *Governing Document*

The Charity is a Company Limited by Guarantee in Ireland governed by its Constitution, the Companies Act 2014 and the Charities Act 2009. The Charity does not have share capital and consequently the liability of the members is limited, subject to an undertaking by each member to contribute to the net assets of the charity on winding up such amounts as may be required not exceeding €1.00.

AONTAS' model of delivery and goals are led by its objectives outlined in its Constitution.

## *Organisational Structure*

The AONTAS Constitution states that the Board must have a minimum of 5 members and can include up to 14 members maximum. The Board of Directors shall comprise of:

- Chairperson
- Vice-Chairperson (included from the remaining 13 members elected)
- A maximum of 10 organisational members' representatives (three from community education)
- One individual member
- Two adult learners

The Board has overall responsibility for the Charity and how it operates. They are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of AONTAS. The AONTAS Board are committed to maintaining the highest standard of governance. The CEO attends Board meetings as a guest to report on activities and engage in discussions but they are not a member of the Board of Directors.

## *Division of Responsibility*

The Board delegates responsibility to the CEO for operations, management, and day-to-day service delivery. The CEO is accountable to the Board and must ensure that AONTAS meets its charitable objectives and delivers on agreed key performance indicators. The Board may reserve the right to approve new staff appointments and their remuneration. They are also responsible for approving AONTAS' overall staffing levels and salary bands for new posts. While overall responsibility is retained by the Board and they control all major decisions, the Board delegate executive authority for the Charity's operations to the CEO. The CEO in turn delegates responsibility of specific functions to the Leadership Team (senior management).

## ***Recruitment and Appointment of the Board***

As a membership organisation, AONTAS' Board of Directors are elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting. Membership is composed of people, organisations, education providers, networks, practitioners, learners, and academics both interested in adult education and committed to the principles such as equality and inclusion, set out by the Charity.

In the case of all elected positions not being filled, there is an additional mechanism whereby the elected Board can co-opt a person to fill the vacancy. Candidates for co-option must be agreed upon by the Board and will be selected based on relevant skills and expertise required to allow the Board to function at the optimum level of excellence.

## ***Directors' Voluntary Capacity and Expenses***

The Directors of the Board are volunteers, and they receive no remuneration (financial benefit). The Directors may be paid all travelling, hotel and other expenses properly incurred by them in accordance with the Company's Expenses Policy in respect of attending and returning from meetings of the Directors or any committee of the Directors or general meetings of the Company or otherwise in connection with the business of the Company.

## ***Terms of Office for Board Members***

The term for a director is three years with a total of two terms served, including the Board appointed Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson may serve up to a maximum of nine years consecutively. The Chairperson must receive a minimum of five votes from the Board, and it is proposed (not mandatory) that they shall have served three years or one term as a Director previously. If a member of the Board is co-opted due to an unexpected vacancy or to bring new expertise, within the maximum number of Directors permitted, they must run for election at the following annual general meeting.

## ***Board Induction, Staff Engagement, and Training***

Upon election to the AONTAS Board, the Directors are provided with a Board Induction Pack, that includes key contacts, information on the Charity and ways of working, the AONTAS Constitution, information on the Charities Governance Code, the Expenses Policy, the latest financial statements, communication channels and approaches, and more. Directors are also given access to a private 'shared drive folder' online with a range of materials and resources and added, with consent, to the AONTAS Board group chat.

Following the AGM in May 2025, the Board was given an induction session in July led by the AONTAS CEO and Chairperson. This included:

- A peer mentor on the Board
- Induction Pack
- Information on the Constitution and other key documents
- The current strategic plan goals and objectives
- The financial situation and current context of staffing and service provision
- Insights on the boundaries between the Board and staff to protect both respectively

Annually, the Board and staff are brought together in-person to build relationships, understanding, and expertise. This helps the Board to learn about the work of the organisation, share their ideas and feedback, and reduce the risk of misinformation or potential abuse in power dynamics from the CEO or Leadership Team now or in the future. The CEO presents the results of a confidential staff survey to the Board on this day, before the AONTAS team arrive for the joint session.

The Board undertake a range of education and training opportunities annually as set out by the Governance Subcommittee, led by the Chairperson. This is designed to build the expertise of the Board and ensure Directors have the capacity to meet their responsibilities. In 2025, training included risk management, cyber security, governance, and aboard induction.

## **AONTAS Board of Directors, Subcommittees, and Attendance**

The AONTAS Board met five times in 2025. There are two subcommittees of the Board: Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), and the Governance Subcommittee.

With delegated responsibilities for key items and policies such as risk, finance, human resource policies, and the Charities Governance Code, representatives from each committee report to the Board at every meeting. The Board review and discuss key items and have access to all the materials through their shared drive folder. The latest management accounts or finance report is included in every board pack.

The Board is supported with secretarial support from Crowe for governance information, meeting attendance, meeting minutes, and matters arising.

### **Representation of Board attendance:**

**Y:** indicated they attended the meeting

**N:** indicated that they didn't attend the meeting

**N/A:** indicated that they were not part of the Board or Subcommittee at the time

<b>Name</b>	<b>28 Feb</b>	<b>31 Mar</b>	<b>23 Jul</b>	<b>26 Sep</b>	<b>08 Dec</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
John D'Arcy	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5/5	100%
Lilian Nwanze	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	4/5	80%
Martin Flynn	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	4/5	80%
Cora Rafter	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	4/5	80%
Imelda Gaffney	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	4/5	80%
Pamela Latimer	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	4/5	80%
Anne Whelan	Y	Y	N	N	Y	3/5	60%
Charis Hughes	Y	N	Y	N	Y	3/5	60%
Deirdre Arnold	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	4/5	80%
Fergus Craddock	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5/5	100%
Lynn Simpson	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	Y	3/3	100%
Chidiogo Blessing Ebeledike	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	Y	3/3	100%
Stephanie Kirwan	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	Y	3/3	100%

Former Directors during 2025 included Louise Mullins (stepped down on 23 July 2025), Liam McCarthy (completed two terms of office on 22 May 2025), and Kayla Dibble (stepped down on 23 July 2025).

## Audit & Risk Committee Attendance

The Audit & Risk Committee met on five occasions during 2025.

Name	20 Feb	09 Apr	10 Jun	11 Sep	17 Nov	Total	Attendance
Martin Flynn	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5/5	100%
Imelda Gaffney	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	4/5	80%
Cora Rafter	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5/5	100%
Anne Whelan	Y	Y	N	N	Y	3/5	60%

The Audit and Risk Subcommittee was supported by executive attendance from the CEO, Company Secretary, and Governance and Operations Officer. Charis Hughes joined the ARC on 23 July 2025. Louise Mullins stepped down on 23 July 2025.

## Governance Subcommittee Attendance

The Governance Subcommittee met on four occasions during 2025.

Name	11 Feb	16 Apr	20 Jun	16 Oct	Total	Attendance
Martin Flynn	Y	Y	Y	Y	5/5	100%
Imelda Gaffney	Y	Y	Y	N	4/5	80%
Cora Rafter	Y	Y	Y	Y	5/5	100%
Anne Whelan	Y	Y	N	N	3/5	60%

The Governance Subcommittee was supported by executive attendance from the CEO, Vice Chairperson and Governance and Operations Officer. Lynn Simpson joined the Governance Subcommittee on 23 July 2025. Louise Mullins stepped down on 23 July 2025.



## ***Policies***

AONTAS has a wide range of policies to ensure and support our governance responsibilities. These policies are developed, reviewed, and updated regularly to meet legal requirements and the needs of the organisation. Each policy is reviewed in line with the set timeframe or policy cycle, or as needs arise. This information is declared on the front of each policy. In 2025, AONTAS considerably updated, reviewed, or updated the following:

- AONTAS Constitution
- Governance Code Framework
- Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Board Induction Pack
- Use of AI in the workplace
- Vouchers Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Risk Management Policy and Framework
- Health and Safety Statement
- Credit Card Policy
- Terms of Reference for the Governance and Audit and Risk Subcommittees
- External Providers Register
- Board Expenses Policy
- Employee Handbook

## ***Board Governance Framework***

AONTAS maintains a formal Board Governance Framework, which sets out the role, responsibilities and authority of the Board in governing the organisation. This Framework and supporting documents are provided to all new Board members as part of their induction, alongside the Constitution and key governance and financial documents.

The Board Governance Framework clarifies the matters reserved for Board decision-making, the delegation of operational authority to the Chief Executive Officer, and the Board's collective responsibilities in relation to strategy, financial oversight, risk management and regulatory compliance.

## ***Conflict of Interest Policy and External Providers Register***

As a Charity, AONTAS has a Conflict-of-Interest Policy to help Directors identify, record, and manage any conflicts of interest to protect the integrity of the organisation and to ensure the Directors act in the best interests of AONTAS. This policy was reviewed and approved in November 2025. Trustees are required to declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts, which are recorded in meeting minutes and the Register of Interests.

The 'External Providers Register' was updated and shared with Board members in 2025. By reviewing this, Board members assure their fellow Directors and the AONTAS team that their position has not been abused to secure contracts or benefit themselves, family or friends through financial gain or otherwise.

## **Governance Codes and Standards**

In 2025, AONTAS completed a comprehensive review of its compliance with the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) Governance Code. Evidence has been gathered and collated for potential inspection to outline how every item of the code is successfully being met in accordance with CRA guidelines. The Board reviewed and approved the documentation, following a presentation and recommended approval report from the Governance Subcommittee. AONTAS submitted a 'fully compliant' report for the 31 October filing deadline.

AONTAS is committed to the principles of the Charities Governance Code. These include advancing the charitable purpose of the organisation, behaving with integrity, leading people effectively, exercising appropriate control, working effectively as a Board, and being accountable and transparent.

## **Risk Management**

The AONTAS Board has a Risk Management Policy in place to manage and mitigate risks for the organisation. The Risk Register is a standing item on the Audit and Risk Committee meeting agenda, and it is reviewed annually by the AONTAS Board. Following improved risk management practices in late 2025, the AONTAS Leadership Team now discuss and review an area of risk with the results brought forward to the ARC for further consideration. This aims to build understanding, ownership, and improved risk mitigation.

Principal risk and uncertainties:

- Governance and Compliance
- Strategic and External
- Financial
- Operational
- Reputational and Environmental

AONTAS has no areas of risk categorised as 'high' or in the red which would indicate immediate concern and a scoring of 25+.

The Directors have assessed the risks and have taken measures to manage these risks in the Charity as follows:

### **a. Market Risk**

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

## ***b. 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.

## ***Reserves Policy***

As a key part of AONTAS' Internal Financial Controls, the purpose of the reserves policy for AONTAS is to ensure the stability of the mission, programmes, employment and on-going operations of the organisation. The reserve is intended to provide an internal source of income for situations such as sudden increase in expense, one time unbudgeted expenses, unanticipated loss in funding, or uninsured losses. The reserves are not intended to replace a permanent loss of funds or eliminate an on-going budget gap.

The Board of AONTAS judges that it needs to have a prudent reserves policy that allows it to:

- Meet its obligations as an employer by paying redundancy payments to its staff at the statutory minimum level
- Continue to implement its activity plans, should an important income stream cease unexpectedly or be delayed
- Address an appropriate level of liability associated with the lease that it has on the office premises

The calculation of the required level of reserves is an integral part of AONTAS' annual planning, budget and forecast cycle.

Reserve levels are monitored to ensure that they are maintained at a reasonable level in the context of planned expenditure, future commitments and working capital requirements.

## ***Investment Policy***

AONTAS does not engage in investment activity and therefore does not maintain an investment policy.



# SECTION TWO:

## AONTAS' PURPOSE AND ACTIVITIES

The **vision** of AONTAS is a world where the pursuit of learning for all adults is valued, equal, and strengthens communities.

### Objectives

AONTAS was established in 1969 as the National Adult Learning Organisation to promote and develop adult education in Ireland. This is achieved through actions including:

- Promoting quality adult learning through continuous professional development and the creation of shared spaces for learning and the exchange of best practice.
- Encouraging and facilitating cooperation between adult learning practitioners, organisations and institutions in Ireland and at European level.
- Being the primary advisory and consultative body for the development of adult and community education in Ireland.
- Being an intermediary for communication and cooperation between all individuals and groups involved in adult education in Ireland, and more.

The **AONTAS Constitution** is available [here](#).

Our work is underpinned by core principles that guide our approach and activities. These are:

- Social justice
- Supporting social inclusion
- Partnership
- Valuing diversity
- Advancing equality
- Feminism

## Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan ‘**Leading Collective Action for Social Change**’ has three goals and key directions for the delivery of work, within these goals:

Goal 1. Connect and Engage the Sector	Goal 2. Advocate for Change	Goal 3. Empower the Change
1.1 Provide a structured platform for voices and input to be heard from across the Sector	2.1 Strengthen and develop the AONTAS organisational voice	3.1 Develop a socially inclusive framework for AONTAS as an employer
1.2. Inform national research on the importance of social equality	2.2 Highlight how social equality is impacted by adult learning	3.2 Integrate a Problem-Solving Culture
1.3. Build capacity within the sector	2.3 Inform and Influence	3.3 Enhance organisational infrastructure
		3.4 Funding Diversification Planning

## Main Activities

### Advocacy and Policy

AONTAS actively seeks to influence and improve policy. We use organisational advocacy to lobby policymakers and decision-makers for the removal of barriers for learners, and to improve the quality of adult education and the learner experience. AONTAS develops evidence-based policy papers and engages in consultations as ‘the voice of adult learning’. In addition, we host the ‘Community Education Network’ and provide programmes such as ‘Learners as Leaders’ to facilitate collective action and to support learner voice.

### Promoting and Developing Adult Learning

We promote adult learning through campaigns, radio interviews, written media, learner stories and videos. Our ‘Adult Learners’ Festival’ and ‘STAR Awards’ are national programmes led by AONTAS that promote and showcase adult learning provision across the island of Ireland. To drive educational equality, we develop change-oriented programmes in areas such as voter education, storytelling and advocacy.

### Learner Voice

AONTAS organises a range of activities to ensure learners are provided with a safe, inclusive and uplifting experience to share their experiences with policymakers, staff, and others. This includes the ‘National FET Learner Forum’ research project, facilitating learners presenting at national and international events, and supporting learners to engage in consultations. We also share our learner voice research findings in representative spaces, and advocate on behalf of learners. AONTAS drives learner voice nationally and we provide training for adult education staff and learners to support activities at local and regional level.

## Community Education

As an equality focused and politically active organisation, we work very closely with community education members and pay particular attention to the community education model. This model is underpinned by the principles of social justice and equality, and it uses change-oriented learning to empower people and create collective action with the intention of a social impact. AONTAS hosts the 'Community Education Network' (CEN) and undertakes dedicated research and lobbying providers and learners in this area.

## International Engagement

We also represent Ireland at international events and through international networks to showcase Irish adult learning initiatives, build partnerships and to increase our knowledge and understanding. AONTAS is the National Coordinator for the New European Agenda for Adult Learning, and we work directly with the European Commission, National Agency (Léargas), and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on this programme. We're also part of the 'International Council for Adult Education', the 'Hall of Fame for Adult and Continuing Education', and the 'European Association for the Education of Adults'.

## Connecting and Strengthening the Sector

We bring organisations, providers, academics, tutors, staff, policymakers, and learners together to provide a space for communication, cooperation, learning and discussion. AONTAS identifies challenges and opportunities from these engagements, and we try to address them in partnership with key stakeholders to strengthen the adult learning sector. Examples of this include events such as our annual policy/lobbying day, and the Adult Education Summit.



## ***Core Services and Activities***

- The Adult Learners' Festival
- National FET Learner Forum
- The STAR Awards
- Policy Day
- The Adult Learner Journal
- Policy, advocacy and lobbying
- The Community Education Network
- Community Education Map
- Campaigns and events
- News, blogs, and social media
- Learners As Leaders programme
- Learner Voice training for staff and learners
- National Coordinator for the New European Agenda for Adult Learning
- Community education and equality driven research
- Shared island activities
- Representation in the field of adult and community education.
- Creation of resources and training
- National and EU funded projects that benefit the FET sector

## ***How we deliver our work***

The AONTAS programme of work is delivered by a team of professional staff through four key areas; communications, capacity building, advocacy, and research. This work is underpinned by social justice, equality, human rights, the Sustainable Development Goals. The broader AONTAS team is made up of five teams:

1. Environmental, Social, and Governance Team
2. Advocacy Team
3. Research Team
4. Communications Team
5. Impact and Engagement Team

## AONTAS Staff

In 2025, on average AONTAS had 20 staff members. The AONTAS team is responsible for different areas of work as delegated by the CEO and Leadership Team. Salaries are transparent, approved by the Board, and consistent across the team within areas of responsibility. During 2025, two staff members went on maternity leave. One employee left the organisation for a new role. To address this gap, one person was hired on a short-term contract through public recruitment, two teams merged and the workplan was reduced and reprioritised. In 2026, the teams will revert to their original structure.

For details on the salary bands in AONTAS, please see page 105 in the Financial Statement.

1	Dearbháil Lawless	Chief Executive Officer
2	Marta Feragalli	Head of Environmental, Social and Governance
3	Megan Fearon	Head of Impact & Engagement
4	Thomas Murray	Head of Research
5	Conor Thompson	Head of Advocacy and Policy
6	Rachael Ryan	Head of Communications
7	Eve Cobain	Senior Research Officer
8	Brian Desmond	Membership & Digital Engagement Officer
9	Aisling Meyler	Research Officer Learner Initiatives
10	Megan O'Neil	Communications and Digital Media Officer
11	Giuliana Peña	Publications and Design Officer
12	Clare Fleet	Governance and Operations Officer
13	Karyn Farrell	Learner Voice Project Officer
14	Lorraine O'Connor	Community Education Officer
15	Suzanne Kerr	Office Coordinator
16	Ruby Cooney	Education Projects Officer
17	Larisa Sioneriu	European Projects Coordinator
18	Traci Barton	Finance and Administration Officer
19	Philip Finn	Research Officer
20	Thomas Ogbemudia	Communications and Social-Media Officer
21	Rebecca Jackson	Policy and Advocacy Officer

Ecem Akarca left AONTAS in February 2025 and Kate Smyth left AONTAS in May 2025.

# SECTION THREE:

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE IN 2025

The following is a summary of the key achievements and performance that advanced goals in our AONTAS' Strategic Plan during 2025.

Mainly activities are funded through our 'Core' and 'NFLF' grants from SOLAS for AONTAS' key services, operations, and the National FET Learner Forum. AONTAS also receives funding from the European Commission for the New European Agenda for Adult Learning (NEAAL) which is co-funded by SOLAS. There are also minor income streams from smaller projects, further details on AONTAS' finances can be found on page 108.

All the activities target and benefit the Further Education and Training sector in the remit of SOLAS' funding provision and were reported to SOLAS in our 2025 End of Year report. Activities within the NEAAL project are noted below with the following symbol \*. Due to staff collaboration or strategic alignment, there are some crossovers in areas like communication campaigns, learner voice training, and the adult education summit.

Goal 1. Connect and Engage the Sector to Enable Change	
1.1 Provide a structured platform for voices and input to be heard from across the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our event 'From Politics to People: A Culture of Care in Community Education' brought 83 representatives together to discuss policy and lobby policymakers on 3 March.</li> <li>• 103 practitioners came together through 4 'Community Education Network' meetings.</li> <li>• 50 new community education organisations consented and joined the Community Education Map. Showcasing local opportunities, the profile of learner's supported, and the types of courses delivered nationally.</li> <li>• We launched a new Membership Hub on 26 March, providing a safe platform for people to connect and converse, find key information and share resources. This included 24 news items, 36 community articles, 16 videos, 67 event notifications, and more.</li> <li>• 91 membership emails were sent with funding opportunities, member spotlights, policy news, and more to 901 contacts.</li> <li>• membership webinars facilitated connection in 2025. (1. Connecting Communities Information Webinar, 29 January; 2. Getting Started with the AONTAS Members Hub, 8 May; 3. Learning Unlocked: Recognition of Prior Learning and the Learner Experience, 16 May; 4. Just4All Policy Discussion, 19 June; 5. Erasmus+ Adult Education for AONTAS Members, 22 August; 6. Strengthening Learner Voice through Staff Insight and Action, 29 September.</li> </ul>

<p>1.2 Inform national research on the importance of social equality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We launched the 2025 edition of the peer reviewed academic journal 'The Adult Learner' under the theme of 'challenging racism and creating a more inclusive society'. Publishing research and practice-based articles from experts in the field.</li> <li>• 2,274 learners shared their experience with AONTAS through the 'National FET Learner Forum' in 713 focus groups and 1,561 surveys. Systematically capturing learner voice to inform national understanding and build democratic practices for listening to the voices of adults engaged in adult learning.</li> <li>• 10 regional reports provided to partnering Education and Training Boards with findings and recommendations from learners in their region.</li> <li>• Findings from the learner forum were brought to 7 in-person consultations to inform national understanding and the future of provision, including the 'Cost of Education' event with DFHERIS (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science) on 3 April.</li> <li>• The Head of Research presented 'Dialogue or monologue? The role of Learner Voice in adult education in Ireland' to ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults) conference, Charles University, Prague, 26 September 2025.</li> <li>• An evaluation of the 'REACH' grant was undertaken to build understanding of the successes and challenges in the delivery of this community education grant.</li> </ul>
<p>1.3 Build capacity within the sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AONTAS Adult Education Summit* 'Connecting Communities for Collective Action' took place on 19-20 November, Aviva Stadium, Dublin. Providing 143 attendees with workshops, panel discussions, exhibition stands, and insights from experts.</li> <li>• We assessed community needs through a series of workshops and developed a resource titled; 'Community Education Against Disinformation'. 44 participants completed the programme in 2025. [IHREC (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission) funded]</li> <li>• 'Learner Voice'* staff training sessions provided in 8 Education and Training Boards with 88 staff engaged.</li> <li>• 37 staff across 11 Education and Training Boards participated in a pilot of 'Learner Voice Digital Badge'* in October.</li> <li>• 13 people completed our 'Learners As Leaders'* programme called 'Community Changemakers' from 6 different regions in Ireland on 20 and 21 August.</li> <li>• 2 students from Marino Institute of Education completed their work placements in AONTAS during the Adult Learners' Festival.</li> </ul>

**Goal 2. Advocate for Change**

<p>2.1 Strengthen and develop AONTAS' organisational voice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONTAS welcomed 71 new members in 2025 and the AONTAS team visited 51 organisational members across the island of Ireland, building our standing and expertise as a representative body.</li> <li>• 149 community education phone calls were undertaken to check-in on member experiences and future needs.</li> <li>• Over 100 nominations received from education providers for the STAR Awards. 24 groups shortlisted and 9 award winners showcasing the quality, impact, and value of adult education programmes. Brought together by AONTAS, 146 guests in Croke Park celebrated adult learning and helped us to publicly promote these initiatives. The STAR Awards judges, whom are selected key stakeholders, had the opportunity to meet with learners and practitioners, and build their understanding and expertise.</li> <li>• A 'Publications Guide and Checklist' was developed for improving our organisational voice and consistency within publications.</li> <li>• We engaged in and presented at National Coordinator meetings* in the European Commission, Brussels, with representatives from across Europe on 30-31 January and 13-14 November for the European Agenda project.</li> <li>• The AONTAS AGM, held on 22 May in Kilmainham brought 66-member representatives together to discuss sectoral issues, vote for new board members, constitutional changes, and inform the future of our work. Including learner and practitioner speakers from across Ireland.</li> <li>• The EU Projects Coordinator visited Slovakia on 15 and 16 October for 'Innovative Learning Environments', a dedicated peer group with European representatives to strengthen our capacity in this area.</li> </ul>
<p>2.2 Evidence and highlight how adult learning is impacted by social inequality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All-island research undertaken to evidence social inequality and the impact of community education. 'Community Education for Social Transformation' report launched in IHREC on October 7th.</li> <li>• Partnership event with NALA in Dublin, on 25 September facilitating a 'National Skills Conversation' with key stakeholders across lifelong learning. Presenting Community Education for Social Transformation (CEST) research.</li> <li>• The Alliance for Lifelong Learning in Northern Ireland commissioned AONTAS on behalf of the Department for the Economy NI to explore adult education measurement. The 'Measuring the Impact of Adult Education in Northern Ireland' was launched in Stormont, Belfast on 10 April with 60 guests as part of the Belfast Learning City festival.</li> <li>• Providing a national database of learner voice, AONTAS developed the 'Learner Voices Across Ireland' report with findings from the National FET Learner Forum on 19 November.</li> </ul>

### 2.3 Inform and Influence

- Reaching nearly 8 million, AONTAS campaigned for equality in adult education and shared materials to inform and influence Government, policymakers, funders, and practitioners. Including articles in the Irish Times and Irish Independent, radio interviews, and 60 items shared on the AONTAS website.
- 149 events took place across 26 counties, including 6 events in Northern Ireland as part of the Adult Learners' Festival. Promoting adult education opportunities for learners and building public awareness of adult and community education.
- 'Transformative Power of Community Education' workshop delivered at the FET conference in Sligo hosted by ETBI on 26 February.
- Meeting held with Minister James Lawless and Minister Marian Harkin on 3 April before the Cost of Education Event in Croke Park.
- Our 'Local, Lifelong, Life Changing- Campaign'\* for Adult Learning, ran from 22-26 September advocating for community education. 8 learner representatives engaged as campaign spokespeople. 137 sectoral organisations contacted directly with information on the campaign, and requests for support. 36 allies declared support.
- First-ever 'National Day of Visibility for Community Education' held on 23 September with providers across Ireland utilising the opportunity to engage with and influence local media and representatives.
- 28 national and European consultations engaged with to influence policymakers. 16 written submissions included Electoral Commission Strategy, 24 March, DFHERIS Statement of Strategy, 6 May and Tertiary Education Strategy, 19 September.
- 174 emails sent to all TDs on 6 November - highlighting campaign activity, goals and AONTAS community education research publications. Parliamentary Questions on community education reported in the following weeks.
- AONTAS presented to the Oireachtas Committee on Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS) on 13 November. AONTAS shared NFLF findings and advocated for inclusive access to apprenticeship opportunities. 14 follow up emails to the members of JFHERIS were disseminated with information relating to queries at the meeting.
- Meeting and visit organised with Minister Marian Harkin in Mullingar WCP/WCI Centre, 15 December. 4 CEN representatives and 3 AONTAS staff attended to discuss key communication issues.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONTAS Pre-Budget Submission 2026 sent to Minister Lawless, Minister Harkin, FHERIS committee members and a range of senior civil servants. Resulting in Parliamentary Questions mentioning adult and community education and AONTAS in the Dáil.</li> <li>• ‘Making Space for Collective Action’ keynote address delivered at the SAOLTA conference, Dublin on 25 November.</li> <li>• Strengthening cooperation and sharing expertise, AONTAS hosted 6 European* and UK study visits including 47 colleagues from Germany, Iceland, Belgium, Slovenia, Slovakia, France and Italy.</li> <li>• As Vice-President for the European Association for the Education of Adults, AONTAS CEO utilised this position to lobby European policymakers on the upcoming Multi-Annual Framework that will impact Irish funding provision and policy, and influence colleagues on the need for and practices of learner voice in Germany, Poland, and Brussels.</li> </ul>
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Goal 3. Empower the Change	
3.1 Develop a socially inclusive framework for AONTAS as an employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Political Education and Anti-Racism’ training was completed by the AONTAS team, in addition to a range of other programmes to build professional development.</li> <li>• Board and staff session organised in February to maintain healthy relationship and communication between the team and our board of Directors. Reducing the potential risk of authoritative dynamics and misinformation that often take place in work environments.</li> <li>• ‘Employee Assistance Programme’ provided to all staff by Laya Healthcare.</li> <li>• Confidential survey undertaken to capture feedback and employee satisfaction. Overall, positive results. Key points developed into action plan.</li> <li>• Hybrid Policy and Flexitime Policy maintained to facilitate work life balance and accessibility.</li> <li>• ‘Support and Supervision’ sessions provided to all staff every 4-6 weeks.</li> <li>• Ergonomic assessment undertaken to ensure health and safety of team members. Equipment provided as requested, including for working from home.</li> <li>• 2 staff fun days, and a Christmas party held to facilitate team building and show thanks for contributions made throughout 2025.</li> <li>• AONTAS office library updated, and snacks, tea, coffee, milk, and key facilities provided in the office kitchen for a comfortable work environment.</li> </ul>

<p>3.2 Integrate a Problem-Solving Culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leadership Team held 3 in-person strategy sessions for stakeholder mapping, 2026 landscape mapping, and campaign planning.</li> <li>• Inter-team meetings held throughout 2025 to build inter-team connections, improved planning and reflection.</li> <li>• ‘Morning Meeting’ sessions and all team discussions held regularly to facilitate good communication and information sharing.</li> <li>• Reflections organised after key events such as the Adult Education Summit to capture and improve experience and delivery in the future.</li> <li>• Attended external events to build peer learning including conferences led by AHEAD, the European Association for the Education of Adults, and ESREA.</li> </ul>
<p>3.3 Enhance organisational infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team breakfast sessions provided in early 2025 to enhance collaboration, trust, and friendships.</li> <li>• New service provider engaged for CRM system to improve internal processes and operations, including membership management and communications.</li> <li>• Salesforce training undertaken by key staff to align capacity with updated systems.</li> <li>• New ‘Standard Operating Procedure’ template developed.</li> <li>• Coaching provided to a range of staff to help build their capacity and confidence.</li> <li>• Internal working groups such as ‘Membership Subgroup’ held to improve organisational infrastructure.</li> <li>• New ‘Board Induction Pack’ and ‘Board Induction Framework’ delivered for new Board members.</li> </ul>
<p>3.4 Funding diversification planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of funding applications submitted to diversify funding including KA2 Erasmus+, Shared Island, and ReThink Ireland.</li> <li>• Education and Training (paid-for) programme developed with future piloting in 2026.</li> <li>• Successful 2026-2027 New European Agenda project proposal submitted.</li> </ul>

## Challenges

The achievements of AONTAS have been delivered in the context of internal and external challenges:

- Increasing operating costs, no financial support for maternity cover and only a 0.5% increase that was specific to staff costs from our funder in 2025.
- Staff requests for higher salaries due to the ongoing cost of living crisis in Ireland and an unfortunate lack of financial capacity to increase the salary scales to support this.
- Increasing demand for additional services from AONTAS to assist with areas like learner voice training, new and additional policy steering groups, and urgent societal issues including misinformation and disinformation impacting adult education provision.
- Maintaining stability and capacity for the AONTAS team with staff movement due to maternity leaves and one person leaving the organisation, resulting in two teams merging and the recruitment of a new colleague.
- Policy and funding challenges impacting AONTAS members such as insecurity for community education providers, a lack of stability for staff, cuts to ESOL provision, and financial barriers faced by adult learners.
- Ongoing geo-political crises such as the genocide in Gaza, Russian invasion of Ukraine, and weakening democracy in the USA, and the increasing division and resulting hate crime and fear mongering in Ireland impacting the wellbeing of staff, members, and learners.

## Plans for the Future

In 2026, AONTAS will deliver the final year of our current 2023-2026 strategic plan. Key areas will include:

- Seeking increased and diverse funding sources.
- Piloting an education and training programme to provide a new funding stream.
- Reducing the number of activities in AONTAS for the wellbeing of staff, and to align with the reality of our financial situation.
- Ongoing delivery of key services and activities such as the Community Education Network, the Adult Learners' Festival, the STAR Awards, lobbying, representation, and campaigns, European engagement, membership support, the Learner Forum research, Learners As Leaders, and more.
- Continued improvement of AONTAS operations, processes, and ways of working. Influencing and informing the sector to drive educational equality.

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

## Income

SOLAS continued to be the primary on-going source of funding, with income of €1,650,669 (82% of total income) in 2025 (2024: €1,599,260 (83% of total income)). The deficit for the year amounted to €4,133 (2024 deficit: €25,448).

The table below details the SOLAS funding approved, received and expended during 2025. All SOLAS funding is restricted and is only expended in accordance with the categories of funding detailed in the table below:

Item No.	Funding Category	Funding Approved	Funding Received	Funding Expended	Overspent - Transfer from Unrestricted Fund	2025 End of Year Balance
1	Specific Supports Core Funding	€1,306,205	€1,306,205	€1,307,069	€864	-
2	National FET Leaner Forum	€344,464	€344,464	€345,053	€589	-
Total		€1,650,669	€1,650,669	€1,652,122	€1,453	-

Total funding received from SOLAS in 2025 was €1,650,669. In its 2025 End of Year report to SOLAS, AONTAS reported there is an overspent balance of €1,453 which was covered by the unrestricted fund.

## Expenditure

AONTAS' 2025 expenditure on Charitable Activities amount to €2,011,215 (2024: €1,955,289). Financial position at the year end, the Charity has current assets of €484,904 (2024: €563,939) and liabilities of €139,683 (2024: €220,541) resulting in net assets of €360,109 (2024: €364,242).

## Reserves

Total reserves at year end, in the amount of €360,109 (2024: €364,242) equivalent at year end to just over 2 month's average expenditure.

The overall level of reserves as at 31 December 2025 are as follows:

Unrestricted Reserves: €341,375 (2024: €341,262)

Restricted Reserves: €18,734 (2024: €22,980)

## Going Concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Directors have a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies.

## Exemptions from Disclosure

There are no omissions of the names of any Directors, executive officers or senior staff members for any extenuating personal circumstances.

### ***Funds held as Custodian Trustee on behalf of Others***

The Charity does not act as Custodian Trustee on behalf of others.

### ***Events after the end of the reporting period***

There have been no significant events affecting the Charity since the balance sheet date.

### ***Political Contributions***

The organisation did not make any political contributions in the financial year (2024 - €nil).

### ***Accounting Records***

The measures taken by the directors to secure compliance with the requirements of Sections 281 to 285 of the Companies Act 2014 with regard to the keeping of accounting records 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 accounting records of the Charity are located at 2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, D06 E0H1, Ranelagh, Dublin.

### ***Relevant Audit Information***

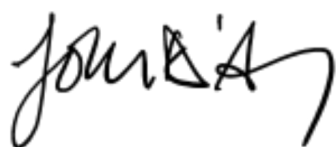
In the case of each of the persons who are directors at the time this report is approved in accordance with Section 332 of the Companies Act 2014:

- so far as each director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the Charity's statutory auditors are unaware, and
- each director has taken all the steps that he or she ought to have taken as a director to make himself or herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Charity's statutory auditors are aware of that information.

### ***Auditors***

The auditors, Forvis Mazars, Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm, have expressed their willingness to continue in office in accordance with Section 383 (2) of the Companies Act 2014.

This report was approved by the Board of Directors on 21st April 2026 and signed on behalf of the Board by:



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**John D'Arcy (Chairperson)**  
Director

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**Martin Flynn**  
Director

## **Directors' Responsibilities Statement**

The Directors are responsible for preparing the Directors' report and financial statements in accordance with Irish law and regulations.

Irish company law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law, the Directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" issued by the Financial Reporting Council, and Statement of Recommended Practice (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), issued by the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

Under company law, the Directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Charity as at the financial year end date and of the surplus or deficit of the Charity for that financial year and otherwise comply with the Companies Act 2014.

In preparing these 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;
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reason for any material departure from those standards; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in business.

The Directors are responsible for ensuring that the Charity keeps or causes to be kept adequate accounting records which correctly explain and record the transactions of the Charity, enable at any time the assets, liabilities, financial position and surplus or deficit of the Charity to be determined with reasonable accuracy, enable them to ensure that the financial statements and Directors' Report comply with the Companies Act 2014 and enable the financial statements to be audited. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

By order of the Board:

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**John D'Arcy (Chairperson)**  
**Director**

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**Martin Flynn**  
**Director**

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026**

# INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF AONTAS, THE NATIONAL ADULT LEARNING ORGANISATION

## *Report on the audit of the financial statements*

### *Opinion*

We have audited the financial statements of AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation (the "Charity") for the year ended 31 December 2025, which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in Note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish Law and FRS 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* issued in the United Kingdom by the Financial Reporting Council (FRS 102).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Charity as of 31 December 2025 and of its deficit for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland*; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

### *Basis for opinion*

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs (Ireland)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report.

We are independent of the Charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard for Auditors (Ireland) issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### *Conclusions relating to going concern*

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

### **Other information**

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

### **Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014**

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken during the audit, we report that:

- the information given in the directors' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements;
- the directors' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements;
- the accounting records of the Charity were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited; and
- the financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which, to the best of our knowledge and belief, are necessary for the purposes of our audit.

### **Matters on which we are required to report by exception**

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the Charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified any material misstatements in the directors' report.

The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the requirements of any of Sections 305 to 312 of the Act, which relate to disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions are not complied with by the Charity. We have nothing to report in this regard.

## **Respective responsibilities**

### **Responsibilities of directors for the financial statements**

As explained more fully in the directors' responsibilities statement set out on page 89, the directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the directors are responsible for assessing the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Charity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

### **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the IAASA's website at: [http://www.iaasa.ie/getmedia/b2389013-1cf6-458b-9b8f-a98202dc9c3a/Description\\_of\\_auditors\\_responsibilities\\_for\\_audit.pdf](http://www.iaasa.ie/getmedia/b2389013-1cf6-458b-9b8f-a98202dc9c3a/Description_of_auditors_responsibilities_for_audit.pdf). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

### **The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities**

Our report is made solely to the Charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Section 391 of the Companies Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Charity'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 Charity and the Charity's members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

**Aedín Morkan**  
**for and on behalf of Forvis Mazars**  
**Chartered Accountants & Statutory Audit Firm**  
**Harcourt Centre**  
**Block 3**  
**Harcourt Road**  
**Dublin 2**  
**DATE:**

**Statement of Financial Activities**  
**(incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)**  
**For the year ended 31 December 2025**

		Unrestricted Funds 2025	Restricted Funds 2025	Total Funds 2025	Total Funds 2024
	Note				
		€	€	€	€
<b>Income from:</b>	<b>3</b>				
Charitable activities		-	1,959,011	<b>1,959,011</b>	1,895,921
Other trading activities					
- Membership fee		38,610	-	<b>38,610</b>	33,920
- Event income		9,461	-	<b>9,461</b>	-
		<b>48,071</b>	<b>1,959,011</b>	<b>2,007,082</b>	1,929,841
<b>Expenditure on:</b>	<b>4</b>				
Charitable activities		35,204	1,976,011	<b>2,011,215</b>	1,955,289
		<b>35,204</b>	<b>1,976,011</b>	<b>2,011,215</b>	1,955,289
<b>Net income / (expenditure)</b>	<b>6</b>	12,867	(17,000)	<b>(4,133)</b>	(25,448)
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		12,867	(17,000)	<b>(4,133)</b>	(25,448)
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>					
Total funds brought forward		341,262	22,980	<b>364,242</b>	389,690
Transfers		(12,754)	12,754	-	-
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>341,375</b>	<b>18,734</b>	<b>360,109</b>	364,242

There are no recognised gains or losses other than the net income/(expenditure) set out above.

All income and expenditure are in respect of continuing activities.

The notes on pages 96-111 form part of these financial statements.

**Balance Sheet**  
**As as 31 December 2025**

		2025	2024
	Note	€	€
<b>Fixed assets</b>			
Tangible assets	7	14,888	20,844
<b>Current assets</b>			
Debtors	8	154,714	84,121
Cash at bank and in hand		330,190	479,818
		<b>484,904</b>	563,939
<b>Creditors</b>			
Amounts falling due within one year	9	(139,683)	(220,541)
<b>Net currents assets</b>		<b>345,221</b>	343,398
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		<b>360,109</b>	364,242
<b>Funds</b>			
Restricted funds	10	18,734	22,980
Unrestricted funds	10	341,375	341,262
<b>Total Funds</b>		<b>360,109</b>	364,242

The notes on pages 96-111 form part of these financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the board of directors, authorised for issue on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026 and are signed on its behalf by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
John D'Arcy (Chairperson)  
Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Martin Flynn  
Director

**Statement of Cash Flows**  
**For the Year Ended 31 December 2025**

		2025	2024
	Note	€	€
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Net expenditure		(4,133)	(25,448)
Adjustment for:			
Depreciation	<b>7</b>	5,956	2,481
Operating expenditure before working capital changes		1,823	(22,967)
(Increase) / decrease in debtors		(70,593)	62,158
Decrease in creditors		(80,858)	(100,333)
Net cash used in operating activities		(149,628)	(61,142)
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>			
Purchase of Tangible Assets	<b>7</b>	-	(23,325)
		-	(23,325)
<b>Net decrease in cash at bank and in hand</b>		(149,628)	(84,468)
<b>Cash at bank and in hand at beginning of year</b>		479,818	564,286
<b>Cash at bank and in hand at end of year</b>		330,190	479,818

The notes on pages 96-111 form part of these financial statements.

# NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

## 1. General Information

These financial statements, comprising the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes, constitute the individual financial statements of AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation for the financial year ended 31 December 2025.

### *Company information*

AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation (the “Charity”) is a company limited by guarantee, domiciled, and incorporated in the Republic of Ireland with company registration number of 80958 and is a registered Charity. The Charity is a public benefit entity. The nature of the Charity’s operations and its principal activities are set out in the Directors’ Report on pages 66 to 89.

The registered office and principal place of business is 2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, D06 E0H1, Ranelagh, Dublin.

### *Statement of compliance*

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (FRS 102). The financial statements have also been prepared in accordance with Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102) “Accounting and Reporting by Charities”.

## 2. Accounting Policies

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

### *Basis of preparation*

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis and in accordance with the historical cost convention. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is the Companies Act 2014, FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” issued by the UK Financial Reporting Council (FRC) and the Statement of Recommended Practice (Charities SORP (FRS102)) as published by the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator which are recognised by the FRC as the appropriate bodies to issue SORPs for the charity sector in the UK. Financial reporting in line with SORP is considered best practice for charities in the Republic of Ireland.

The financial statements are prepared and presented in Euro, which is the functional currency of the Charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest Euro (€).

## 2. Accounting Policies (Continued)

### Income

Income is recognised when the Charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the item(s) of income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably. Income is deferred where the Charity is limited by specific performance related conditions that are evident in the funding agreement, where there is a specification of a time period that limits the Charity's ability to recognise the income until it has performed an activity and when there are specific terms or conditions within an agreement that have not been met and are not within the control of the Charity at year end.

Income from charitable activities, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the Charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

### Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the Charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them. Charitable activities include costs of services and grants, support costs and depreciation on related assets. Non-staff costs not attributed to one category of activity are allocated or apportioned pro-rata to the staffing of the relevant service. Finance, HR, IT and administrative staff costs are directly attributable to individual activities by objective.

Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the Charity and include the audit fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the Charity.

Support costs are incurred on those functions that assist the work of the Charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Salaries and associated costs which can be attributed to specific projects are charged accordingly.

### Funds

#### Restricted funds

Restricted funds represent grants, donations and other income which can only be used for particular purposes as specified by the donors. Such purposes are within the overall aims of the Charity.

## 2. Accounting Policies (Continued)

### Funds (continued)

#### Unrestricted funds

Unrestricted funds represent amounts which are expendable at the discretion of the Directors in furtherance of the objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes. It is the policy of the Charity to retain sufficient reserves to cover future commitments in relation to its on-going function and mandate. The provisions are intended to finance:

- Working capital requirements
- Potential setbacks in income
- Unexpected/emergency expenditure

#### Tangible fixed assets

Tangible assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Fixtures and fittings	-	15% - 20% Straight line
Office equipment	-	20% Straight line
Computer equipment	-	20% Straight line

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying amount of the asset and is credited or charged in the statement of financial activities.

#### Prepayments

Prepayments are expenses paid in advance and recorded as assets before these are utilized. Prepayments are apportioned over the period covered by the payment and charged to the statement of financial activities when incurred. Prepayments that are expected to be realized no more than 12 months after the reporting period are classified as current assets. Otherwise, these are classified as noncurrent assets.

#### Deferred income

Deferred income consists of grants received in advance which will be recognised upon fulfilment of the related conditions.

#### Financial instruments

A financial asset or a financial liability is recognised only when the Charity becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Basic financial instruments are initially recognized at the transaction price, unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where it is recognized at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest for a similar debt instrument. Financial assets include cash at bank and in hand and debtors (excluding prepayments).

## **2. Accounting Policies (Continued)**

### **Financial instruments (Continued)**

Financial liabilities are initially recognized at the transaction value and subsequently measured at amortised cost. Financial liabilities include creditors (excluding deferred income and taxation and social welfare).

### **Employee benefits**

The costs of short-term employee benefits are recognised as a liability and an expense.

Termination benefits are recognized immediately as an expense when the Charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

### **Retirement benefits**

The Charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for employees. Annual contributions payable to the Charity's pension scheme are charged to the income and expenditure account in the period to which they relate.

### **Operating leases**

Lease payments are recognized as an expense over the lease term on a straight-line basis. The aggregate benefit of lease incentives is recognized as a reduction to expense over the lease term, on a straight-line basis.

### **Taxation**

The Charity's operations are not for profit and accordingly the company avails of the charities' exemption from corporation tax.

### **Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty**

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of policies and reported amounts of assets and liabilities, income and expenditure. The accounting estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances, the results of which form the basis of making the judgements about the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The key judgements and estimates made in the preparation of these financial statements are as follows.

### **Going concern**

The Charity holds surplus funds in the amount of €361,284 at 31 December 2025 (€364,242 at 31 December 2024).

Based on committed grant income of €1.8m over the next 12 months and cash at bank, the Directors are satisfied that the Charity has adequate resources to continue for at least 12 months from the date of approval of these financial statements and it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of the financial statements.

## 2. Accounting Policies (Continued)

### Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty (Continued)

*Determining lease commitment – Company as a lessee.* The Charity holds a lease for its business premises at 2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, D06 E0H1, Ranelagh, Dublin. The Charity has determined that the risks and benefits of ownership related to the leased property are retained by the lessor. Accordingly, the lease is accounted for as an operating lease.

## 3. Income

### Current Year

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	€	€	€
<b>Income from charitable activities:</b>			
SOLAS Core Grant	-	1,306,204	1,306,204
SOLAS Learner Forum (NFLF) Grant	-	344,460	344,460
Erasmus+ European Agenda for Adult Learning 2024-2025	-	160,689	160,689
Erasmus+ ENHANCE KA2	-	50,706	50,706
Department for the Economy - Alliance for Lifelong Learning	-	32,400	32,400
Just4All	-	29,807	29,807
GSD KA2	-	15,206	15,206
Erasmus+ VOLT Voice of the Learner	-	10,000	10,000
IHREC Human Rights and Equality Grant	-	9,747	9,747
Léargas Erasmus+ KA1 ESC	-	4,615	4,615
Learning and Work Institute Wales	-	2,341	2,341
Erasmus+ Voices	-	292	292
Erasmus+ Partner Up	-	(7,456)	(7,456)
	-	1,959,011	1,959,011
<b>Other income:</b>			
Membership fee	38,610	-	38,610
Event income	9,461	-	9,461
	<b>48,071</b>	<b>1,959,011</b>	<b>2,007,082</b>

### 3. Income (Continued)

#### Prior Year

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	€	€	€
<b>Income from charitable activities:</b>			
SOLAS Core Grant	-	1,259,316	1,259,316
SOLAS Learner Forum (NFLF) Grant	-	339,944	339,944
Erasmus+ European Agenda for Adult Learning Grant (NEAAL) Co-Funding (SOLAS)	-	169	169
ToSwitch – Erasmus + KA2	-	(903)	(903)
RegAle – Erasmus + KA3	-	6,577	6,577
Basic Education and Empowerment for Political Participation (BEEP)	-	10,155	10,155
CitizenXelerator	-	87,710	87,710
Léargas Erasmus+ KA1 ESC, change Work Institute Wales to Learning and Work Institute Wales	-	23,549	23,549
GSD KA2	-		
Erasmus+ Partner Up	-	34,585	34,585
Erasmus+ ENHANCE KA2	-	4,195	4,195
IHREC Human Rights and Equality Grant	-	5,737	5,737
Just4All	-	9,014	9,014
Erasmus+ European Agenda for Adult Learning 2024-2025	-	111,257	111,257
Erasmus+ VOLT Voice of the Learner	-	4,616	4,616
		1,895,921	1,895,921
<b>Other income:</b>			
Membership fee	33,920	-	33,920
	<b>33,920</b>	<b>1,895,921</b>	<b>1,929,841</b>

### 3. Income (Continued)

The purpose of the above grants are as follows:

Grant	Purpose
SOLAS Core Grant	Core costs of AONTAS to support the delivery of the AONTAS Strategic Plan.
SOLAS Learner Forum (NFLF) Grant	Implementation plan costs of AONTAS to support the delivery of the National FET Learner Forum.
Erasmus+ European Agenda for Adult Learning 2024-2025	To develop innovative and community-based methods, identify the needs of learners, and develop policy recommendations for engaging vulnerable and marginalised adults in Irish adult education.
Erasmus+ ENHANCE KA2	Learner voice is the key focus of this partner project across Europe.
Department for the Economy - Alliance for Lifelong Learning	Research to identify how impact is measured across the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector in Northern Ireland under the Alliance for Lifelong Learning.
GSD KA2	European strategic partnership to develop and improve sustainable development practices in adult education.
Erasmus+ VOLT Voice of the Learner	Creating a model of learner voice in the Netherlands.
IHREC Human Rights and Equality Grant	To develop a community education against disinformation programme and workbook.
Léargas Erasmus+ KA1 ESC	Providing learning and mobility opportunities for community education practitioners.
Learning and Work Institute Wales	Funding provided to host a study visit with a range of educators from the Learning and Work Institute in Wales.
Erasmus+ Voices	This project uses oral history as a method to capture the voices of immigrants to help build empathy & social cohesion.
Erasmus+ Partner Up	This project is based in the findings from the Upskilling Pathways initiative

Income is derived from:

	2025	2024
	€	€
Republic of Ireland	1,708,483	1,633,180
Within EU (outside the Republic of Ireland)	263,858	296,661
United Kingdom	34,741	-
	<b>2,007,082</b>	<b>1,929,841</b>

## 4. Analysis of Expenditure on Charitable Activities

### Current Year

	Department of Education and Skills – SOLAS FET Grant	Department of Education and Skills – Solas NFLF Grant	Erasmus + NEAAL Grant	Other	Total
	€	€	€	€	€
<b>Description</b>					
Premises costs	128,351				128,351
Management expenses	66,269				66,269
Office costs	51,218				51,218
Adult Learners' Festival and AONTAS publications	20,037				20,037
Information and resources	20,190				20,190
Learner Forum Project		190,069			190,069
Membership, communications and promotions	28,057				28,057
General expenses	15,216		63,567	70,992	149,775
	329,338	190,069	63,567	70,992	653,966
Support costs	977,731	154,984	98,183	126,351	1,357,249
	1,307,069	345,053	161,750	197,343	2,011,215

Included within the above are support costs as follows:

	General cost	Governance cost	Total 2025
	€	€	€
Wages and salaries	1,247,294	-	1,247,294
Audit (including VAT)	-	12,055	12,055
Others	55,125	42,775	97,900
	1,302,419	54,830	1,357,249

## 4. Analysis of Expenditure on Charitable Activities (Continued)

### Prior Year

	Department of Education and Skills – SOLAS FET Grant	Department of Education and Skills – Solas NFLF Grant	Erasmus + NEAAL Grant	Other	Total
	€	€	€	€	€
<b>Description</b>					
Premises costs	128,272	-	-	-	128,272
Management expenses	67,937	-	-	-	67,937
Office costs	54,137	-	-	-	54,137
Adult Learners' Festival and AONTAS publications	19,654	-	-	-	19,654
Information and resources	20,128	-	-	-	20,128
Learner Forum Project	-	193,250	-	-	193,250
Membership, communications and promotions	28,435	-	-	-	28,435
General expenses	14,174	-	31,065	91,077	136,316
	332,737	193,250	31,065	91,077	648,129
Support costs	927,046	147,244	80,193	152,677	1,307,160
	1,259,783	340,494	111,258	243,754	1,955,289

Included within the above are support costs as follows:

	General cost	Governance cost	Total 2025
	€	€	€
Wages and salaries	1,202,845	-	1,202,845
Audit (including VAT)	-	10,978	10,978
Others	50,482	42,854	93,336
	1,253,327	53,832	1,307,159

## 5. Employees

The average number of persons employed by the Charity during the year was as follows:

	2025	2024
	No.	No.
Administration	5	5
Project	16	17
	21	22

## 5. Employees (continued)

The number of employees whose total employee benefits (excluding employer's pension costs) for the reporting period which fell within the bands below were:

	2025	2024
	No.	No.
In the band € 60,001 - € 70,000	2	2
In the band € 70,001 - € 80,000	-	-
In the band € 80,001 - € 90,000	-	-
In the band € 90,001 - € 100,000	1	1
In the band € 100,001 - € 110,000	-	-
	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

Breakdown of wages and salaries is as follows:

	2025	2024
	€	€
Wages and salaries	1,040,754	1,018,157
Social security costs	114,735	112,947
Pension costs	91,805	76,975
	<b>1,247,294</b>	<b>1,208,079</b>

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and PRSI) for key management personnel for the financial year amounted to €442,530 (€425,552 in 2024). The key management personnel comprise of the CEO, Head of Environmental Social and Governance, Head of Research, Head of Advocacy and Policy, Head of Communications, and Head of Impact and Engagement. The pay of key management personnel is set by approval of the Board.

No Directors or any other persons related to the Charity had any personal interest in any contracts or transactions entered into by the Charity during the financial period.

## 6. Net Income / (Expenditure) for the Year

	2025	2024
	€	€
Net income / (expenditure) for the year is stated after charging:		
Depreciation	5,956	2,481
Rent	77,735	80,958
Auditor's remuneration for external audit services (including VAT)	12,055	11,255

## 7. Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures and fittings	Office equipment	Computer Equipment	Total
	€	€	€	€
<b>Cost</b>				
At 1 January 2025	27,154	9,939	47,371	84,464
Additions	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2025	27,154	9,939	47,371	84,464
<b>Accumulated depreciation</b>				
At 1 January 2025	(6,310)	(9,939)	(47,371)	(63,620)
Charge for the year	(5,956)	-	-	(5,956)
At 31 December 2025	(12,266)	(9,939)	(47,371)	(69,576)
<b>Carrying amount</b>				
At 31 December 2025	14,888	-	-	14,888
At 31 December 2024	20,844	-	-	20,844

## 8. Debtors

	2025	2024
	€	€
Membership receivable	12,080	11,820
Prepayments	29,522	31,693
Accrued income	113,112	40,138
Other Debtors	-	470
	154,714	84,121

## 9. Creditors

Amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	€	€
Trade creditors	34,530	32,099
Deferred income	19,251	111,907
Accruals	42,440	22,932
Tax and social insurance	25,849	30,676
Other creditors	17,613	22,927
	139,683	220,541

## 9. Creditors (Continued)

Trade creditors, accruals and bank overdraft are payable at various dates in the subsequent year in accordance with the suppliers' usual terms and conditions.

Tax and social insurance are repayable at various dates over the coming months in accordance with the applicable statutory provisions.

Other creditors are payables to other creditors and pension control account.

Deferred income comprises grants received in advance in which terms and conditions have not yet been met.

Movements in deferred income are as follow:

	2025	2024
	€	€
At 1 January	111,907	246,828
Deferred during the year	19,251	111,907
Credited to the income from charitable activities in the Statement of Financial Activities	(111,907)	(246,828)
At 31 December	19,251	111,907

## 10. Movements in Funds

### Current Year

	Balance at the beginning of year	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at end of year
	€	€	€	€	€
<b>Restricted funds</b>					
Charitable activities	22,980	1,959,011	(1,976,011)	12,754	18,734
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	341,262	48,071	(35,204)	(12,754)	341,375
<b>Total funds</b>	364,242	2,007,082	(2,011,215)	-	360,109

### Prior Year

	Balance at the beginning of year	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at end of year
	€	€	€	€	€
<b>Restricted funds</b>					
Charitable activities	58,728	1,895,921	(1,931,669)	-	22,980
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	330,962	33,920	(23,620)	-	341,262
<b>Total funds</b>	389,690	1,929,841	(1,955,289)	-	364,242

## 10. Movements in Funds (Continued)

	Balance at beginning of year	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at end of year
	€	€	€		
<b>Projects / activities</b>					
SOLAS Core Grant	(992)	1,306,204	(1,307,069)	1,857	-
SOLAS Learner Forum (NFLF) Grant	(897)	344,460	(345,053)	1,490	-
Erasmus+ European Agenda for Adult Learning 2024-2025	-	160,689	(161,750)	1,061	-
Erasmus+ ENHANCE KA2	-	50,706	(50,706)	-	-
Department for the Economy - Alliance for Lifelong Learning	-	32,400	(31,802)	-	<b>598</b>
Just4All	-	29,807	(29,807)	-	-
GSD KA2	(2,776)	15,206	(15,206)	2,776	-
Erasmus+ VOLT Voice of the Learner	-	10,000	(10,000)	-	-
IHREC Human Rights and Equality Grant	-	9,747	(8,170)	-	<b>1,577</b>
Léargas Erasmus+ KA1 ESC	-	4,615	(4,065)	-	<b>550</b>
Learning and Work Institute Wales	-	2,341	(2,341)	-	-
Erasmus+ Voices	-	292	(292)	-	-
ToSwitch – Erasmus + KA2	456	-	-	-	<b>456</b>
NEAAL 2022/23	(2,536)	-	-	2,536	-
BEEP	(1,750)	-	-	1,750	-
Erasmus+ Partner Up	15,922	(7,456)	(9,750)	1,284	-
Other Restricted Funds	15,553	-	-	-	<b>15,553</b>
<b>Total Restricted Funds</b>	<b>22,980</b>	<b>1,959,011</b>	<b>(1,976,011)</b>	<b>12,754</b>	<b>18,734</b>
<b>Total Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>341,262</b>	<b>48,071</b>	<b>(35,204)</b>	<b>(12,754)</b>	<b>341,375</b>
<b>Total Fund</b>	<b>364,242</b>	<b>2,007,082</b>	<b>(2,011,215)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>360,109</b>

### Restricted funds

Restricted funds are attributable to activities/projects that have specific conditions set out in their funding grant. These are expected to be completed in the subsequent years.

## 10. Movements in Funds (Continued)

### Unrestricted funds

Unrestricted funds are resources that a charity can use at its own discretion, in-line with their Internal Controls, financial management and charitable objectives. Membership fees in AONTAS, for example, are a type of unrestricted funding.

### Transfers

These are transfers from unrestricted funds to support deficits on individual programmes for restricted funds.

## 11. Analysis of Net Assets Between Funds

### Current year

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds
	€	€	€
Fixed Assets	14,888	-	14,888
Debtors	41,602	113,112	154,714
Cash at bank and in hand	287,363	42,827	330,190
Creditors	(2,478)	(137,205)	(139,683)
	<b>341,375</b>	<b>18,734</b>	<b>360,109</b>

### Prior year

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds
	€	€	€
Fixed Assets	20,844	-	20,844
Debtors	11,820	72,301	84,121
Cash at bank and in hand	324,926	154,892	479,818
Creditors	(16,328)	(204,213)	(220,541)
	<b>341,262</b>	<b>22,980</b>	<b>364,242</b>

## 12. Members' Liability

The Charity is limited by guarantee not having a share capital. The liability of the members is limited.

Every member of the Charity undertakes to contribute to the assets of the Charity in the event of its being wound up while they are members, or within one year thereafter, for the payments of the debts and liabilities of the Charity 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 €1.00.

## 13. Financial Instruments

	2025	2024
	€	€
<b>Carrying amount of financial assets</b>		
Financial assets measured at amortised cost		
Debtors (excluding prepayments and other debtors)	12,080	11,820
Cash at bank	330,190	479,818
	<b>342,270</b>	<b>491,638</b>
<b>Carrying amount of financial liabilities</b>		
Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost		
Creditors (excluding a deferred income and tax and social insurance)	94,583	77,958

## 14. Operating Lease Commitment

The Charity has a lease of twenty-five years which commenced in August 2003 relating to its business premises at 2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, D06 E0H1, Ranelagh, Dublin. Rent expense recognised in 2025 amounted to €82,400 plus the €11,667 service charges (2024: €80,958 plus €11,508 service charge).

The total future minimum lease payments to be paid under non-cancellable operating leases as at 31 December are as follows:

	2025	2024
	€	€
Within one year	77,735	80,958
After one year but no more than five years	22,138	99,873
More than five years	-	-
	<b>99,873</b>	<b>180,831</b>

## ***15. Related Party Transactions***

The related parties of the Charity are considered to be the directors, their close family members and entities which they control or in which they have a significant interest as well as members of the Charity.

### ***Transactions with Key Management Personnel***

Other than as set out at Note 5, there were no other transactions with key management personnel during the current or previous financial year.

## ***16. Post Balance Sheet Events***

There have been no significant events affecting the Charity since the balance sheet date.

## ***17. Approval of Financial Statements***

The Board of Directors approved these financial statements for issue on the **21<sup>st</sup> April 2026**.





**Contact us:**

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