



# Looking after health, safety and welfare at work



**Clocking In to Clocking Out**  
**Improving workplace basic education**

*Published by:*

**FÁS**

Skills for Work  
Services to Business  
Telephone: (01) 607 0500

Webpage: [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie)  
e-mail: [info@fas.ie](mailto:info@fas.ie)

**National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)**

76 Lower Gardiner Street  
Dublin 1  
Telephone: (01) 855 4332  
Fax: (01) 8555475  
Webpage: [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)  
e-mail: [literacy@nala.ie](mailto:literacy@nala.ie)

*Produced by:*

DV Fulfilment, Print & Graphics Solutions

Copyright © 2008 National Adult Literacy Agency and FÁS

**ISBN: 1-871737-82-6**

## **Contents**

<b>Vocabulary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Why is health and safety at work important?</b>	<b>3</b>
Try it out	4
Extension activities	5
<b>What are the dangers at work?</b>	<b>6</b>
Try it out	7
Extension activities	8
<b>What are the effects of accidents at work?</b>	<b>9</b>
Try it out	10
Extension activities	11
<b>How can I make a difference?</b>	<b>12</b>
Try it out	13
Extension activities	14
<b>What is the Health and Safety Authority?</b>	<b>15</b>
Try it out	16
Extension activities	17
<b>What is the law on health, safety and welfare at work?</b>	<b>18</b>
Try it out	19
Extension activities	20
<b>What is a safety statement?</b>	<b>21</b>
Try it out	22
Extension activities	23
<b>What is a safety representative?</b>	<b>24</b>
Try it out	25
Extension activities	26

## ***Vocabulary***

**Accident**

**Asthma**

**Attitude**

**Chemical**

**Clarification**

**Competent**

**Comply**

**Consult**

**Control**

**Dermatitis**

**Fatal**

**Hazard**

**Injury**

**Legislation**

**Limb**

**Manual handling**

**Mental health**

**Moral**

**National**

**Occupational**

**Penalty**

**Personal protective equipment  
(PPE)**

**Physical health**

**Practices**

**Procedure**

**Productive**

**Regulations**

**Revised**

**Risk**

**Safeguard**

**Safety audit**

**Safety officer**

**Safety representative**

**Safety statement**

**Sector**

**Symbols**

**User-friendly**

**Welfare**

## ***Why is health and safety at work important?***

People spend a lot of time at work. Health, safety and **welfare** should be a high priority for everyone in the workplace. Your job should not have a negative effect on your health or safety. However, many accidents, illnesses and deaths occur in the workplace every year. Many of these can be prevented.

It is important that employees and employers work safely to protect their own health and the health of their fellow employees.

There are many good reasons to look after health and safety at work.

### **Moral reasons**

Employers and employees have a **moral** duty to look after health, safety and welfare at work. It is right to promote good health and safe work **practices**. Nobody should suffer pain or hardship when it is preventable.

### **Legal reasons**

Both employers and employees have responsibilities under workplace health and safety legislation. The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) inspects workplaces to make sure that all companies keep to the law. Companies face penalties for ignoring health and safety laws.

### **Economic reasons**

Accidents and ill health can cost a business a lot of money. Companies that look after health and safety can be more **productive** because fewer employees are absent through illness and injury. Employees will feel better about their work when they know that their employer cares about their safety and welfare. This also contributes to productivity.

## Try it out

### True or false?

Read these pairs of sentences. Only one is true. Tick the one that is true.

1. a. Health and safety should be a high priority for everyone at work.   
b. Health and safety should be a high priority for employers only.
2. a. 'Moral' means something is good and right.   
b. 'Moral' means something is preventable.
3. a. There is no penalty for companies who break health and safety laws.   
b. If a company breaks health and safety laws, it faces penalties.
4. a. Looking after health and safety is good for business.   
b. Looking after health and safety costs too much money.

### Spelling

#### Words with **y** at the end

Look in the information sheet to help you complete these words.

1. health and s a f e t **y**
2. high p \_ i \_ r \_ \_ **y**
3. m \_ \_ **y** accidents
4. e \_ e \_ **y** year
5. work s \_ f \_ l **y**

Be careful:  
Money has **ey**  
at the end.

## Extension activities



### Writing

Every **sector** has different health and safety concerns. For example, some sectors involve a lot of manual handling. Others use dangerous **chemicals**. Write an article about what you believe are the major health and safety issues in your sector.



### At home

We are becoming very aware of health and safety at work but often forget about our homes. Do a **safety audit** of your home and see how safe it is. We often know about the hazards in our homes, but do our visitors know? Are the paths even, or are they a hazard to an elderly person? Where do you store household chemicals? Are they within reach of small children? What other hidden hazards can you find in your home?



### Reading

Newspapers use both facts and opinions. It is often difficult to know what is fact and what is opinion. Read a newspaper article about a work accident. What is the style of writing? Highlight when you come across a fact or an opinion about the accident.



### Design

Design a poster with some health and safety information for your workplace. *The Safe and Well* workbook (NALA) has information on using colour codes for signs.



### Talk about

Have you ever had an accident at work or do you know someone who has? Talk about the accident. How did it happen? Could it have been prevented? Have any changes been made to stop it happening again?



### At work

Smoking was banned from workplaces in 2004. Do you think this makes the workplace healthier? Why or why not?

## ***What are the dangers at work?***

### **Hazards, risks and controls**

A **hazard** is something that can potentially harm, damage or injure people, property or the environment. For example, a hole in the carpet is a hazard because you could trip on it and be injured. The hole is a high **risk** if a lot of people walk up and down that piece of carpet everyday. However, if the hole is in a part of the building that nobody uses anymore, then it presents a low risk or maybe even no risk at all. **Controls** are measures that should be put in place to remove or minimize the risk.



### **Controlling hazards**

1. Identify the hazard: a hole in the carpet.
2. Assess what kind of risk it poses: high — it is in a busy part of the shop.
3. Control the hazard: tape carefully over the hole or fit a new carpet.

Slips, trips and falls are the most common cause of accidents at work. Here are some other examples of **occupational** hazards. All of these hazards need to be controlled.

- Lifting weights is a hazard because you can injure your back.
- Machinery is a hazard at work because you can lose control of it.
- Working at height can be dangerous because falls can be very serious.
- Wood dust and some spray paints can cause occupational **asthma**.
- Chemicals in some products can cause skin problems such as **dermatitis**.
- High noise levels can cause hearing loss in people who work in sectors such as construction, in factories or in the entertainment industry.

## Try it out

### Words

Explain these terms in your own words. Write sentences in your notebook.

1. hazard
2. risk
3. control
4. identify
5. assess

Put the words in the box in the correct places.

cause    occupational    injure    dangerous    hazard    problems

1. Lifting weights is a hazard because you can ..... your back.
2. Machinery is a ..... at work because you can lose control of it.
3. Working at height can be ..... because falls can be very serious.
4. Wood dust and some types of spray paint can cause .....  
asthma.
5. Chemicals in certain products can cause skin ..... such as  
dermatitis.
6. High noise levels can ..... hearing loss in people who work in  
sectors such as construction, in factories or in the entertainment industry.

## Extension activities



### Writing

The law states that workers must be protected from dangers in the workplace. Write a list of the potential hazards in your workplace and the safeguards to put in place.



### Using computers

What safety **procedures** do you need to follow when using a computer? Why are they important? Type them up.



### Using numbers

Write a list of different sectors, for example fishing or construction. Consider how dangerous they are (think of injury, death or illness). Then rank them according to their level of danger.



### At home

There are advertisements on television promoting safe driving. Do you think they are effective? Why or why not? How would you promote safe driving?

### Talk about

Slips, trips and falls are the most common cause of accidents. What is the difference between them? What can cause them? Is your workplace or your home a dangerous place for slips, trips and falls? How can you control these hazards?



Night workers and shift workers experience different risks to daytime workers. What are they? What can they do to control the risks involved in this kind of work? Are there advantages as well as disadvantages to this kind of work?

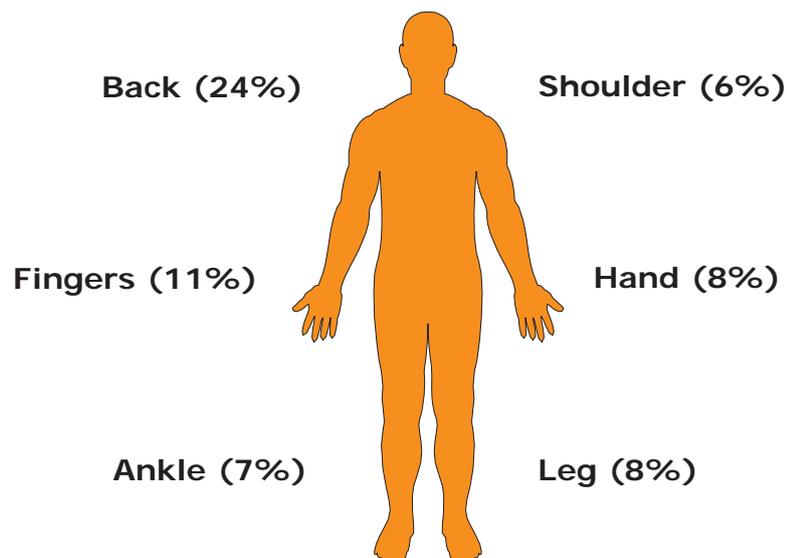
## What are the effects of accidents at work?

An **accident** is an unplanned, unwanted event that causes harm, damage or injury to people or property. An accident is something that occurs unintentionally. Most workplace **injuries** result from:

- accidents in **manual handling**, and
- slips, trips and falls.

### Injuries

This diagram shows the body parts that were most injured in workplace accidents in 2006. *(This information is from Summary of Injury, Illness and Fatality Statistics 2005-2006: Health and Safety Authority).*



### Consequences

Some injuries have long-term health, economic and social consequences. You may have to cope with disability and pain. Your income may go down. You may not be able to enjoy sport or other hobby activities in the same way.

## Try it out

### Answer these questions.

Use the information in the diagram to answer these questions.

1. What was the percentage of injuries to the hands?

.....

2. What body parts on the diagram suffered the fewest injuries?

.....

3. What was the total percentage of accidents to the **limbs**?

.....

4. What body part was injured in almost a quarter of all accidents?

.....

5. What body parts were injured more in the workplace – upper or lower limbs?

.....

### Answer these questions.

**Write your answers in your notebook.**

1. What are the most common causes of injuries in the workplace?
2. What might be a long-term economic consequence of a workplace injury?
3. How could a workplace ankle injury affect your leisure activities? Give an example.

## Extension activities

### Reading



The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) website has statistics on workplace non-fatal injuries. Go to the website at [www.hsa.ie/eng/Statistics/](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Statistics/) Can you find the figures for your industry? How safe is your industry compared to others?

### Using numbers



The statistics section of the HSA website shows a graph on the **fatal** accident rate in the workplace in recent years. Go to the website at [www.hsa.ie/eng/Statistics/](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Statistics/) Can you interpret the graph? What kind of information can you understand from it?

### Writing



What should you do if there is an accident at your workplace? Write instructions for employees to follow if there is a particular kind of accident. Then check your ideas with the safety officer at work.

### Talk about



Look at the diagram showing the parts of the body that were injured. Now think about the job you do. Could you still work with any of these injuries? Discuss how each injury could affect your work.

### Find out



Accidents happen in the home as well, particularly with young children. Find statistics for home accidents involving children and the most common type of accident.

What is first aid? Find out about first aid courses in your area. What do they cover? Would it be useful for you to attend one for work or leisure?

## ***How can I make a difference?***

As an employee, you can and should make a difference to the health, safety and welfare of your workplace. Take the right **attitude**: make health and safety a priority. Here are some pointers in the right direction.

### **Know what to do**

Know the responsibilities of your job. Know the **safety statement**. Then you will know what you have to do. Be confident about your responsibilities. If you are not sure, ask the safety officer.

### **Know how to do it**

Attend workplace training. Then you will know you are **competent** and you can carry out your responsibilities. If you think you need more training, ask for it.

### **Look out for yourself**

1. Wear your **personal protective equipment (PPE)** and clothing if your job needs it.
2. Use safety equipment properly.
3. Know the rules for manual handling.

### **Look out for others**

Co-operate with your employer and with your colleagues.

Make suggestions for improvements when you get the opportunity.

Do not take chances. Report something if it does not seem right to you.

We all need to look out for our workmates and ourselves. If we do not report small hazards or accidents, nothing will be done about them. Remember, something that seems unimportant could result in:

- serious injury,
- ill health, or
- death.

## Try it out

### Answer these questions

Write your answers in your notebook.

1. What attitude does the information sheet recommend?
2. How can you be confident about your health and safety responsibilities at work?
3. How can you be competent to carry out your responsibilities?

### Spelling

For words ending in **ity**, write **ities** for the plural.

#### Singular

responsibility

priority

opportunity

activity

ability

fatality

#### Plural

responsibilities

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Think of other **ity** words.

Put the words into sentences. Write them in your notebook.

## Extension activities



### Listening

Describe your job to someone else. Include any health and safety issues you may have. Let them think of solutions to help you work better and write them down. Write down your own suggestions too. When you have finished, compare them. Do they have any helpful suggestions? If they do, are you surprised that someone who does not do your job came up with a possible solution? What made them think of this solution? Can you see how discussing issues can provide valuable solutions?



### At work

What personal protective equipment or clothing do you need to wear at work? What safety equipment do you need to operate? How do you find wearing or using them? Are there any other safeguards you need to take in your job?



### Using computers

Make a checklist of the safeguards you need to take every day in your job.



### Reading

For more information on employees' responsibilities, the Health and Safety Authority has a series of posters for employees called Simple Safety. Go to the website at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)



### Talk about

How do you feel about reporting things that do not seem right? Do you feel confident enough to say something if you are not sure about it? How could you phrase your concern about a potential hazard when you are not certain about it?



### Find out

What health and safety training have you received at work? Do you feel confident about your responsibilities? What areas would you like to receive more training in? Search the internet or talk to colleagues and find out what training is available for your job. Which would you prefer, on the job training or an external training course?

## ***What is the Health and Safety Authority?***

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is the **national** body in Ireland responsible for securing health and safety at work. The HSA is funded by the state and reports to the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The HSA was set up under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989.



Health and safety at work is the responsibility of everybody, so the HSA talks at length with employees and their organisations as well as with employers and the self-employed. It also consults with various groups who focus on specific hazards and occupations.

### **The Health and Safety Authority:**

- promotes good standards of health and safety at work;
- inspects workplaces and makes sure they are following health and safety laws;
- investigates certain serious accidents, causes of ill health and complaints;
- carries out and funds research into health and safety at work;
- publishes codes of practice, guidance and information;
- provides an information service during office hours; and
- develops new laws and standards on health and safety at work.

## Try it out

Answer these questions.

Write your answers in your notebook.

1. What is the Health and Safety Authority?
2. Who does it report to?
3. When was it set up?
4. List three things it does.
5. Write down one service it provides.

## Words

Fill in the missing words with a word from the box.

safety	consults	hazards	employees
--------	----------	---------	-----------

Health and ..... at work is the responsibility of everybody, so the HSA talks at length with ..... and their organisations as well as with employers. It also ..... with groups that focus on specific ..... and occupations.

## Extension activities



### Computer skills

The HSA website address is [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) . Go to the website and browse around to find information for your sector.



### Reading

The HSA website has FAQs, or frequently asked questions, on workplace bullying. As a group, try to answer some of these questions. Then read the information provided by the HSA to see what you can learn.



### Find out

Find out the contact details of the HSA. What different ways can you contact the HSA to report an accident or to get more information?



### Design

Look at the logo of the HSA and how it represents the organisation. Does your company have a logo? Make some copies of familiar logos and look at the use of colour, shape and letters. Now design a new logo for your workplace or for yourself.



### Talk about

Is there a need for an organisation like the HSA? If so, why?



### Writing

When an accident happens in the workplace, the employer must complete an accident report form and send it to the HSA. The report takes its information from people who have seen the accident. Have you seen or witnessed an accident in your workplace? Write a report on the accident or fill in an accident report form. Accident report forms are explained in the workbook *Safe and Well (NALA)* in Module 5.

## ***What is the law on health, safety and welfare at work?***

Health, safety and welfare is governed by the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005). In 2007, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Applications) Regulations were passed. These **regulations** deal further with some specific areas and work issues. The regulations apply to all workplaces. They are written in a **user-friendly** way. They are designed to help both employers and employees to understand and keep to the necessary health and safety requirements.

One helpful regulation requires that new safety signs do not include words. Safety signs can only contain **symbols**. People who do not speak the language well and people with reading difficulties benefit from this **legislation**.

Under the legislation, both employers and employees have responsibilities.

### **What responsibilities does an employer have?**

As much as possible, the employer must provide a safe place of work and safe ways of working. To manage health and safety, the employer must:

- consult with workers;
- have a safety statement; and
- protect employees from risks to their **mental** or **physical** health.

### **What responsibilities does an employee have?**

The employee must not do anything to put themselves or others at risk. They must:

- **comply** with relevant health and safety laws;
- co-operate with their employer; and
- look out for one another.

### **What if employers and employees do not meet their responsibilities?**

The HSA inspects workplaces. There are fines and **penalties** for employers who ignore, or allow their employees to ignore, the law.

## Try it out

### True or false

Read the sentence and tick T for true or F for false.

Check with the information sheet if you need to.

	True	False
1. The 2007 Regulations apply to some workplaces only.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The 2007 Regulations are designed to be easier to follow.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. After 2007 new safety signs cannot have words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. By law only employers are responsible for health and safety at work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. An employee's mental health is protected under the legislation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Safety statements are voluntary for employers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Employers can be fined if they ignore the legislation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Employees can be fined if they ignore the legislation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The HSA carries out inspections of workplaces.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Words

In your own words, explain these terms.

Physical health

.....

Mental health

.....

## Extension activities



### Find out

Health and safety legislation includes Acts, orders, regulations and codes of practice. What is the difference between them? Give examples of each.



### Talk about

What do you think is the purpose of legislation? Is it prevention or punishment? Which of these is the strongest motivator when it comes to health and safety in the workplace?

What kind of penalties should there be for health and safety breaches? What does it depend on? Can you find out what the penalties are?



### Writing

Think of your own experience. How effective is the law on health and safety in the workplace? Is it respected, and by whom? Discuss and then write about how to enforce it.



### Design

Design a poster to make employees in your workplace aware of their health and safety responsibilities. Decide first what your main message will be, then choose a design to get the message across.



### At work

Look at the safety signs in your workplace. Are they easy to recognise and understand? Do they have words? Do the words help or not? How will new symbols replace the words?

## ***What is a safety statement?***

A **safety statement** is a written programme to **safeguard**:

- the safety and health of employees while they work; and
- the safety and health of other people who might be at the workplace, including customers, visitors and members of the public.

The safety statement should state how the employer will ensure people's safety and health. It should also state the resources necessary to maintain safety and health standards. It should be updated regularly.

The safety statement must be specific to a workplace. Different workplaces have different risks. For example, workplaces near water have risks of drowning. Workplaces with overhead electrical wires have risks of electrocution.

The safety statement should influence all work activities, including:

- the selection of competent people, equipment and materials;
- the way work is done; and
- how goods and services are designed and provided.

## ***What should be in a safety statement?***

The safety statement must state:

- the hazards and risks in the workplace and the safeguards to be taken;
- the duties of employees in relation to health and safety;
- the names and job titles of everyone who is responsible for a health and safety task; and
- the procedures for appointing a safety representative and a safety committee if one is needed.

The safety statement should also have emergency plans and show the procedures to follow if there is a serious danger or an emergency. It must show all the emergency routes clearly.

## Try it out

### Similar but different

What is the difference between these pairs of words?

Plans and procedures

.....  
.....

Goods and services

.....  
.....

Risks and safeguards

.....  
.....

Resources and equipment

.....  
.....

### Answer these questions.

Write your answers in your notebook.

1. Whose safety is the safety statement for?
2. What sort of activities does the safety statement cover?
3. List four things that should be in a safety statement.

## Extension activities

### Reading



Get a copy of your workplace safety statement and read through it carefully. Underline the main points. In particular, take note of any sections that apply to you and the work you do.

A safety statement should be **revised** regularly. Do you have any suggestions for additions to yours?



### Writing

In your own words, write what a safety statement is and what one for your workplace should include.



### At home

Watch the opening sequence of the television cartoon The Simpsons. What health, safety and welfare advice has been ignored?



### Design

Design your own risk assessment for the use of a power tool or piece of kitchen equipment.

### Talk about



Talk about the language used in your workplace safety statement. It should be easy to understand by the people it affects. Do you find any of the language difficult? Can you simplify it without changing the meaning?



### Find out

Who writes the safety statement for your workplace? Where can you get more information or professional advice on writing safety statements?

## ***What is a safety representative?***

The **safety representative** is elected by the employees to be their voice to management about health, safety or welfare in their workplace. The main function is to **consult** with the employer on health, safety and welfare.

To help the safety representative carry out their functions, the employer should provide training. The employer must also provide information on health and safety issues about that workplace.

The safety representative has the right to:

- make representations to the employer on safety, health and welfare at the place of work;
- contact the HSA inspector about a workplace visit and accompany them; and
- make contact with and receive advice from the HSA.

## ***What is a safety officer?***

The safety officer is chosen by the employer to monitor and manage safety, health and welfare in an organisation. They make sure the organisation meets its legal responsibilities.

The safety officer:

- reviews the safety statement regularly;
- makes sure that workplace **safety audits** take place;
- arranges health and safety training for employees;
- increases safety awareness by holding regular staff and management briefings;
- organises and records fire drills;
- investigates accidents;
- reports all accidents and dangerous occurrences to management;
- consults with the HSA when **clarification** is needed; and
- consults with health and safety consultants on behalf of the company.

## Try it out

### Who am I?

Read these statements. Do they describe the safety officer or the safety representative?

 <p><i>I review the safety statement.</i></p>	 <p><i>I organise the company fire drills.</i></p>
 <p><i>My employer pays for my training.</i></p>	 <p><i>I am elected by the employees.</i></p>
 <p><i>I can make representations to the company on behalf of the employees.</i></p>	 <p><i>I monitor health and safety for the company.</i></p>
 <p><i>I am appointed by the employer.</i></p>	 <p><i>I am the voice of the employees.</i></p>

## Extension activities



### At work

Do you know the fire safety procedures in your workplace? When did you last have a fire drill? If you do not know, you could speak to your safety officer.



### Design

Draw a plan of your workplace. Include all emergency exits, fire doors and fire fighting equipment.



### Find out

Different types of fires need to be treated differently. There are different fire extinguishers to fight different fires. Find out the best way to extinguish an electrical fire, a paper fire, a fat fire, a chemical fire and any others that are hazards where you work or live. The Safe and Well workbook (NALA) has information on dealing with fires.



### Computer skills

Imagine that you are the company safety representative. Create a blank accident report form on your computer and save it.



### Writing

When you enter a place such as a cinema, restaurant or sports complex, you can usually see a map near the entrance showing the fire exits. Take a trip and look for this information and the emergency exit signs as though you are a safety officer. Write a report on how accessible the fire exits are to the general public.



### Talk about

Carry out a role play about a hazard at work. How do you tell the safety representative about the hazard? How does the safety representative tell the safety officer and management about the hazard?







**FÁS -Services to Business**  
27-33 Upper Baggot Street, Dublin 4, Ireland  
Tel:(01) 607 0500 Fax: (01) 607 0608  
email: [info@fas.ie](mailto:info@fas.ie)  
Website: [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie)

**National Adult Literacy Agency**  
76 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin 1, Ireland  
Tel:(01) 855 4332 Fax: (01) 855 5475  
email: [literacy@nala.ie](mailto:literacy@nala.ie)  
Website: [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)  
[www.literacy.ie](http://www.literacy.ie)



Ireland's Eu Structural Funds  
Programmes 2007-2013  
Co-Funded by the Irish Government  
and the European Union



*Human Capital Investment  
Operational Programme  
2007-2013  
Investing in Your Future*

*FÁS activities are funded  
by the Irish Government  
and the European  
Social Fund.*



**NALA**

**National Adult Literacy Agency**  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh