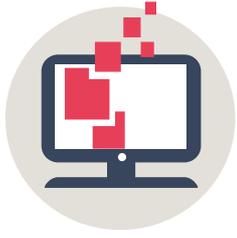


Literacy Matters

Keeping you up to date with literacy news in Ireland and informing you of the work NALA is doing



Take the first step

This year's national awareness campaign encouraged people to return to education to improve their literacy skills.

Also:

- Using literacy to promote positive mental health in Tipperary
- Empowering students using digital literacy
- A family literacy project to conquer boredom

Contents

Welcome	3
'Take the first step' awareness campaign	4
Taking the ladder to the top	8
A new world for student Chris Carthy	10
Food for thought in Clonmel	12
The changing nature of ESOL teaching	14
New financial literacy and numeracy resources	15
What's in a word? The power of plain English	16
Creating opportunity for learners	18
Empowering adult learners through digital literacy	20
How we can do better	22
YouTube and our numeracy tutor videos	23
Putting boredom in its place	24
Working together with students	26
Other news	28
Win funding for a numeracy project	30
In memory of Janet Flynn	31
Dates for your diary	32

Welcome

Welcome to our latest edition of Literacy Matters.

There has been a lot going on in the world of literacy and adult education over the last six months. In September, NALA managed a new awareness campaign on behalf of SOLAS. The campaign, which was launched on International Literacy Day and in partnership with ETBI, included national radio advertising, video and digital advertising on social media, posters and a great deal of public relations activity featuring four inspirational adult learners. The campaign also received the support of Fair City actor Bryan Murray, writer Patricia Scanlan and jockey Johnny Murtagh. The awareness campaign, which you can read about on page four, was a key action in the Further Education and Training Strategy and a wide range of stakeholders worked together to ensure its success.

There is so much groundbreaking work being carried out all over the country by people involved in adult education and we are delighted to be able to shine a light on this work. On page 11, Fergus Dolan looks at the crucial role ESOL tutors play in helping immigrants integrate and take part fully in civil society. On page 12, Mary Roche Cleary, from Tipperary ETB, shows how a healthy eating project gave students in Clonmel an opportunity to use their literacy skills to explore the links between food and positive mental health.

On page 18, Mara Kilbride, from the National Learning Network in Navan, and tutor Sandra Sheridan, talk about how they use online learning options to enhance their students' skills. The fascinating potential of digital learning is also explored in an interview with Emma Tobin Coles from Waterford Wexford ETB, as she talks about the impact a new blogging project in Waterford is having in developing students' online literacy skills.

Elsewhere, we show how we put boredom in its place by teaming up with EirGrid on an exciting family literacy project. There's also a great competition mentioned at the end of this article so be sure to get your entries in as soon as you can!

We hope you enjoy this issue of Literacy Matters and we would be delighted to hear from you if you have a story that you would like to share in the next edition. To get in touch just send an email to media@nala.ie.

Until next time, we hope you have a lovely Christmas and a Happy New Year.

From all the team at NALA





Johnny Murtagh and Patricia Scanlan (front) with Chris Carthy and Gerardine Dunphy at the launch of the campaign.

Take the first step

This year's national awareness campaign encouraged people to return to education to improve their literacy and numeracy skills for everyday life.

In September, jockey Johnny Murtagh, writer Patricia Scanlan and actor Bryan Murray all joined forces to lend their support to a new SOLAS awareness campaign called 'Take the first step'.

The campaign, which was launched on International Literacy Day on 8 September and ran until 22 September, included

national radio advertising, video and digital advertising on social media, posters and a great deal of public relations activity.

The power of adult education is something that Johnny Murtagh is a firm believer in. "It's a subject that's very close to my heart because I can identify with people who have problems reading or writing. I left

“There’s loads of help out there now and I always try to encourage people to return to education whenever I can,”

Johnny Murtagh.

school early and it’s not easy when you’re trying to pretend that there isn’t a problem,” he said.

“But there’s loads of help out there now and I always try to encourage people to return to education whenever I can,” he said.

Research and planning

Before embarking on the development of the awareness campaign, NALA did extensive research with the target audience.

“We spoke to early school leavers, long-term unemployed people, parents of school-aged children and older people about their perceptions and attitudes towards education. We wanted to get a deeper understanding of what would work for them in a campaign,” said Clare McNally, communications manager, NALA.

“The research showed that many people regretted having left school early and had very different motivations for wanting to return to education. This included: wanting to improve basic skills to get a qualification or get a job; to support children with homework and also personal reasons such as improved self-esteem and confidence. Therefore, we knew that we needed to develop a campaign that would speak to different people. We also knew from our work with students that there was an opportunity to flip the emotion of regret into one of empowerment by saying it’s

never too late to learn and that the benefits are immense,” says Clare.

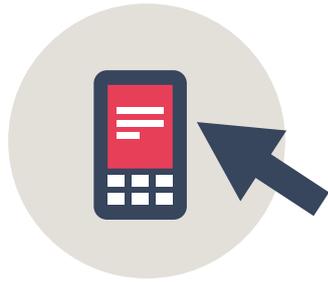
The research also showed that digital literacy was likely to prompt interest, and that current awareness of courses was at a very general level so a new campaign needed to be complemented by clear direction on how to find a course. And while advertising on TV and Radio remained important, Facebook came out as the best way to reach almost all groups.

“The people we spoke to in our research said that they would relate best to real people instead of actors or celebrities so we knew that students sharing their stories would be the most effective at motivating others, in a similar position, to improve their basic skills,” says Clare.

Over the summer, NALA worked with an advertising agency to develop a campaign around real people sharing their stories on radio, video, outdoor posters and PR.

The end result was a campaign that profiled four amazing individuals who had addressed their literacy difficulties and reaped the rewards of returning to education.

The four ETB students profiled were: Eamon Delaney, aged 38, from Kilkenny; Chris Carthy, aged 53, from Sligo; Gerardine Dunphy, aged 52, from Meath; and Tony Moloney, aged 59, from Cork. Like thousands of people all over Ireland,



these students left school early and had struggled with literacy and numeracy difficulties throughout their lives.

The campaign focused on the benefits of returning to further education, as well as demonstrating that this issue is not confined to any particular demographic segment.

How it worked

For those who have difficulties reading or writing, the stigma attached can prove daunting and discouraging. The awareness campaign aimed to remove this stigma by focusing on the benefits of returning to further education, and encouraged those interested in improving their basic skills to Freephone 1800 20 20 65, Text LEARN to 50050 or log onto www.takethefirststep.ie.

Once they called or texted, NALA put them in contact with their local ETB Adult Education Centre or told them about other free services that would be able to meet their needs.



When people called the Freephone number they were asked if they found the call helpful and, of the callers who answered the question, 99% said that they did find it helpful. Some callers also said that, while they had been aware of other adult literacy awareness campaigns for years, they never followed up to enquire about getting help. This time, they had the courage to take the first step and make the call.

FET strategy

The awareness campaign, which was managed by NALA on behalf of SOLAS, was a key action in the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019. A wide range of stakeholders were involved in the campaign including ETBI, ETBs, Libraries, Skills for Work, Skillnets, AONTAS, ISME, IBEC, the Department of Education and the Department of Health. An Post also supported the campaign by funding national TV advertising that encouraged adults to take the first step and return to education.



“ When people called the Freephone number they were asked if they found the call helpful and, of the callers who answered the question, 99% said that they did find it helpful.”

Thank you!

The success of the awareness campaign would not have been possible without the help of many people. We would like to say a huge thank you to the students who were profiled in the campaign: Tony Moloney, Chris Carthy, Eamon Delaney and Gerardine Dunphy. We would also like to thank students Donna Murray in Dublin and Majella Lynch in Cavan for the media interviews they did. Thank you also to all the ETBs, ALOs and tutors who supported the campaign, including those who put us in contact with the students:

Mary Roche Cleary, Marie Clancy, Bernadette McKeivitt, Bridie McLaughlin, Cathy Powell, Joyce Gough, Siobhan McEntee, Brid Murphy, Sheila Holland Fox and Alison Jones. Thank you to Maria Riordan, Eithne Donnelly and all the staff in Ringsend Adult Education Service, City of Dublin ETB for allowing us to film and for taking part in the filming at very short notice! And of course a very special thanks to our students, especially our student subcommittee for all their hard work throughout the campaign.

At a glance:

- 2,500 campaign posters were sent to literacy services around the country
- 30,000 promotional leaflets were distributed nationally
- Over 40,000 people watched the online videos of Eamon, Chris, Gerardine and Tony
- NALA provided information to over 450 people about their local ETB adult education service

What freephone callers said:

“ I’ve been wanting to call for the last 10 years but hadn’t the confidence.”

“ It’s so refreshing to be able to text. I can’t believe you responded! I feel so lucky. Thank you so much.”

“ I can’t believe all the help is available for free.”

Taking the ladder to the top



“I couldn’t use computers before but now I’m able to send emails and use apps on my phone.”

Eamon Delaney from Kilkenny was one of the students who featured in the radio and video advertising for the ‘Take the first step’ awareness campaign. Eamon is a student with Tipperary ETB (Killenaule Adult Education Centre) and he jumped at the chance to get involved and share his story.

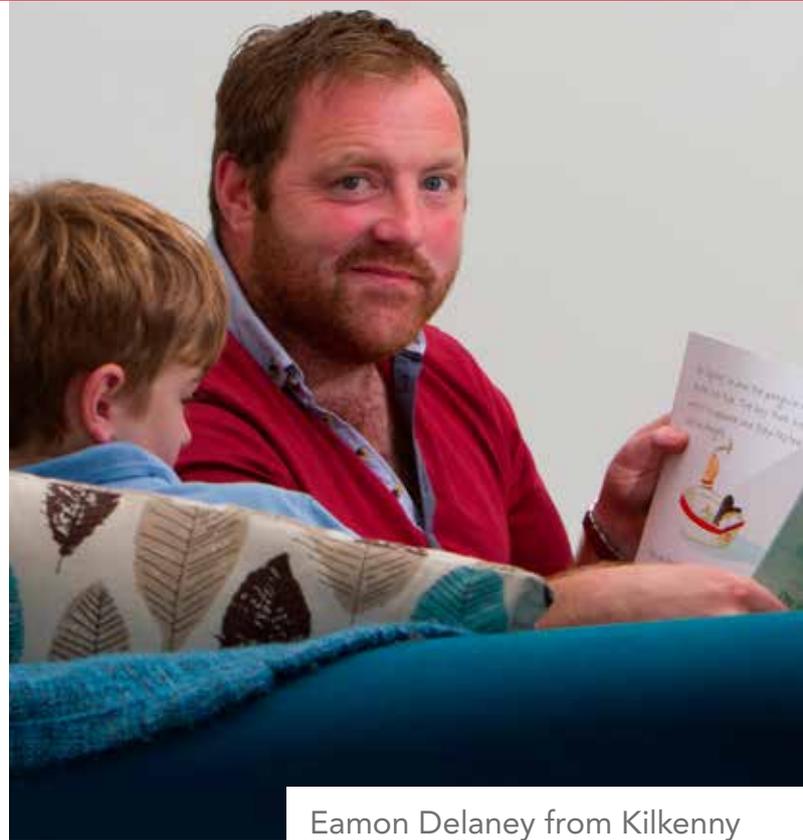
“It was a great experience and it’s fantastic to think that by telling my story I might have given someone else the confidence to go back to education,” says Eamon.

“There are a lot of people out there who are still struggling with literacy difficulties so it feels good to have played a part in reaching out to help them,” he says.

Left school

Although Eamon got on well in school, he left after his junior cert to start working on the family farm. His parents looked after any of the jobs that required reading or writing.

“I did learn some good stuff in school but I never used it and never brought it out of me. I was working on the farm for years after



Eamon Delaney from Kilkenny

school so didn’t use any of the skills I had learned.” he says.

After he got married Eamon started working in Lisheen Mines in Tipperary and got on very well there. However, although there were several opportunities to go for promotion he didn’t put himself forward because of his literacy difficulties.

“It’s a pity because I know I wouldn’t have had any problems with the work itself, I would have been more than able for that. It was just the fear of not being able to do some of the paperwork,” he says.

Return to education

Eamon originally decided to return to adult education over five years ago but it didn’t work out. However, when he found out that Lisheen Mines was going to shut down he decided to return to classes so that he would be able to prepare himself for looking for a new job. He was able to read but he knew he would have to do a lot of work to improve his writing, spelling and computer skills.

Although returning to education wasn't easy, Eamon was determined to stick with it. By that time he had two kids and he knew that before he could help them he would need to help himself.

"At the start I had to get over the shame of it. I was very nervous when I went to the first class but then I met Lillian, the tutor, and she made me feel comfortable. We chatted and I told her what I needed. She understood straight away because they are dealing with that every day. And they know that you are very nervous. After a while I realised that the nerves are a good thing. You have to have them as they drive you on," Eamon says.

Since returning to education, Eamon has completed FETAC level 2 & 3 in computers and he says the classes have been an amazing experience.

"You make a lot of friends and everybody is in the same boat, willing to learn. Sometimes you help somebody in class and that's a great feeling, knowing that you have learned enough to help somebody else. I'm no longer afraid to ask for help with things that I don't understand. I couldn't use computers before but now I'm able to send emails and use apps on my phone."

Forget the fear

Eamon has the following advice for anybody that is considering returning to education:

"Go for it, you've nothing to lose. You come out the other side so much better off and you won't be afraid of it anymore."

As for his own plans, Eamon intends to continue with the classes for another while yet.

"I will stick at them now that I have started them. I feel like I'm just over halfway on the ladder so I want to continue with the classes so that I can learn the techniques to reach the

top. A few years ago I wouldn't have had the confidence to take part in a video sharing my story. But where I am now is such a big jump from where I used to be and I feel like there's nothing that I can't do."

If you haven't seen it you can still watch Eamon's video on www.takethefirststep.ie

Eamon's video on Facebook:

- Was watched over 10,000 times
- Was liked and reacted to over 740 times
- Was shared 90 times
- Received over 50 comments



"Go for it, you've nothing to lose. You come out the other side so much better off and you won't be afraid of it anymore."

A new world



“Everything is so different. It’s like being blind and then being able to see again.”

Sligo woman Chris Carthy was delighted at the opportunity to share her story as part of the ‘Take the first step’ campaign but even she is surprised at how much of a positive impact it’s had.

“People still come up to me and ask if I am the woman in the video. They ask me what it was like going back to education and it’s great being able to encourage them to do the same,” says Chris.

“A woman came up to me recently and she told me that she had problems with reading and writing. She is nervous about going to her first class so I am going to go along with her for support,” she says.

For Chris, going back to education to improve her own reading and writing enabled her to see the world in a whole different way.

“Returning to education has opened up the world, not a world, the world,” says Chris.

“Everything is so different. It’s like being blind and then being able to see again.”

Reading to grandchildren

For years, Chris used to avoid situations where she might have to read or write but now one of her favourite things to do is read to her grandchildren.

“Back when my first grandson was only two years old I used to skip the words I didn’t know in his storybooks but he would be correcting me because he knew from other people reading to him what the right word

should be. But now when I visit I spend most of my time reading to them and they love it.”

Chris came from a large family of fifteen and, like the rest of her brothers and sisters, she left school when she was 13 years old.

“I remember not wanting to leave school, because I had lots of friends but that’s just the way it was back then,” she says.

Chris was a hard worker but her literacy difficulties meant that she avoided going for some jobs that she really wanted.



Chris Carthy’s campaign poster

"I always went for jobs where I wouldn't have to read or write, like doing the dishes somewhere. I didn't go for certain jobs I actually really wanted like waitressing, because I wouldn't have been able to write what people wanted. When I left school I think I just about knew how to write my first name."

It was only after she took early redundancy that Chris decided to return to education.

"Health and safety regulations started to become very important in the job I was in. I wasn't able to understand what the letter X was referring to when it was on some bottles of cleaning liquid and I was worried that I might end up causing damage or hurting somebody by spraying the wrong thing. So I took early redundancy when the opportunity came along and decided to return to education."

In the meantime she saw NALA's ads on the television.

"I said, OK, I will ring that number. So they sent me out all the information and then I thought, well the education centre is only down the road so I will go in and chat to somebody."

Chris was apprehensive before going to her first class but it turned out to be one of the best things she has ever done.

"I was terrified! I was worried that the tutor wouldn't be nice and question why I was there. But I just chatted to her and she said it was very confidential. I did some one-to-one classes for two hours every week for a year."

Now, apart from reading to her grandchildren, one of Chris' favourite things to do is to write letters to people.

"When I left school I would never have dreamed of writing to anybody. Now I actually do write letters, and people think it's the maddest thing. And they say, oh my God, I haven't got a letter in ten years! They really enjoy getting the letters and I really enjoy writing them because, before I returned to education, I thought it was something that I would never be able to do."

Chris attended Sligo Adult Learning and Education Service (ALEC) which is run by Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim ETB.

Chris' video on Facebook:

- Was watched over 10,000 times
- Was liked and reacted to 980 times
- Was shared 200 times
- Received over 70 comments



"Returning to education has opened up the world, not a world, the world."



The team in Clonmel get ready for some exercise before the healthy eating event.

Food for thought

A healthy eating project gave Tipperary students an opportunity to use their literacy skills to explore the links between food and positive mental health.

In October, as part of Positive Mental Health Awareness Week, students at the Tipperary Adult Learning Centre in Clonmel put their new literacy and numeracy skills into practice when they organised an event exploring the relationship between food and mental health.

The 'Healthy eating and minding ourselves' event was the last in a week-long series of activities that took place in the centre to promote positive mental health. For the event, fifteen students in Clonmel came together in two groups to make healthy food for 100 adult students from other towns and services in Tipperary.

Mary Roche Cleary, adult literacy organiser at Tipperary ETB, says that the event was an ideal opportunity for students to use many of the new skills they have learned.

"In the run up to the healthy eating event there was a lot of dialogue and planning with the students and it gave them confidence when their opinions and suggestions were listened to," says Mary.

Mary even got her cousin Richard Kennedy, a fitness coach and former professional footballer with Crystal Palace, involved to help the students with their preparations.

Team effort

"It was a real team effort. The students worked with Richard to come up with a menu. Then they organised ingredients and worked out how much would be needed for 100 people. They were also able to show their organisational skills and take ownership of tasks that they were delegated," she says.

The project also allowed the students to experience working in pairs.

"There were two groups of students involved and they didn't know each other beforehand. Part of the project involved working in pairs with a student from the other group and this really enabled everybody to learn from each other," she says.

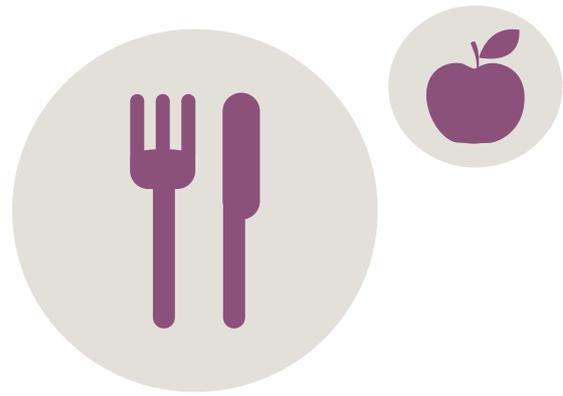
The outcome was a healthy feast that went down very well with everybody who attended the event.

"The students made so much lovely food. There was everything from smoothies and salads to overnight oats and healthy pizza. The students also made posters showing what was on the menu and they even put together signs to say which foods contained allergens and which foods were halal because there were people there from the Muslim community."

There was also an emphasis on the link between exercise and mental health.

"Before the students served up their food they went for a brisk 20 minute walk to clear their heads and prepare themselves for the work ahead," says Mary.

Students from a level 3 communications class in nearby Cahir brought copies of a leaflet they had produced detailing all of the gym and health facilities in South Tipperary. Anybody who attended the healthy eating event could take a copy of this leaflet home with them.



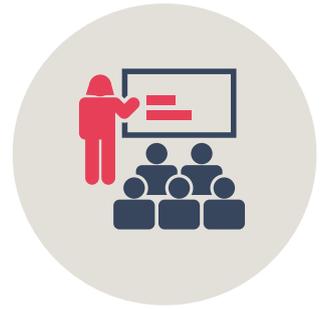
"The students made so much lovely food. There was everything from smoothies and salads to overnight oats and healthy pizza."

Mary says that the feedback from everybody who attended the event was overwhelmingly positive. "The success of the day was all down to the students and the great team of tutors, resource workers and other staff here. It wouldn't have been possible without everybody working together."



The menu detailing the food that the students made.

The changing nature of ESOL teaching



From using the post office to helping people apply for a job, Fergus Dolan looks at the role of tutors who teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

What do ESOL learners who are new to the country generally want from ESOL classes?

Since the needs of people who arrive with little or no English are challenging, ESOL teachers have traditionally concentrated on teaching these groups. As a consequence, ESOL tuition and teachers have a strong tradition of dealing with the first stages of settlement, with the teacher acting in a support role. The students typically learn the vocabulary of the home environment, the family, public transport, going to the doctor, post office and for shopping.

ESOL learners who are new to the country mostly need to develop the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and to develop their language competence so that they can communicate.

Do ESOL learners who have been in the country for some time have different needs to those who have recently arrived?

Yes, very often they do. Some ESOL students might have already moved beyond what is known as the 'survival stage' and need to develop language and literacy skills that will enable them to integrate more fully into society. Tutors need to help ESOL students develop their English so that they can succeed at things like applying for and holding down a job. This could involve preparing students to understand health and safety processes or helping a student to apply for a promotion. Many ESOL students who are beyond the survival stage might also

have children who are in school so tutors might help them to prepare for parent-teacher meetings.

What skills does an ESOL teacher need to ensure they are as supportive as possible?

ESOL teachers could have people from several different cultures in their class so a level of cross-cultural understanding is necessary. The ability to deal sensitively with students' personal circumstances is also hugely important, along with the ability to offer support for people who cannot read and write in their native tongue.

What part can ESOL teaching play in ensuring the success of the Further Education and Training Strategy?

ESOL tutors are key to the success of the strategy as they do really amazing work and often on very limited resources. The strategy aims to ensure the continued delivery of high quality adult education and, to achieve this, more ESOL teaching practices need to be built into teacher training. The FET Strategy also calls for 'sustained funding for programmes which focus on social inclusion'. ESOL programmes are a crucial way of helping immigrants in Ireland integrate and take part fully in civil society.

You can contact Fergus at fdolan@nala.ie.

Visit www.nala.ie/resources and type ESOL in the search bar to see a selection of free and paid-for ESOL resources.

New financial literacy and numeracy resources

Following NALA's recent research on the teaching of financial numeracy practice in Ireland, a new set of resources for tutors has been created.

Website worksheet

A financial literacy website worksheet activity to guide learners to particular websites and ask them specific questions, to which the learners need to find answers.

Liquid prices

An activity called 'Liquid Prices' where learners choose what to investigate and work together on calculations in order to produce a final chart.

Numeracy assessment tool

An initial assessment tool that could help to identify learners' numeracy needs in the context of money. The tool provides an opportunity to discuss numeracy with learners, to explain what a numeracy class involves and to help students to recognise if such a class could be of use to them.

Worksheet-based activities

Three worksheet-based activities on financial decisions that can be used with learners working at QQI levels 2, 3 and 4. The worksheets explore personal decision making, Christmas expenses and personal finance quotes. The worksheets are accompanied by factsheets relating to borrowing money. There is also a guidance sheet for tutors to help them to use the worksheet-based activities at each of the different levels.

Graphic novel tool

A tutor designed a course of learning for two QQI level 2 groups of learners, using the money-themed graphic novel Skint! This novel was developed by the Scottish Book Trust for use in Scotland, and later adapted for use in England. A plan for one of the learning sessions is available with

worksheets and with a link to the online version of Skint!

You can download all of these resources at www.nala.ie

In Spring 2017, NALA will host a national seminar called 'Making Ends Meet'. This will bring together tutors and organisations who provide advice on money to explore ways both groups can collaborate. For more information on this seminar please contact Tina Byrne, Research Officer, NALA at 01-412 7917 or tbyrne@nala.ie

We would like to thank all the tutors that helped us with this project and for their willingness to share their work with other tutors.

Win funding for numeracy projects!

NALA recently won €2500 in MetLife Foundation's Inclusion Plus competition. We want to share this money with our members to promote projects that will improve the skills of people with numeracy difficulties. To find out how you can apply go to page 30.



What's in a word?

We all know that words are important but did you know that they can save you money and might, one day, even end up saving your life?

Words, and the language used to communicate, can affect people in many different ways. That's why plain English is so important to every person, organisation and business.

Health and medical information is one area where the use of plain language is so important. A survey conducted by NALA last year found that 17% of participants had taken the wrong amount of medication on at least one occasion. This means that people were potentially putting their lives at risk because the language used in dosage instructions wasn't clear and easy to understand.

"Many people who deal effectively with other aspects of their lives find health information difficult to obtain, understand or use. Patients are often faced with complex information and treatment decisions so the use of plain English is essential to ensure people can understand what they need to," says NALA's CEO, Inez Bailey.

People are tired of not being able to understand information that has a direct impact on their health and wellbeing. A recent report carried out by the company MSD (Merck Sharp & Dohme) found that 86% of people want their illness or condition explained to them in language they understand.

But plain English isn't just important for communicating health information. New

research shows that people are having trouble understanding household bills and financial information related to loans.

A survey carried out by the website Switcher.ie, found that Irish consumers are being "bamboozled by overcomplicated bills". Half of the people who took part in its online survey admitted to having difficulty checking their electricity or broadband bills for accuracy, and 56% said they found it hard to check their gas bills. This means that some people are losing money every time they pay one of their bills which can result in unnecessary financial problems.

A lack of plain English also causes problems for people when it comes to taking out a loan from a bank or other credit institution. Recent research from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) found that people are confused by information contained in personal loan agreements. This confusion can end up costing a person thousands of euro over the lifetime of a loan because they might not choose the right repayment option.

Using plain English wouldn't just make life easier for people who need to understand health or financial information, it would also greatly benefit the organisations and companies that provide services to the public.

"Plain English is very important for organisations and businesses as they can deliver a better service



In August, NALA announced details of its 2016 Plain English Awards which are sponsored by leading law firm Mason Hayes & Curran.

This year we are encouraging businesses and organisations from different sectors (Financial, Health, Regulatory and Public Sector) to send us documents that they think are outstanding examples of plain English. Pictured at the launch are John Murray, journalist, Inez Bailey, CEO, NALA and Declan Black, Managing Partner at Mason Hayes & Curran.

while saving time and money by not having to clarify misunderstandings with the public," says Inez.

The growing awareness about the value of plain English among organisations and businesses is reflected in the range of clients that use NALA's plain English service. These include government departments, regulatory bodies, private companies, public sector bodies and individuals who want to communicate more effectively.

Clients come to our service wanting to improve the clarity of the information they provide. Some come voluntarily and others are encouraged to come by regulatory bodies, research ethics committees and others.

NALA's plain English services include training where we give you the know-how and skills to write and edit your own printed or online information. We can also edit information materials ranging from short letters and leaflets to annual reports, training manuals and websites. We offer the Plain English Mark to each website and printed document that meets internationally accepted plain English standards. To find out more and to sign up for plain English training please call 01-412 7900 or visit www.nala.ie/events.

For free plain English tips and guidelines visit www.simplyput.ie.



Plain English training dates

An introduction to plain English:
19 January; 22 March; 12 June

Plain English writing for the web:
16 May

For more please see
www.nala.ie/events

Creating opportunity for learners

Mara Kilbride, Centre Manager in the National Learning Network (NLN) in Navan, and Sandra Sheridan, a tutor in Navan tell us how they are using NALA's Write On service to enhance their students' learning.

What subjects do students work on using Write On?

Students can choose from 12 awards at Level 2 and 14 awards at Level 3. Modules on offer include writing, reading, setting learning goals, computer skills, personal and interpersonal skills, communications, managing personal finances and mathematics. Students particularly like the real life practical courses such as managing personal finances and self-advocacy.

The course offers the option of national accreditation at QQI Level 2 and Level 3. Level 3 is the equivalent of the Junior Certificate in Ireland. In 2015 32 students from the NLN in Navan received 52 Level 2 and Level 3 QQI minor awards through www.writeon.ie.

What are the benefits to your students of doing a blended learning course?

It's very useful because students in the course have a range of different learning disabilities. For example, some students have dyslexia and find typing on the computer is a real advantage. The ability to repeat lessons is also very useful. Some students cannot read and they find the audio on the site allows them to work independently. They do not have to have a tutor sitting beside them which is a great boost for their self-esteem. It also allows students at different levels to work at their own pace.

Students also gain a great sense of achievement on receiving a national QQI certificate from the programme.

Have your students used Write On before?

Some of the students have never used Write On before but others have used it in their previous education centre. Students can bring their Write On work with them from one centre to another. This means that all the work that has been completed in one centre does not have to end when they leave that centre.

How does Write On complement other services provided by the NLN?

The NLN works with over 5,000 students each year and Write On is one of a range of flexible training courses and support services for people who, for a variety of reasons, may find it difficult to gain employment. Job seekers, those who are long-term unemployed, or people with an illness or disability can access our courses which offer a variety of work experience and class-based work. Our courses range from art and cookery to computer and business skills and all the courses are free.

Find out more about the National Learning Network

You can find out more about the National Learning Network by visiting www.nln.ie or phone 1890 283 000. The phone number for the Navan centre is 046-902-1975.

Have you tried our Distance Learning Service?

NALA's Distance Learning Service is designed to fit learning around your needs and your life. You decide what, where and when you want to learn. It's also free to use.

How does it work?

You can study online by yourself, using www.writeon.ie, or work with a tutor over the phone. You can also do a combination of these to suit your lifestyle.

What qualification do I get?

You can get a national QQI qualification. QQI is responsible for further education and training in Ireland. Our website www.writeon.ie allows you to work towards 12 national QQI awards at Level 2 and 14 national QQI awards at Level 3. Level 3 is the equivalent of a Junior Cert.

How do I find out more?

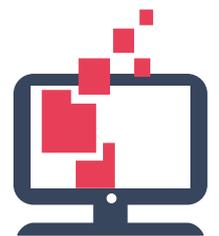
You can call us at our Freephone number 1800 20 20 65 or text LEARN to 50050 and we will call you back to give you more details.

“Students gain a great sense of achievement on receiving a national QQI certificate from the programme.”



Pictured at the launch of the Digital Literacy Project were WWETB students, tutors and staff, County Library staff and the Mayor of Metropolitan District, Cllr John Hearne.

Empowering adult learners through digital literacy



A new project in Waterford and Wexford uses a blog to develop adult learners' online literacy skills.

In September, the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) Adult Literacy Service, along with Waterford Library Services, launched a digital literacy project called 'Keep Calm and Love Learning' in the Central Library, Waterford City.

This digital literacy project, managed by Emma Tobin Coles, Joann Power and Nicola McCarthy, invites learners from adult learning centres across Waterford County and City to blog about their experiences of learning as an adult. The aim of the project is to empower learners to express personal stories in their own words using technology.

Emma Tobin-Coles, adult literacy organiser in Tramore, says that the project began as a way of encouraging students to become more confident in using the internet as a communication tool.

"A lot of people, especially older people who might not use social media that often, don't feel confident when it comes to using the internet," says Emma.

In the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 10% of Irish adults said they had no computer experience. The blogging project aims to provide this experience in a fun and practical way.

"It enables students to write something and then see what's involved in publishing it on the internet immediately. It's a very hands on way to engage learners and get feedback from them about what they are learning. It's also very quick to set up, we just went to www.wordpress.com and set it up in a few easy steps," says Emma.

The Keep Calm and Love Learning blog is a collaborative project between adult education centres in Waterford.

"Four centres in Waterford have their own password and log in details. Students from each of the centres can access the blog with the help of their tutor and publish the content that they have been working on. Using a blog is something that's also new for us as tutors so we are all learning together," Emma says.

As part of the project, Maurice Sammon, a student with WWETB, wrote a blog post about how learning computers has helped him in his everyday life.

"It was the computer course that surprised me the most. The reason I went for a computer course is because everything revolves around them now. I was put on a beginner's course, and, although I knew nothing about computers at the start, afterwards I had an email address and I was doing shopping online. I did my car tax online. What a whole new world computer literacy opens up."



Maurice Sammon talking about his experience, at the launch.

"After the course I was shopping online and I did my car tax online."



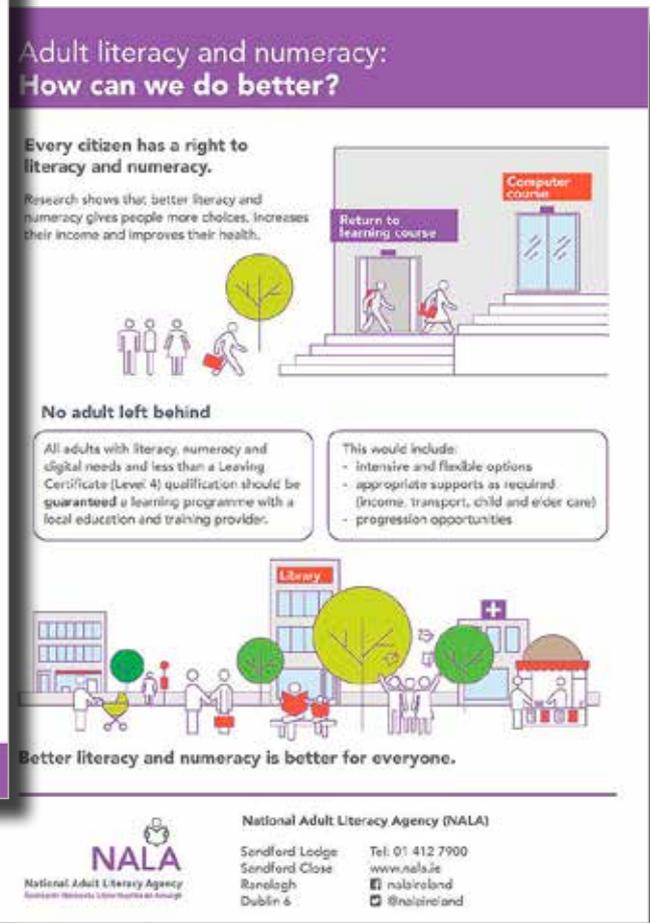
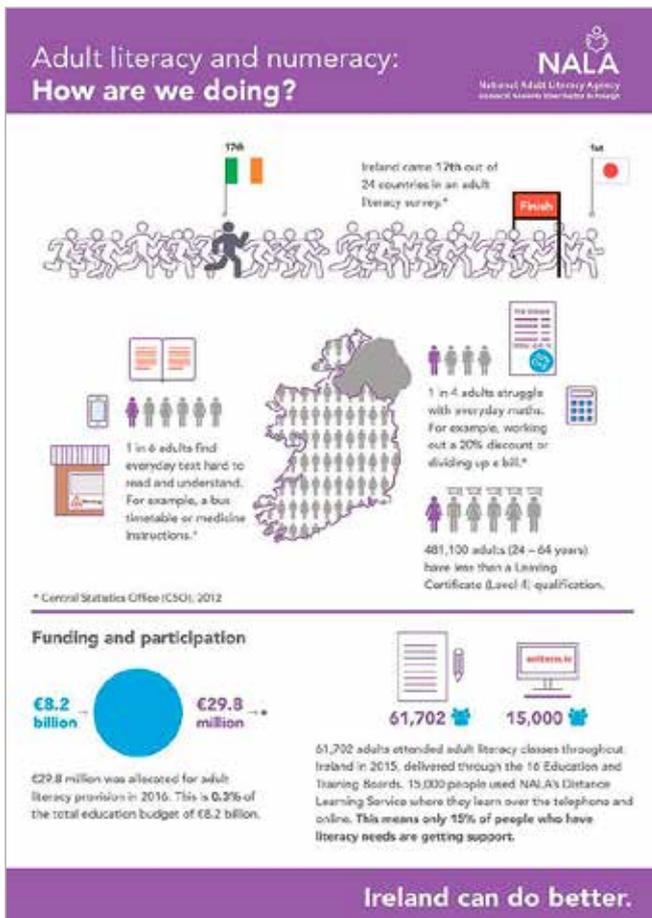
"The Keep Calm and Love Learning Digital Literacy project is a fantastic initiative by WWETB because it enables students like Maurice to use their own stories to develop their digital skills," says Bláthnaid Ní Chinnéide, NALA's integrating literacy co-ordinator.

The project encourages students to use their literacy and digital skills to publish their work on the internet and, as a result, it highlights the transformative work that is taking place every day in education centres across WWETB's literacy service.

To read or comment on the blog visit www.keepcalmandlovelearning.wordpress.com

To find out more about the project contact:

Emma Tobin Coles,
Adult Literacy Organiser, Tramore.
emmatobin@wwetb.ie



How we can do better

Since we were set up by volunteers in 1980, NALA has been a leading campaigning and lobbying force on adult literacy issues. One of our core aims is to advocate on behalf of people all over Ireland who have literacy and numeracy difficulties. As a result of our advocacy work, we have put literacy on the political agenda and secured funding for the provision of adult literacy services.

However, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. We are meeting with a range of politicians and TDs in an effort to ensure that no adult is left behind when it comes to having literacy skills for everyday life. As part of this process, we have

produced an infographic document looking at how Ireland is currently doing regarding adult literacy and numeracy. The document also outlines steps that can be taken to ensure that Ireland does better for all adults who have literacy difficulties.

Over the coming months we will be using this infographic to inform politicians and policymakers of the need to give every citizen guaranteed access to a literacy and numeracy learning programme with a local education and training provider. Better literacy and numeracy is better for everyone.

The power of video

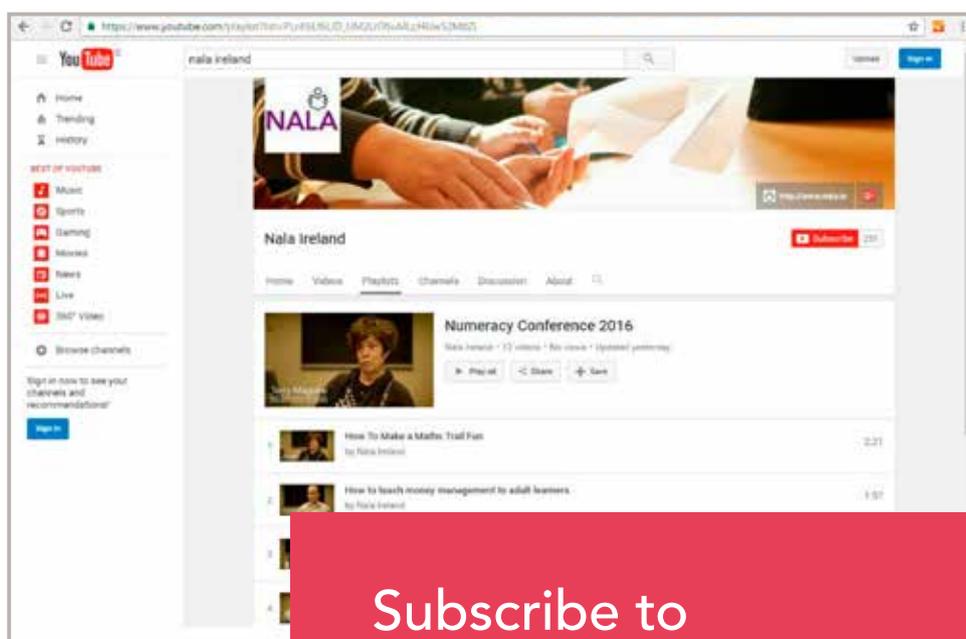
Did you know that at each of our conferences during the year we record video chats with the guest speakers and ask them to share their top tips for tutors? You can watch them on our YouTube channel.

Numeracy conference video tips

The most recent tutor tips videos on our channel are from the guest speakers at our numeracy conference that we held in June. The theme of the conference was: Supporting mathematical understanding and using informal methods in everyday maths.

There is a great selection of videos on our YouTube channel highlighting ways that tutors can use examples and situations from everyday life to teach maths. Video tips:

- Terry Maguire, director of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, talks about how to make a maths trail fun.
- Tony Hayes, regional development officer with Project Maths, speaks about the importance of adopting a visual approach when teaching numbers.
- Lorraine Harbison, a lecturer in mathematics at Church of Ireland College of Education, gives some great tips on supporting mathematical understanding.
- John Keogh and Ciaran O'Sullivan, both lecturers in Tallaght IT, explore the topic of Green Maths and the role mathematical principles play in nature and the environment.
- Fiona Faulkner, a lecturer in mathematics at Dublin Institute of Technology, gives some useful tips about using something as simple as measuring a room to encourage learners to engage with maths on a more meaningful level.



Subscribe to
www.youtube.com/nalairland
 to see our latest tutor tips videos

Putting boredom in its place

Earlier this year NALA teamed up with EirGrid, the company responsible for the national electricity grid, to develop a family literacy resource pack for parents in disadvantaged communities.

The Boredom Buster resource pack shows parents and guardians who have children in DEIS schools how they can support their child's literacy and numeracy development through fun, everyday activities in the home. DEIS schools are schools that receive extra funding from the Department of Education and Skills.

Thanks to sponsorship received from EirGrid, NALA produced resource packs for 2,000 parents all around the country. The

packs were delivered in conjunction with TUSLA, the child and family agency.

What's in the pack?

The pack includes The Boredom Buster, a huge collection of fun learning activities that parents can do with their children no matter what the weather, a colouring sheet for children and a tea towel reminding parents of the importance of talking, playing, reading, writing and counting with their children. All of these items come in a colourful tote bag.

The family literacy resource pack highlights the way people of all ages learn as part of their everyday lives and especially the



Margaret Murray from NALA with Louise Glennon during the launch of the resource pack in EirGrid's office in Dublin.



NALA staff busy getting the packs ready.

positive things that children learn at home from their families.

Louise Glennon, senior communications specialist at EirGrid, says that the company wanted to sponsor the resource pack following some plain English work with NALA.

“When we learned more about the services provided by NALA, we gained a deeper understanding of the need for literacy and numeracy supports in certain communities. We were delighted to support the family literacy pack because of the positive impact it will have on both adults and children, helping to foster a better learning environment for children in their homes,” she says.

Positive impact

In September, EirGrid invited NALA in to their office in Dublin to give out some of the resource packs to staff and to chat about literacy in Ireland.

“EirGrid staff are very proud of our involvement with NALA. Staff who received packs have found them to be very practical and are using them at home with their own families. It is this practical nature and usability that we are particularly proud of. We hope that the packs are having a positive impact in homes across the country,” Louise says.

The project enables NALA to support the Department of Education and Skills’ national strategy, ‘Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life’. This strategy recognises that parents who are engaged in their child’s learning have a significant positive role to play in a child’s educational achievement - especially in literacy and numeracy.

Win The Boredom Buster!

We have 10 Boredom Busters up for grabs! All you have to do to enter the competition is send an email, before 10 January 2017, with your name and address to pgleeson@nala.ie



“We were delighted to support the family literacy pack because of the positive impact it will have on both adults and children, helping to foster a better learning environment for children in their homes,”

Louise Glennon, EirGrid.

Working together with students

Students are vital to NALA's work – from raising awareness of literacy in Ireland to representing student views and making our service better.

Events and projects such as our student development fund, student days and student subcommittee enable us to hear the views and opinions of literacy students across Ireland.

€40,000 student development fund

Did you know that NALA's student development fund provides a small grant, up to €650, for a group event? The fund is in place to actively support students to meet other students and experience something new together such as going to a play or on a trip somewhere.

Students may be in one-to-one or group tuition or may be working on literacy as part of education programmes such as Youthreach or ITABE (Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education).

In 2016 alone we approved €40,000 for 71 education centres to carry out non-tuition student projects. A criteria for the fund is that centres give student feedback on topics set by NALA. This feedback is then used to inform NALA's future work. NALA shares the feedback with members and stakeholders such as SOLAS and the ETBI.

Student Days

NALA's student days are for people who are improving their literacy and numeracy in an adult education centre or by using www.writeon.ie. The events are also for people who are improving their English, for example English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, in an adult education centre.

This year's two student days, held in Dublin and Kilkenny, were attended by

over 200 adult learners and were a great success. Students were delighted to get the opportunity to meet other students, hear from interesting speakers and take part in workshops. John Lonergan, former governor of Mountjoy prison and Brian Cody, Kilkenny hurling manager were guest speakers and gave very motivating and powerful talks at our Dublin and Kilkenny student days.

We would like to thank all the ETB adult literacy organisers, tutors and student subcommittee for helping us organise these days.

Student subcommittee

Our student subcommittee is a subcommittee of NALA's Board. It was set up in 2005 to focus on adult literacy and numeracy student issues and to make sure these issues are reported to NALA's Board. It is a voluntary committee made up of fourteen current and former adult literacy and numeracy students. At least one student is from NALA's Board. The main role of the student subcommittee is to gather and discuss student views at meetings and share findings with NALA's Board.

NALA is currently looking for new subcommittee members. This is a great opportunity to influence our work and make sure student views are heard.

To find out more about becoming a member of NALA's student subcommittee, our student fund or days please contact Margaret Murray at 01 412 7928 or email mmurray@nala.ie.

There is no charge for attending our student days or applying for our student fund. However, you need to be a member of NALA so why not join today!

Go to www.nala.ie to join.



Blanchardstown Youthreach say thank you to NALA for funding their trip to Causey Farm through the student development fund.



Members of our student subcommittee with hurling manager Brian Cody who was guest speaker at our student day in Kilkenny in May.

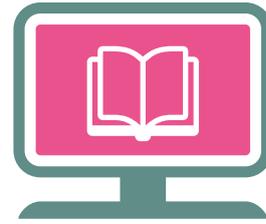


Olive Phelan with John Lonergan, former governor of Mountjoy Prison and guest speaker at our student day in Dublin in April.



Members of NALA's student subcommittee during one of their meetings in Dublin.

Other news



New website for further education and training courses

Over 4,000 further education and training courses can now be found in one place – www.fetchcourses.ie. The new website, developed by SOLAS and the ETBI, will allow learners to access information about education opportunities throughout the country such as Post-Leaving Cert courses, the latest traineeships, back to education initiatives and many more. These programmes are delivered by a network of further education and training providers across 26 counties, and online through SOLAS eCollege.

Making Ireland Click

Making Ireland Click was a four part TV series on RTE 1 that encouraged all citizens to do more with and embrace online technology. The show's website, www.makingirelandclick.com, contains a range of useful adult learner resources, including videos on online banking and social media tips.

Read our DES submission

In May, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) invited NALA to submit our views on the development of the proposed new Strategy for Education and Skills 2016-2018. NALA's submission on the consultation paper, which incorporates feedback from our members, outlines our recommendations to the DES. Our submission is now available to read online at www.nala.ie/resources/109

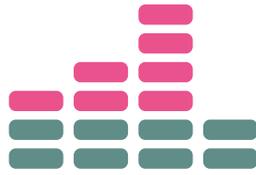
Our bookshop has gone virtual!

We have closed our bookshop in our office in Ranelagh and have moved the shop online. With our office now located out of the city centre, and sales increasingly being placed through our website, we had very few customers coming to our shop.

What does this mean?

- You can browse resources and books on www.nala.ie
- We will continue to sell books and resources but all orders will be done by website, email or telephone
- We will continue to invoice you for your orders, if that is your preference. You can also pay by credit card
- You will still be able to buy all your favourite resources from NALA
- We will not have a bookshop in our office anymore

If you have any questions about these changes, please call us on 01 412 7900.



In the media

Adult literacy and further education received a lot of media attention over the last few months:

- The launch of NALA's Plain English awards was covered in the Irish Independent, Irish Examiner, The Herald and the Daily Mirror.
- In August the Irish Independent featured an article on Billy Molloy, Kilkenny WordAid adult learner and member of NALA's student subcommittee, as he received his Leaving Cert results.
- Learners appeared on RTE radio's Today with Sean O'Rourke show in May and September. In May, Ann Quinn and Joe Higgins, students with CDET B Adult Education Service in Ballyfermot and Crumlin shared their inspirational stories about returning to education.
- In September, Chris Carthy from Sligo and Tony Moloney from Cork shared their stories as part of the 'Take the first step' awareness campaign. The campaign received great media coverage across many newspapers, including The Irish Times and the Irish Independent. Also as part of the media coverage of Take the first step, students Eamon Delaney from Tipperary ETB and Donna Murray from CDET B, along with actor Bryan Murray, were inspirational on TV3's Saturday AM Show.



Students Eamon Delaney and Donna Murray, along with Fair City actor Bryan Murray, before their appearance on TV3's Saturday AM.

Do you have an interesting student stories to share?

We are always on the lookout for students who could feature in some of our publications or on social media to promote adult learning. If you or a student you know has a good story to tell about improving their literacy or numeracy, then we would love to hear from you. Please email Patrick Gleeson pgleeson@nala.ie with any suggestions.

Win funding for a numeracy project

NALA recently won €2,500 in MetLife Foundation's Inclusion Plus competition and we want to use this to promote projects that will improve the skills of people with numeracy difficulties. According to the OECD PIAAC survey, 25% or one in four Irish adults score at or below level 1 for numeracy. At this level a person may find it difficult to do a simple maths calculation.

We want to share this money from MetLife Foundation with our members so we are inviting you to apply for funding to support a numeracy project. The funding can be used to provide new resources or any initiative that supports adult or family numeracy.

Projects will be chosen based on the benefits they will bring for people with numeracy difficulties. The most you can apply for is €300 and the closing date for applications is 31 January 2017. Successful applicants will be told by 7 February 2017.

Apply now!

To apply for the funding please fill out an online application form by visiting the following link: www.bitly.com/nalanumeracy

25%
of Irish adults score at or below level 1 for numeracy.



In memory of Janet Flynn

Rose Brownen remembers Janet Flynn, a former member of NALA's student subcommittee and a former student and tutor with Kilbarrack Local Education for Adult Renewal (KLEAR), who passed away in February of this year.



One of Janet's artworks using pens to symbolise how she felt trapped by her literacy difficulties before returning to education. The image was used as the backdrop for NALA's International Literacy Day conference in 1998.

Last year the KLEAR organisation was 35 years old. At the celebration event I asked Janet to prepare a piece about her time in KLEAR and the difference it made to her life.

Janet obliged and she did an eloquent job to wonderful applause from all our guests. She spoke about childhood illness ending her schooling very young and the fallout from that, which she knew she would somehow have to deal with over time. She described returning to an adult education course and hearing two women from KLEAR speak about the courses that were just starting at the centre. This is what she said:

"I was delighted to hear what they were offering. I got all the details and the next morning I went off on my bicycle to sign up. I was told I could start straight away and I began to work with a woman called Ann. I made good progress with her and she recommended that I join a group who were studying for the Leaving Cert. I was delighted when I managed to pass the exam. After this, I agreed to put my name

forward to serve on NALA's committee and to my surprise I was elected."

A talented artist, Janet went on to be offered a place on a course called Women's Art Studies. She also completed a diploma course in Dublin Institute of Technology which concluded with a huge exhibition in Mountjoy Square.

Janet's contribution to the development of literacy, at both local and national level, was enormous. We called on her many years ago to give her thoughts on our literacy tutor training course, which we were developing and improving for new voluntary tutors. Among her many good ideas was the suggestion that new tutors meet with established students during training, to understand the full and worthwhile lives they had; that they were not people to be pitied, but equal citizens seeking a second chance, or as she would often say, a first proper chance.

May she rest in peace.

Dates for your diary

National Forum for Adult Literacy Tutors 2017

Saturday 28 January 2017

from 10am to 4pm

Venue: The Ashling Hotel,
Parkgate Street, Dublin 8

The focus of this forum will be on integrating health and financial literacy into adult literacy work.

Visit NALA's website, www.nala.ie, for more details.



Plain English Training

Plain English is a style of writing and layout that the intended reader can understand after a single reading. It will help you clarify what you're trying to say and, as a result, help your reader get your message exactly as you intended.

In 2017 we will hold plain English training on:

Thursday 19 January

Wednesday 22 March

Tuesday 16 May (writing for the web)

Monday 12 June

Tuesday 19 September (in Cork)

Wednesday 15 November

NALA Annual General Meeting

Saturday 1 April

Our AGM in 2017 will be held in Dublin. Members are invited to come along to find out about our new strategic plan. It is also a great opportunity to elect members to our board and hear about our work.

We would love to see you there.



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

National Adult Literacy Agency
Sandford Lodge,
Sandford Close,
Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Tel: 01 4127900
web: www.nala.ie
email: info@nala.ie