

# Review

## Our year and our work, 2013

**Policy** Together with our stakeholders, we secured a national adult literacy and numeracy strategy as part of the legislation behind SOLAS. **Practice** We provided training for adult literacy and numeracy tutors on effective teaching methods and supported literacy students get national qualifications. **Access** We raised awareness of adult literacy services through our promotional work and we increased access to adult education through our Distance Learning service.

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## Summary Annual Report 2013



National Adult Literacy Agency  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh



**1** in **6** people have a literacy difficulty in Ireland



**1** in **4** people have a problem with numeracy

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# Literacy Matters

Keeping you up to date with literacy in Ireland and informing you of the latest news

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spelling or  
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National

Week 20

# About NALA

NALA stands for the National Adult Literacy Agency. We are a charity that:

- is the voice of adults wishing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, and
- is committed to raising adult literacy and numeracy levels in Ireland.

According to the latest international survey, one in six people have a literacy difficulty in Ireland and one in four people have a problem with numeracy.

Since volunteers set NALA up in 1980, we have been a leading campaigning and lobbying group on adult literacy issues. We have been involved with:

- developing teaching materials;
- distance education services;
- policy-making;
- research;
- campaigns to raise awareness about adult literacy difficulties and services in Ireland; and
- tutor training.

Many people and organisations have given a lot to adult literacy work in Ireland. For our part, we have put literacy on the political agenda and secured funding to provide adult literacy services. Currently, 57,000 adults are attending adult literacy courses run by Education and Training Boards (ETBs) across Ireland.

## About this review

This review tells you about the work we did during 2013. The sections follow the same order as our Strategic Plan 2011-2013. You can read and download information about our strategic plan, accounts and publications at [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie). On page 52 some acronyms and terms in this review are explained.



# A message from our chairperson



Dear members,

2014 sees the implementation of our new Strategic Plan, which we have been developing since early 2013. Its development involved many meetings, workshops and consultations with key stakeholders. Both NALA members and Board members have had an input at every phase of its development. The plan was approved and signed off by the Board at its November meeting. As well as providing a strategic focus for the work of the Agency, developing the plan has allowed NALA an opportunity to reflect on the values and principles which underpin the Agency and to explore the changing social, educational and economic context of its work. It created a space for the re-affirmation of what we stand for and helped us seek and identify solutions to some of the challenges we face in achieving our goals in a rapidly changing environment.

One element of this environment is the establishment of the Education and Training Boards and the formation of SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, in 2013. SOLAS will oversee the funding and policy direction for the Further Education and Training sector. Up to January 2014, NALA's main funding came from the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Now and in future, NALA's funding will come from SOLAS. We are confident that the excellent relationship enjoyed by NALA with the DES will be replicated in NALA's relationship with SOLAS.

The results of the keenly anticipated Adult Skills Survey (PIACC) were published in October 2013. There was little cause for celebration as the survey showed that one in six Irish adults has a significant literacy difficulty. This is a reduction from the one in four figure in the last adult literacy survey in 1997. While moving in the right direction, our ranking in terms of adult literacy is still poor relative to other countries. Every person who

experiences diminished life prospects as a result of unmet educational needs is one too many, so considerable work needs to be done.

With regard to governance matters in NALA, our audit sub-committee has delivered an impressive body of work, under the chairmanship of our Treasurer Thomas Mc Manus with the support of NALA staff. Some of the key policies developed, includes a Reserves Policy, a Whistleblowers Policy and a comprehensive review of Internal Financial Controls. Given the controversy which has blown up in recent times over the regulation of charities, it is gratifying for members to know that good governance and transparency have been a hallmark of NALA management over the years. This meant that the Agency was among the first voluntary bodies to sign off on the Voluntary Code of Governance in 2013. Our governance issues are under constant review, and we look forward to the establishment of the Charities Regulatory Authority in the near future.

I thank the Director and staff of NALA, and each member of the Board for their commitment and hard work over the last year. I hope you read and enjoy the Annual Review of NALA's work, and I thank you for your loyal support of the valuable work undertaken by the Agency throughout the year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Vaughan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Gretta Vaughan**

Chairperson  
National Adult Literacy Agency

# An overview from our director



2013 had many significant highlights for NALA, adult literacy and the wider Further Education and Training sector. Legislation to establish the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and SOLAS was enacted and the development of the first strategy for the further education and training sector began. After a long list of government and NALA reports calling for these developments over decades, we finally got a national authority for all further education and training. This

marks an end to the divide between education and training. As a direct result of NALA lobbying, an adult learner seat was secured on ETBs. NALA also contributed to the first ever Review of Adult Literacy Services and planned how we support its recommendations to improve service quality.

These wide ranging reforms are necessary for Ireland to better support a culture of lifelong learning and to respond to the challenge of supporting large numbers of the public who have low levels of literacy and numeracy. The publication during the year of the Adult Skills Survey showed small gains in Ireland's adult literacy and numeracy rates since the last survey results 17 years ago. It also showed that Ireland ranked poorly in comparison to other countries. NALA made the survey findings the theme of our awareness week, which included events for policy makers and practitioners.

We worked solidly with the ETBI to support them in responding to the needs of learners with literacy and numeracy issues at all levels of their programmes and planned programme in integrating literacy in the coming years. Similarly, we worked with South Dublin County Council and Saint John of Gods exploring how they can improve their services to customers, especially those with literacy and numeracy difficulties. This work will continue in 2014.

Throughout the year we continued to provide support, information and training to practitioners working in ETBs and other education and training settings. We received positive feedback from participants who attended our professional development events. There was particular interest in our training on how to use a blended learning approach. [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie) continued to



grow and now helps large numbers of people, mainly in learning centres, to receive awards at levels 2 and 3.

We did research, drawing on the expertise of numeracy tutors to improve practice in education and training centres. We also promoted the findings of our survey of numeracy tutors. The findings detailed their approach to their work and highlighted their future professional development needs. We conducted all our research in partnership with the ETBI and their members, as well as Waterford Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tallaght.

Our work to build awareness of, and participation in, learning started in January and continued in September with our An Post TV advertisement campaign. The campaign yielded a consistent stream of calls and texts to the NALA Freephone. In addition, there was regular publicity on a range of themes featured in our press and media work. A new TV series focused on the importance of family learning and provided a key promotional tool for [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie), which has been supported by over 40 national stakeholders working with children and parents in education.

Our Plain English service attracted new clients and our work in this area has boosted understanding of the importance of ensuring people understand communication intended for them. Those working in the health sector are at the forefront in this regard, many working with us to train their staff and improve their communications as well as submitting applications to the MSD Crystal Clear Awards.

Work to build the benefits of NALA membership resulted in an increase in our numbers, and we expect that this work will see further growth next year. Other organisational development included the review of the implementation of our strategic plan 2011-2013 and the development of a new plan for 2014-2016. A key element of this was a focus on demonstrating the impact of our work and devising an innovation process to enhance our work.

We are grateful to all our supporters and particularly our main funder, the Department of Education and Skills.



**Inez Bailey**

Director

National Adult Literacy Agency

# Our key achievements

## Policy

### Campaigning for legislation

We successfully campaigned for changes to the SOLAS Bill to be more inclusive of people with literacy difficulties.

### Working with stakeholders

We increased the number of organisations with good literacy policies and practices.

### Representing students

We secured legislation to have learners represented on the new Education and Training Boards.

## Practice

### Providing training

We provided training to 202 vocational teachers, instructors and tutors on integrating literacy in their work.

### Researching best practice

We completed three research reports on effective adult literacy and numeracy teaching methods to help inform best practice in the sector.

### Getting students accreditation

We carried out three rounds of accreditation, providing 4,842 Level 2 minor awards and 1,204 Level 3 minor awards to almost 1,300 learners across Ireland.

## Access

### Raising awareness

We raised awareness of literacy issues through our TV series with RTÉ 1 which was watched by 190,000 people every night.

### Promoting services

We promoted adult literacy services through our advertising campaign with An Post and by organising student interviews on local and national radio and press.

### Informing people

We responded to over 5,000 calls and 600 texts, answering questions and supporting people who were considering returning to adult basic education.

### Building partnerships

We worked with Education and Training Board Ireland to integrate literacy, numeracy and blended learning into the sector.

### Raising awareness

We highlighted the new adult skills survey for Ireland and helped policy makers analyse and interpret the results.

### Helping unemployed

We worked with Department of Social Protection and Southside Partnership Local Employment Service to support unemployed people with literacy needs.

### Supporting tutors and students

We organised five professional development events for 600 literacy tutors and held student development days in Dublin and Waterford for 160 students.

### Resourcing parents

85,000 people used our website [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie) that gives parents ideas on how to support their children's learning in the home.

### Providing learning

14,000 people used our e-learning website [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie) and our Distance Learning Service provided tuition to 280 students.

### Promoting plain English

We won three important bids related to plain English including the rights to host the prestigious international Plain Language Association Conference in 2015.

### Providing training and editing

We gave plain English training to over 300 participants and provided plain English editing to 60 organisations.

### Prioritising health literacy

We secured a government commitment to address and prioritise health literacy in developing future health policy.

# Policy

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We worked to ensure that adult literacy and numeracy development is a priority in all national policy.

In 2013, we:

- secured at least one seat for adult learners on each of the 16 Education and Training Boards;
- ensured that SOLAS will be required by law to have a strategy for the promotion and development of adult literacy and numeracy;
- increased the number of organisations advocating for the need to prioritise and resource adult literacy;
- worked with the Department of Social Protection to ensure people with literacy and numeracy difficulties are referred to appropriate education programmes;
- increased the number of organisations with good literacy policies;
- renewed a written agreement with ETBI, the umbrella body for the ETB sector to promote the development of adult literacy;
- contributed to the development of Department of Education and Skills documents that promote the integration of literacy in further education and training;
- worked with the Southside Partnership Local Employment Service to deliver a blended learning programme for young unemployed people; and
- used the OECD Adult Skills Survey for Ireland to highlight how raising literacy and numeracy levels is vital for Ireland's economic and social development.

Michael Kelly, Ballybrack, Daniel Doyle, Shankill and Noel Byrne, Shankill at the launch of our new course with Southside Local Employment Service in Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin.

***“ Raising adult literacy and numeracy levels and working towards a more inclusive society ”***



## Getting adult literacy policy prioritised in new legislation

A notable achievement of our advocacy work in 2013 was that adult literacy and numeracy development now feature strongly in two new pieces of legislation. Both of these pieces of legislation, known as 'Bills', will shape the ongoing reform of further education and training (FET) in Ireland.

1. **The Education and Training Boards Bill 2013** merged VECs and FÁS and established 16 regional Education and Training Boards (ETBs) who will now develop and deliver further education and training in Ireland. The early drafts of the ETB Bill had no designated seat for adult learners on its board. This meant learners' views would not be directly represented. NALA mounted a campaign to ensure that adult learners were included at board level, which was ultimately successful. The 2013 legislation ensures at least one seat for adult learners on each of the 16 ETBs.
2. **The Further Education and Training (SOLAS) Bill 2013** establishes SOLAS which will strategise for, co-ordinate and fund a strategy for further education and training in Ireland. The SOLAS Bill also disbands FÁS. NALA campaigned for changes to the SOLAS Bill to make it more inclusive of people with literacy and numeracy difficulties and those who got the least from education and training systems in the past. We received great support from key stakeholders, such as ETBI and AONTAS, and we were delighted to see **our four key recommendations** included in the new SOLAS Bill. This now means that SOLAS will:
  - promote equality of opportunity in further education and training in Ireland;
  - consult with learners on the further education and training strategy development;
  - have an adult learner perspective on its Board; and
  - be required by law to develop and maintain a strategy for the promotion and development of adult literacy and numeracy.



## Working with stakeholders – ‘Realising our Potential’ Campaign

This campaign highlights what adult literacy and numeracy means for wider social and economic development in Ireland. It also aims to persuade policy makers to invest adequate resources in literacy programmes.

In 2013, we worked to:

- increase the number of organisations that advocate for adult literacy policy,
- support organisations to become more accessible to people with literacy difficulties,
- increase the number of organisations with good literacy policies and practices, for example by ‘adopting a literacy-friendly approach’, and,
- highlight the results from the OECD Adult Skills Survey 2013.

### **Increasing the number of organisations that advocate for adult literacy policy**

During the year we worked with many organisations to encourage and support them to take account of adult literacy issues in their policy submissions and publications. They included:

- The Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC);
- The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN);
- The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE);
- The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN); and
- Social Justice Ireland (SJI).

Our work resulted in a call for greater priority and resourcing of adult literacy in publications from organisations such as the INOU (in its Pre-budget Submission) and Social Justice Ireland (in their ‘Socio-economic Review 2013’).

## Supporting organisations to become more accessible to people with literacy difficulties

We met with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and local DSP management to explore the needs of people with literacy and numeracy difficulties and possible responses. This resulted in the DSP having greater awareness of the needs of unemployed people with literacy and numeracy needs, and referring them to appropriate further education and training.

## Increasing the number of organisations with good literacy policies and practices

This year we continued to work with South Dublin County Council (SDCC) and STEP (a service working with people with intellectual disabilities and part of the St John of Gods Organisation). The work included supporting the implementation of 'Literacy Friendly' action plans and bringing this approach to a wider audience.

The two main reasons for any organisation to become involved in a process to become a 'Literacy Friendly' organisation are:

Marie Carrol, Southside Partnership, An Tanaiste Eamon Gilmore, Fiona Burke, Local Employment Services, Inez Bailey, NALA at the launch of NALA and the Southside Partnership Local Employment Service new programme aimed at young unemployed adults.



- to ensure that the people who use their service can understand their communications and access their services without literacy being a barrier, and
- to ensure that staff are supported to address any literacy needs they may have in carrying out their jobs and to support them to progress within the organisation.

### **South Dublin County Council scoops Outstanding Customer Service Award at Chambers Ireland 10th Annual Excellence in Local Government Awards**

South Dublin County Council won the Outstanding Customer Service Category at the Chambers Ireland 10th Annual Excellence in Local Government Awards. The award was for the Council's 'Taking Steps to be a Literacy Friendly Authority Initiative'.

In accepting the award, the Mayor of South Dublin County, Cllr. Dermot Looney said, "I am delighted that this initiative has been recognised with this prestigious award. South Dublin County Council is continually pushing the boundaries and identifying new ways to ensure that our services are inclusive for all our citizens. As a teacher I am very aware of the literacy and numeracy difficulties that many experience. These can impact on all aspects of their lives including the ease at which they access public services."

County Manager, Daniel McLoughlin added, "I would like to acknowledge all those involved in the development and implementation of the Council's Literacy Friendly Policy. The award recognises our ongoing commitment to customer service excellence. I would particularly like to thank the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) for their cooperation and support on this project."

Maria Finn, Social Inclusion Officer for the Council said, "It was a great achievement for South Dublin County Council to win the award. We were delighted that our hard work and commitment to the project got national recognition and it gave us personal satisfaction. The project had a major impact for our customers and in influencing other local authorities to follow suit. We will continue to pursue the Literacy Agenda in 2014. A big thank you to NALA, in particular, thank you to Helen Ryan and Maureen Bassett for their continued support and dedication".

## Bringing a literacy-friendly approach to wider audiences

In July, NALA presented to the City and County Managers Association (CCMA), the representative voice of the local government management network. We shared the work being done with South Dublin County Council and proposed to extend the audits to a number of other Councils. CCMA decided to extend the initiative and they have booked training for two staff in each of the 15 Local Authorities for January 2014.

A similar process took place in September in St John of Gods Organisation (SJOG). NALA presented the successful STEP and City Gate audit and report to the Service Managers in SJOG. SJOG will participate in a training day in mid-January. On this day we will train people from a number of services to do the audit and support them as they implement the actions needed.

## Building partnerships

We renewed a written agreement to advance adult literacy development with the umbrella body for the ETB sector, called ETB Ireland (ETBI). Our collaboration with ETBI progressed the areas of integrating literacy and numeracy, and blended learning. We look forward to implementing these agreements in 2014.

NALA also contributed to the Department of Education and Skills **2013 Review of Adult Literacy Services** and to the **Operational Guidelines for Adult Literacy Provision**. Both documents encourage services to promote the integration of literacy in further education and training, and to expand family literacy, numeracy and blended learning practice.

NALA and the Southside Partnership Local Employment Service cooperated to deliver a new programme aimed at young long term unemployed adults under the government's **Momentum** programme. While it is proving challenging to secure employment for the participants, using blending literacy learning with employment services has proved effective. Forty-eight of 60 participants have achieved certification targets, while others did work placements or progressed to further education or jobs.

In 2013 we continued our collaboration with **AONTAS** and had regular meetings to support each other's work and learners in Ireland. We also worked with the **Irish Network for Digital Inclusion and Engagement (INDIE)** around digital literacy.

## Highlighting the results of the OECD Adult Skills Survey

In 2008 we lobbied the Department of Education and Science, the Minister for Lifelong Learning and party political spokespersons for a way to measure and evidence progress in adult literacy levels. From this, we got a commitment to take part in the next international adult skills survey that would assess the literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills of Irish people.

In 2013, we got the results of this Adult Skills Survey for Ireland. It is also known as the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).

The results found that almost 18% or 1 in 6 Irish adults are at or below level 1, the lowest level on a five level literacy scale. It also showed that 25% or 1 in 4 Irish adults are at or below level 1 for numeracy.

The fact that this was the first survey in over 15 years and that it assessed people more broadly than previous surveys was very significant. Because of this we dedicated **National Adult Literacy Awareness Week 2013** in September to raising awareness of the survey. Our objective was to help policy makers and stakeholders better understand the survey so that they could analyse and interpret the results appropriately.

### **National Adult Literacy Awareness Week (NALAW) 2013**

We were delighted with the turnout at our events during this week – one event was so oversubscribed, that we had to change to a larger venue at the last minute. Here's a quick recap of the key events during NALAW.

#### **Literacy for 21st Century Ireland - what will PIAAC mean for Ireland?**

William Thorn, Senior Analyst in the OECD presented on the Adult Skills Survey, ahead of the results being announced on October 8. Richard Curran, business journalist with the Irish Independent chaired the event. Speakers included Paul O'Toole, Director General of FÁS and Rosemarie McGill, representing the ETBI.

Ninety people attended this event ranging from adult literacy and education practitioners to third level universities, employer organisations, community and voluntary sector bodies and research organisations.

### **Problem solving in a technology-rich environment**

Forty-five people interested in literacy and technology came to Google Learning and Development Centre to talk about problem solving in technology-rich environments – another core component of the Adult Skills Survey. William Thorn addressed this group and explained the importance and relevance of the survey to those attending ahead of the results being announced.

### **Highlighting the adult skill survey to political parties**

We presented on the Adult Skills Survey to 19 TDs and Senators in the Dáil. Mary Mitchell O'Connor, TD, arranged the event and Senator Cáit Keane chaired it.

### **What will PIAAC mean for the health sector?**

This seminar provided a wealth of information for people working in the health sector and showed the relationship between literacy, adult skills, health and well-being. Minister of State at the Department of Health with responsibility for Primary Care, Alex White opened the seminar. There were interesting and informative presentations from: Dr Austin O'Carroll, General Practitioner working in the inner city, Dr Geraldine Doyle, Senior Lecturer, UCD Business School, and Fidelma Browne, Head of Public Communications, HSE.

Thirty people attended the event and found it useful to see how the Adult Skills Survey could help the sector reflect on the effectiveness of health services and inform health literacy policy and practice in the future.

## **Launch of results of Adult Skills Survey 8 October**

When the survey results were announced on the 8 October, we issued press releases and did interviews with local and national media, gaining extensive media coverage. We can see the impact of this work in the following:

- media coverage after the publication of the Irish Survey of Adult Skills. (See page 40 for more information), and
- support from organisations that we had briefed on the survey.



## What did people say?

"Our improving literacy skills are to be warmly welcomed, however, Ireland needs to build on these improvements and further concentrate on our weaker numeracy skills which are so vital for employability."

Una Halligan,  
Chairwoman, Expert  
Group on Future  
Skills Needs.

"I am encouraged that this survey shows we are making progress on reducing the number of adults with low literacy levels. However, our overall performance on literacy, but particularly numeracy, is not as strong as I would have liked. We must drive forward the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in our schools and focus strongly on literacy, numeracy and ICT in lifelong learning. Further progress is also required to equip adults to engage with technology to solve problems."

Ruairí Quinn, *Minister for Education and Skills*

"The report is a serious wake up call for the Irish education system and demands an urgent response."

Tony Donohoe, *IBEC Head of Education Policy.*

"It is hard to imagine that this ancient island of saints and scholars should have descended to a state where more than half a million adults can barely keep pace with some of the lowest levels of literacy worldwide."

Irish Examiner

"The literacy, numeracy and ICT skills that were good enough in the past will not be good enough in the future. I believe we are firmly on the right path in reforming how core skills are taught and learned in schools. In addition, the fundamental reform programme we have undertaken in the further education and training sector allows us to deal with these challenges in an integrated and coherent way. SOLAS and the ETBs, in developing and implementing our Further Education and Training Strategy, will bring a renewed focus to the fostering of key skills in the adult population."

Ciarán Cannon, *Minister for Training and Skills*

# Practice

We developed and promoted new approaches that improve teaching and learning practices in adult literacy and numeracy education.

In 2013, we:

- published new guidelines for the further education and training sector to implement a whole-centre approach to the development of literacy and numeracy skills;
- assisted SOLAS to implement their strategy for integrating literacy and numeracy across the curriculum in 38 Community Training Centres;
- designed a professional development programme for centre managers, on leading a whole-centre approach to literacy and numeracy development;
- provided training to 202 vocational teachers, instructors and tutors at NALA seminars and workshops on integrating literacy;
- completed three research reports on effective adult literacy and numeracy teaching methods;
- provided learning sessions to 490 distance learners;
- recorded over 14,000 people using our online e-learning website [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie), spending on average 22 minutes on each visit;
- provided 4,842 Level 2 minor awards and 1,204 Level 3 minor awards to 1,295 learners across Ireland;
- provided 20 Blended Learning training sessions for tutors around the country, accommodating 221 participants;
- organised five professional development events for 600 people working in area of literacy;
- recorded 85,000 people using our website for parents [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie)
- drew 160 students to our Student Days in Dublin and Waterford; and
- had 36 successful applications for the NALA Student Development Fund which benefited 911 students.



Wes Doyle from Clondalkin  
featured in our TV series The  
Family Project in May.





## **Integrating literacy and numeracy with further education and training**

The aim of this work is to assist further education and training (FET) providers to build literacy and numeracy support into their courses at every level. In 2013 we did this through publishing guidelines for FET centres and providing training for teachers, trainers and centre managers.

### **Guidelines**

We published a revised edition of Integrating Literacy: Guidelines for further education and training centres. This will assist centres and colleges to plan and implement a whole-centre approach to literacy and numeracy development across the curriculum.

### **SOLAS**

In 2013, we assisted SOLAS to implement their strategy for integrating literacy and numeracy across the curriculum in 38 Community Training Centres (CTCs). These centres are independent, community based organisations which provide training and related supports for early school leavers. We worked closely with facilitators from the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) to support two groups of CTC staff to successfully complete the NALA-NUIM Integrating Literacy Course, which they had begun in 2012. In the course, participants worked with centre learners and colleagues to try specific changes to their practice and procedures. This worked well with all participants reporting positive outcomes from the integrated methods and materials they developed and used.

At SOLAS's request, and in cooperation with a CTC Working Group, we designed a professional development programme for centre managers on leading a whole-centre approach to literacy and numeracy development. We cooperated with NUIM to further develop this as an accredited module (10 credits at Level 7). Two groups of CTC managers began the course in November and will complete it in March 2014. NALA is supporting the organisation, delivery and evaluation of the course. We are liaising with participants to provide additional support, if required, in developing a centre policy and plan for integrating literacy and numeracy across the programme.

## NALA training

In 2013, 202 vocational teachers, instructors and tutors took part in NALA seminars and workshops on integrating literacy. These were organised at the request of FET providers, including the National Learning Network, Prison Education Service, ETB FE colleges and adult, youth and community education programmes. In the workshops, participants considered methods teachers and learners in any subject can use to overcome literacy barriers to learning, and to develop subject-related language, literacy and numeracy.

We also designed and delivered a one-day module for the Higher Diploma in Further Education (NUIM).

## Partnerships

We continued our partnership with **Education and Training Boards Ireland**, agreeing a continuing professional development programme on integrating literacy for ETBs which will be rolled out in 2014.

We also continued to work with **Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)** to provide professional training and third level qualifications for adult literacy and numeracy tutors.



Laura Foley and Kevin O'Duffy, student subcommittee members, at our AGM.



John Stewart, NALA and Minister Ciarán Cannon at our ALO Forum in April.

## Researching ways to improve teaching and learning

In 2013 we focused on researching effective teaching methods and the impact of teaching and learning in adult literacy. The purpose of the research was to inform literacy and numeracy tuition, and develop policies around key issues such as family learning, numeracy, distance and blended learning and integrating literacy.

We worked with stakeholders, in particular literacy tutors in the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). This approach allowed tutors to share their practice with the wider teaching community. The findings from our research were also shared at NALA's professional development events.

### **Doing the maths: the training needs of numeracy tutors in Ireland**

This study, carried out by NALA and the Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT), documents the findings from a survey of numeracy tutors working with adult learners. The report on survey findings provides up to date information on the profile, teaching experience and teaching practices of tutors delivering adult numeracy provision. It recommends that an expert group be convened to agree the future of professional development for adult numeracy tutors in Ireland.

### **Adult literacy and numeracy in action: case studies of practice work**

This report presents the findings from a study of current teaching practices in six adult literacy and numeracy services provided by ETBs around the country. The case studies detail teaching and learning practice and examine delivery in traditional and blended learning contexts. The project was a joint initiative between NALA and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). This report will form part of a series of reports detailing adult literacy and numeracy practice as it happens on the ground. In 2014 NALA and WIT will publish case studies on reading strategies used by tutors with students.



## **What really counts: case studies of adult numeracy practice**

This research, carried out by NALA presents five case studies on numeracy practice in Ireland. The case studies focus on different aspects of practice including general teaching methods, teaching mathematical concepts and the use of technology to teach numeracy to adults. The results will be published and shared with people working in the sector in January 2014.

## **NALA Factsheets**

NALA published two factsheets in 2013:

- Adult Skills Survey (also called the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies or PIAAC for short) factsheet. This showed the most recent findings for literacy, numeracy, technology and problem solving in Ireland.
- The DES adult literacy returns 2012 factsheet which details participation rates, the educational attainment and the employment status of adult literacy learners in Ireland.

In 2014 the NALA research office will continue to work closely with tutors and learners to carry out research that will improve the learning experience of adults with literacy and numeracy needs.

You can download all our reports on **[www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)**

## **Understanding the Adult Skills Survey**

As highlighted on page 17, on the 8 October the Central Statistics Office (CSO) published a report on the results for Ireland of the OECD's Adult Skills Survey, also known as PIAAC. Staff from NALA met with the CSO for in-depth discussion about the findings from the survey. Donal Kelly, one of the lead researchers on the study, provided a training day to NALA staff on ways to further explore the data to generate a greater understanding of the survey and what it tells us about Irish adults who scored at level 1-3 in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology rich environments. NALA will use this data in its research, practice and policy work to further support and improve outcomes for Irish adults looking to improve their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

## Distance Learning

NALA's Distance Learning Service (DLS) has been running since 2000 and has changed each year to reflect changing learner needs and improved efficiencies in supporting those learners.

The DLS handles referrals from NALA's Freephone and Freetext service by firstly assessing learner needs. This initial assessment is carried out by one of three Learning Support Workers (LSWs), each an experienced adult literacy tutor.

During 2013, almost 500 adults had at least one learning session with one of our eleven Distance Learning Tutors (DLT) or LSWs.

Learning Support Workers and Distance Learning Tutors provided 1,893 hours of support in 2013.



## **www.writeon.ie**

Our online e-learning website, [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie), continues to show strong growth. The number of learning accounts grew from 26,863 on 1 January to 34,802 on 1 December 2013, an increase of almost 25%. The site had 14,112 different people accessing it, spending an average of 22 minutes on each visit. In addition, [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie) was used in 47 different countries. (Source: Google Analytics)

The uptake of [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie) in blended learning contexts, such as in ETB adult literacy centres continued during 2013. Blended learning refers to mixing different teaching techniques, for example face-to-face tuition and using [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie). To promote and meet the need for blended learning, we provided 20 training sessions for tutors across the country, accommodating 221 participants.

We are currently working to develop a HTML5 version of [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie) to further improve its accessibility, and we hope to add a new topic about the Environment by mid 2014.

## **Delivering accreditation**

The DLS is a registered provider of accreditation in Ireland and is quality assured by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). As a student, having accreditation or a qualification has lots of benefits. Not only does it give a student a sense of personal achievement and show what they have learned, but it is also very useful to progress to further education and training or better employment opportunities.

In 2013, our DLS provided accreditation to 1,295 learners. This included 4,842 Level 2 minor awards and 1,204 Level 3 minor awards.

## More than 600 people attend our adult literacy training events

In 2013, we organised five continuous professional development (CPD) events for people working in the area of literacy. The aim of each event was to highlight new teaching and learning initiatives and promote best practice in adult literacy work. Over 600 people attended these events. This is a 30% increase from 2012 when 460 people attended our events. The events were:

- National Forum for Adult Literacy Tutors
- Adult Literacy Organisers Forum
- Numeracy Conference
- ESOL Conference
- Family Literacy Conference

### National Forum for Adult Literacy Tutors

200 tutors attended the National Forum for Adult Literacy Tutors in January 2013. The theme of the Forum was 'Teaching strategies for working on literacy and numeracy'. Keynote speakers included Moira Greene, Adult Literacy Organiser, County Clare, who spoke about strategies for reading comprehension, and Daniel Sellers, Educational Consultant, who spoke about linking learning to students' everyday lives. There were also seven workshops for participants on different teaching strategies.

### Adult Literacy Organisers (ALOs) Forum

The theme for the 2013 Adult Literacy Organisers Forum in April was 'Initial assessment: what works in the adult literacy service?'

The theme relates to important issues identified at the 2012 Forum and described in the document **'Adult literacy and basic skills in a changing sector: 7 priorities to consider'**. The event included presentations from: Ciarán Cannon, Minister for Training and Skills; Tomás MacPháidin, CEO, City of Galway VEC; Jay Derrick, Director, University of London; Janet Looney, European Institute for Education and Social Policy; Kieran Harrington, ALO, Galway ETB; Pat Ayton and

Frances Ward, ALOs, Dublin ETB; Helen Murphy, Waterford Institute of Technology; Mary Kett and Liz McSkeane, Educational Consultants; Siobhan McEntee and Sheila Holland-Fox, ALOA and Majella O'Dea, Department of Education and Skills.

A total of 62 Adult Literacy Organisers from 28 VECs attended the Forum.

## **Numeracy conference**

NALA and the Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT) hosted a joint numeracy conference entitled 'Helping to meet the challenges of delivering maths provision'.

The aim was to support numeracy tutors with ideas and resources for teaching maths to adults. We also launched our research publication **'Doing the maths: the training needs of numeracy tutors in Ireland, 2013 and beyond'**.

The lecture hall was packed with participants ready to listen to five speakers: John O'Donoghue, Director, National Centre for Excellence in Mathematics and Science, University of Limerick; Terry Maguire, Head of Lifelong Learning, Institute of Technology Tallaght; Peter Cullen, Framework Standards and Guidance, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI); Tina Byrne, Research Officer, NALA and Carol Hanney, CEO, Dun Laoghaire, VEC. They later formed a panel for questions and answers from attendees. There were six workshops running throughout the day. They focused on relating numeracy to accreditation at Level 1-3.

110 numeracy tutors attended.

## **ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)**

The title of our ESOL conference was 'Phonology and grammar: the hidden assets'. This event highlighted some key issues in ESOL. Keynote speakers included: Sue Hackett, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Jo Gakonga, ESOL teacher trainer and manager of [www.elc-training.com](http://www.elc-training.com) and Ray Parker, teacher educator and ELT project manager.

70 ESOL tutors attended.

## Family Literacy conference

The title of our Family Literacy conference was ‘Harnessing technology and social media to engage parents in family learning initiatives’. Mary Flanagan, Clare Family Learning Project chaired the event that included presentations from: Peter Baxter, Director, CreateSchool; Margaret Murray, NALA; Ciara Brennan, Primary School Teacher, Bray; Mary Holmes, Family Learning, Donegal ETB; Gert Ackerman, The Wheel; John Wills, Bernardos; Geraldine Tuttle, Galway Roscommon ETB and Ger Halbert, Education Officer, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

70 family learning practitioners attended.

## Big impact of NALA’s Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

In Table 1 you can see very strong figures regarding participants’ learning at our CPD events. In 2013 an average of 93% of participants stated that they learned something new, while an average of 78% said that the event inspired changes to their work.

Table 1: Impact of NALA conferences

	2012	2013	2012	2013
	Learned something new	Learned something new	Inspired changes to work	Inspired changes to work
National Tutors’ Forum	86%	96%	74%	87%
ALO Forum	96%	90%	58%	53%
Numeracy conference	88%	94%	81%	93%
ESOL conference	79%	na	63%	na
Family learning conference	80%	na	73%	na

na = not available until May 2014



## Supporting parents help their children learn

NALA's [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie) website is part of a campaign to build awareness about the important role parents and guardians play in building their children's literacy and numeracy skills.

During 2013 we continued to work with stakeholders on the project to promote the website and develop content. We worked closely with a literacy and numeracy working group made up of representatives from early years' organisations and also with the Library Unit of the Local Government Management Agency. By the end of the year, over 85,000 different people visited the website.

Most people (2 out of 3) found our website in response to our promotional work and through referrals from stakeholders. The remainder found the website through an internet search. The most popular search items were maths games, reading, and learning and education games. The most popular pages on the website related to activities for 5 – 7 year old children. People are viewing the website mainly from their desktop (75%), and also from their mobile phones (14%) and tablets (11%).

May and June were the busiest months, probably because it coincided with the television series 'The Family Project'. In the lead up to the television series the County Childcare Committees and libraries distributed promotional material about the website to the public. The libraries also had a [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie) library day in June 2013 with events going on nationwide. We also gave presentations about the website to different groups such as:

- Young Ballymun Breakfast Buddies group,
- Parents in Killinarden, Tallaght,
- Librarians at the Youth Library Conference, and
- Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinators at a national event.

We wrote articles on [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie) in magazines such as:

- the Irish National Teachers Organisation 'In Touch' magazine,
- the Irish Primary Principal's Network's 'Leadership Plus' magazine, and
- the 'Education Matters Yearbook 2013' produced by NUIG.

Twenty-three adult literacy schemes requested and received promotional material for the website. Fifty-four schools (26 in DEIS areas) requested and received promotional material on the site.

**The number of people who subscribed to the ezine from the website increased from 112 in January 2013 to 986 by December 2013.**

**The Facebook page was set up in April 2013 and had 450 'likes' by December 2013.**

We were delighted that [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie) was given 8th place out of 20 by one well known website called [www.lifehack.org](http://www.lifehack.org) in an article about excellent websites that make your child smarter.

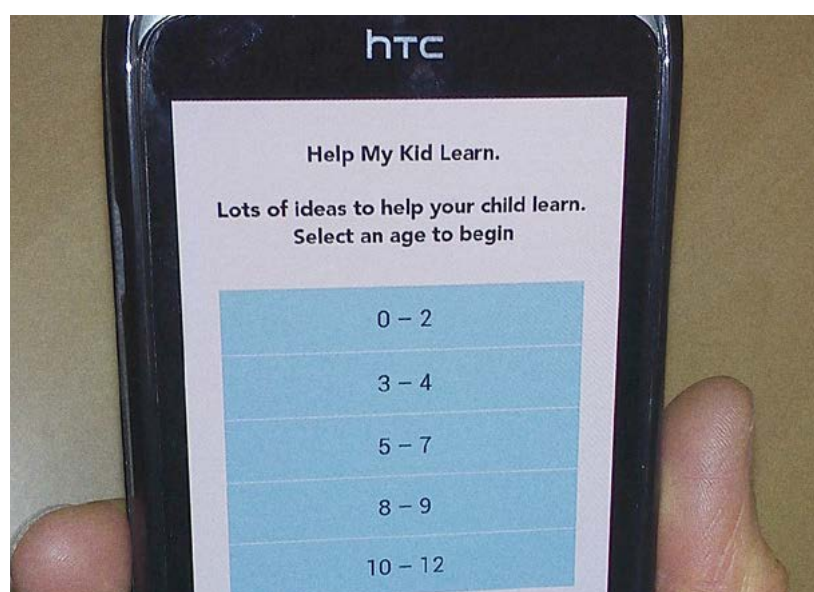
[www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie) is part of the National Department of Education and Skills Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020.

NALA regularly reports to the Department of Education and Skills in relation to this strategy.

#### **Stakeholders we worked with:**

- Library Unit, Local Government Management Agency
- Library Association
- South Dublin County Libraries
- Early Years Policy Unit, Department of Education
- Childminding Ireland
- Early Childhood Ireland
- National Parents Council Primary
- Irish National Teachers' Organisation
- Irish Primary Principals' Network
- Teachers' Union Ireland
- National Education Welfare Board
- Junior Certificate School Programme Library Project
- Association Secondary Teachers Ireland
- National Council Curriculum Assessment
- Barnardos
- Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists

- AONTAS
- Education Programming RTE
- Clare Family Learning
- Young Ballymun
- One Family
- Children's Books Ireland
- Reading Association
- CALMAST
- Education and Training Boards Ireland
- Adult Education Officers' Association
- Adult Literacy Organisers' Association
- Waterford Institute Technology Literacy Centre
- Irish Local Development Network
- Community and Voluntary Pillar
- Community Platform
- St Pats College Write to read
- Irish Steiner Kindergarden Association
- Fingal County Childcare Committee
- Leitrim County Childcare Committee
- Terry Maguire, IT Tallaght



[www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie) can be easily viewed on a mobile phone

## 160 students attended our Student Days

Student days give us the opportunity to hear feedback from students from around the country about the issues that concern them.

The Student Sub-committee of NALA's Executive Committee facilitated two student days this year. The first was in Dublin on 13 April and the other was in Waterford on 11 May in the Waterford Institute of Technology. A hundred students attended in Dublin and 60 students attended in Waterford. Two main recommendations arose:

1. NALA should continue to lobby for more hours and funding for literacy classes at a national level and encourage students to be advocates; and
2. Students are interested in being kept up to date about national events and changes such as the Education and Training Boards and SOLAS.

The Student Sub-committee was keen to ensure there was a fun element to the day and that students could talk to each other as much as possible. The workshops in 2013 were on:

- storytelling,
- drama,
- fun with numbers; and
- a walking debate.

Some students put their name forward for NALA's 'Learner Ambassador Programme'. A Learner Ambassador is a student who shares their story about the benefits of returning to education with people in their community and by doing so often motivates others to take up a learning opportunity. We are coordinating this project in 2014 for the Department of Education and Skills.

***// In 2013 there were 36 successful applications for the NALA Student Development Fund, and 911 students benefited from this Fund. //***

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140 evaluation forms were completed and 20 interviews were carried out by the Student Sub-committee on the student days. The main feedback was that the student days offer the chance to meet adults who have faced similar issues. This was comforting for students. Feedback after these days also suggests there is a longer term impact on the attendees of building confidence and an increased interest in national events that may impact on their literacy classes locally.

## Student development fund

In 2013 there were 36 successful applications for the NALA Student Development Fund, and 911 students benefited from this Fund. Events that students took part in ranged from visits to historical places (a famine village, workhouse, Glendalough, Cobh for the Titanic, trips to the theatre), to exhibitions in Collins Barracks, the Chester Beatty and the Islamic Cultural Centre in Clonskeagh and local 'gatherings' of students that do not normally get a chance to meet.

Adult Literacy Organisers Frances Ward, Pat Ayton and Pat Bennett at our AGM in March.



# Access

We encouraged adults with literacy difficulties to take up learning opportunities.

In 2013, we:

- raised awareness of literacy issues through our TV series, The Family Project, which typically had almost 190,000 viewers a week;
- wrote 24 press releases and did 15 interviews with journalists that resulted in over 190 mentions of literacy in the media;
- answered 5,092 calls on our Freephone and responded to 600 texts to our Freetext service;
- provided plain English editing to over 60 organisations to make their written information easier to understand;
- gave plain English training courses to about 20 organisations, training over 300 participants;
- presented at four conferences and seminars, promoting the benefits of using plain English in their sector;
- contributed to three government departments and agencies consultations highlighting the importance of plain English;
- influenced the New Public Sector Reform Plan and responsibilities for public bodies in terms of plain language;
- won three important bids related to plain English including the rights to host the PLAIN Conference in 2015;
- secured a government commitment to address and prioritise health literacy in developing future health policy;
- organised the National Health Literacy Advisory Panel meetings and agreed an action plan for the next three years;
- promoted health literacy at our National Adult Literacy Awareness Week and Crystal Clear Awards;
- met 8 organisations to raise awareness of and discuss the role of health literacy in their work.



Jennifer Dowling, NALA  
Freephone Operator.



## Raising awareness

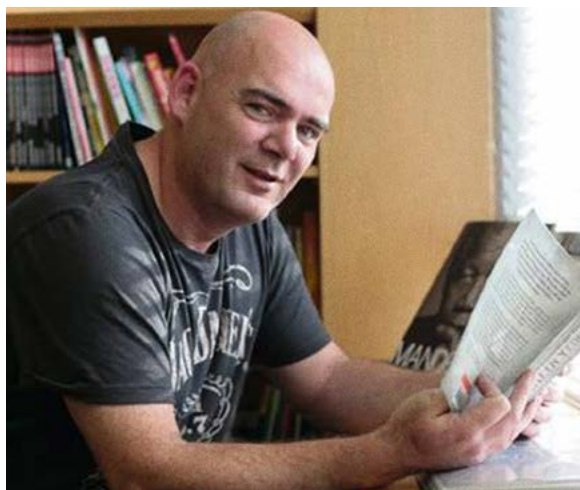
We increased participation in adult literacy services and made it easier for more people to learn through distance education programmes. This work involves encouraging adults to improve their literacy through a TV series, national advertising and talking to the media. All our promotional work directs people to ring or text us, or go online for information. In 2013, there were 57,000 adults attending literacy classes in the Education and Training Boards, 14,000 adults using our online learning website [www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie) and almost 500 adults working with a tutor through our Distance Learning Service.

### TV series – The Family Project

The Family Project was our 13th TV series. It was broadcast on Monday nights on RTÉ One from 20 May to 24 June. The six-part TV series followed six families from around Ireland working together to overcome educational issues that affect their lives. Each week, a different family set out to tackle a problem that had a particular impact on them.

One family featured a Dad wanting to return to education, another focused on children who were having difficulty with their maths, while another was about parents who simply find it hard to get the time to help with homework.

Fran O'Neill from Cavan was interviewed by the Irish Independent in September about his journey back to education.



Each family was guided by Ireland's best education experts. The experts developed a learning programme for families and gave them tools to address their particular issue. They showed families ways that they could work together to set and reach their learning goals. The experts were from the same area as the family, to show that local resources are available to everyone in Ireland.

Each family also had a personal mentor. The mentors are well-known Irish people. They included Johnny Murtagh, Sheila O'Flanagan and Mary O'Rourke. They agreed to mentor because of their personal interest in education and their understanding of the issues families face.

The TV series recorded very high ratings. Each week, an average of 189,433 viewers watched the show, representing 16% of the viewing public. This was our third highest viewership over 13 series.

The series also promoted [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie). This resulted in over 15,000 hits to this site during this six week period.

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's (BAI) Sound and Vision Fund and RTÉ funded the series and Animo TV produced it.

We are delighted to announce that we have secured funding to develop a new TV series around the theme of Family Learning. This will be broadcast in May 2014 on RTÉ One.

In addition to NALA's own broadcast work, we also worked with Wordaid, Co Kilkenny VEC and Kilkenny Carlow Local Radio to secure BAI funding for a short radio series around literacy learners which was aired during 2013. Limerick ETB was also successful in securing Sound and Vision funding for a TV series being developed.

***// We are delighted to announce that we have secured funding to develop a new TV series around the theme of Family Learning. //***



## **An Post national advertising campaign**

For the last six years, An Post has produced and funded a national TV advertising campaign to encourage those with literacy difficulties to take those difficult first steps back to education. Since this time we have recorded over 20,000 calls to our Freephone and Freetext number. This year the advertisements were broadcast in January and September, and we recorded 2,173 calls and texts during this time.

In October we were delighted to present these results at a European Awareness Raising for Adult Learning and Education (ARALE) Conference in Brussels. It was a great opportunity to share our work in a wider European context.

## **Talking to the media**

In 2013, we raised awareness of literacy services and issues in Ireland. We wrote 24 press releases and did about 15 interviews with journalists. From this work, we recorded over 190 mentions of literacy and numeracy in print media and several interviews on TV and Radio. We also recorded an additional 130 mentions of our TV series 'The Family Project' in TV highlights.

In total we recorded:

- 13 articles in the national daily papers;
- 162 mentions of literacy in regional newspapers;
- 130 mentions of 'The Family Project' in TV Picks of the Week; and
- 15 articles in trade journals and magazines.

Highlights during the year included:

- promoting our new course aimed at 18 – 15 year olds in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area which was covered in 15 local papers;
- promoting the benefits of using plain English and the importance of health literacy with MSD and the Crystal Clear Awards which was covered in 34 national, regional and trade publications;
- promoting the role of parents in their children's education and our website [helpmykidlearn.ie](http://helpmykidlearn.ie), recording 56 press mentions
- In September and October we concentrated our efforts on

highlighting the results of the new OECD Adult Skills Survey. We arranged briefings with journalists and the OECD senior analyst, William Thorne, before the survey results were announced, and we did interviews with journalists on the day the results were released. Inez Bailey did interviews with RTÉ One and TV3 News about the results, as well as doing an extended interview with Newstalk. All national radio stations covered the results in their news bulletins, and there was extensive coverage, interviews and analysis in the Irish Examiner, Irish Times and Irish Independent.

## **National Adult Literacy Awareness Week 2013**

This year our theme for National Adult Literacy Awareness Week was 'Literacy for the 21st Century – preparing for PIAAC'. Our objective was to help policy makers and stakeholders to understand the survey in order to analyse and properly interpret the results. By doing this, our goal was to inform better policy, improve adult education, training and workplace skills.

See Policy section on page 17 for more information.

## **Poster and leaflet distribution**

We organised bespoke posters for 22 adult literacy centres this year, promoting local adult literacy services and Education and Training Boards. We also distributed posters highlighting literacy services to our members and 32 adult learning centres.

## **Freephone and Freetext service**

This year we received over 5,000 calls to our Freephone and 600 texts to our Freetext service.



## Plain English Editing and Training Service: making progress through editing, training, presentations and [www.simplyput.ie](http://www.simplyput.ie)

In 2013, we helped a range of organisations to make their written information easier to understand. Our **editing clients** included:

- hospitals and other bodies under the Health Service Executive,
- public sector bodies such as
  - the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions,
  - the Pensions Ombudsman,
  - the Food Safety Authority of Ireland,
  - the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, and
- private companies such as MSD, AbbVie Pharmaceuticals and Bayer.

We ran plain English **training courses** for organisations such as:

- AIB,
- Clúid Housing Association,
- Donegal County Council,
- FBD Insurance,
- SpunOut,
- SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland), and
- UCD.

We also provided an **open plain English course** to 24 participants from organisations such as Caranua (the new Residential Institution Fund organisation representing survivors of residential abuse), Revenue, the Irish Sports Council, Early Childhood Ireland and the Dyslexia Association of Ireland.

We **presented** at seminars and conferences including:

- the Irish Council for General Practitioners' conference (250 attendees),
- two Business in the Community meetings in Dublin and Cork (120 attendees), and

- an IPPOSI (Irish Association for Patient Organisations, Science and Industry) seminar in the Mansion House (80 attendees).

We contributed to consultations related to plain English for the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and The Pensions Board.

About 5,000 people visited our plain English website [www.simplyput.ie](http://www.simplyput.ie). This compares with 3,000 people in 2011.

We also won important bids such as our bid to:

- provide editing and training to staff of the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (Medical Card), and
- host the prestigious Plain Language Association InterNational (PLAIN) Conference in 2015.

Our hosting of PLAIN 2015 will spotlight the need to use plain English for public documents both nationally and internationally. We are very excited about this conference, which has previously been held in Sweden, Sydney, Vancouver and the Netherlands. Thanks to the support of the Department of Education and Skills, we have already secured Dublin Castle Conference Centre as the conference venue. We are now planning how we are going to secure sponsorship for this prestigious international conference.

## **Other highlights**

1. This year we worked closely with several Government departments. Of particular note was our work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

In August, we met with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to discuss plain English in the public service. This initially resulted in us developing a Plain English Guide for Civil Servants. The guide was launched at their Customer Care Seminar in Croke Park. A more impressive result of our work with this Department is their inclusion of more specific actions on plain English in the New Public Sector Reform Action Plan.

The actions read as follows:

- improve the accessibility of information for the citizen;
- continue to centrally promote the benefits of the use of plain language including through guidelines, training and other supports;
- all public bodies should commit, including in their Customer Charters, to making information more accessible to the citizen and particularly to maximizing the use of plain language in letters, application forms, information leaflets and so on.


We look forward to supporting this Department achieve these actions.

We also did significant editing work for the Department of Social Protection (the new Intreo Job Seeker Information Pack) and for the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

2. We developed short new courses in plain numbers and report writing.
3. We published articles and news bites in publications such as the Irish Medical Times, the Free Legal Aid Centre Newsletter and Clarity (a plain English journal).
4. Our efforts to promote plain English also got positive coverage in external press releases, documents and mentions in the media.

## Plain English and the property tax letter

*After hearing complaints about people finding the property tax letter confusing to understand, we contacted Revenue and offered to work with them in the New Year to make their letters easier to understand. We hope that by using our plain English service they will save time, money and possible frustration that might otherwise be involved in clarifying information.*



## Putting a spotlight on health literacy

In 2013, we continued to work with the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive and other health bodies to develop health literacy policy and implementation plans.

### **First ever government commitment to health literacy**

In March the government launched 'Healthy Ireland' – a new national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of our country over the coming generation.

Healthy Ireland includes a commitment to 'address and prioritise health literacy in developing future policy, educational and information interventions' (Section 3.8, page 25).

### **National Health Literacy Advisory Panel (HLAP)**

The HLAP consists of members from organisations working in healthcare who are interested in developing health literacy strategies in their own organisation and influencing a national health literacy policy. Members include:

- HSE Social Inclusion and Health Promotion
- Irish Cancer Society (ICS)
- Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF)
- Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD)
- Temple Street Children's University
- University College Dublin
- University College Cork

NALA chairs and organises the meetings for HLAP. In 2013 we met on a quarterly basis to share information and help identify opportunities for individual and joint work. We agreed an action plan for the next three years and have submitted this plan to 'Healthy Ireland'.

The Panel also worked together to:

- publicise the Irish findings of the European health literacy survey;

- develop strategies to implement Health Literacy in relevant political and social contexts; and
- make recommendations for action such as publicity campaigns.

## Promoting Health Literacy

During National Adult Literacy Awareness Week (NALAW) we held a health literacy seminar on the Thursday called 'Literacy for the 21st Century – what will PIAAC mean for the health sector?' The seminar was aimed at policy makers and stakeholders in the health sector to help them identify more clearly how the survey results for Ireland could reflect past policy decisions and impact on future policy direction. See page 18 for more information.

## Crystal Clear Awards

The Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards 2013 took place in Dublin on Monday, 13 May 2013. There were almost 130 entries received across the healthcare sector. GPs, nurses, practice managers, physiotherapists and hospital catering managers and others sent in applications. The number of applications to the Crystal Clear Awards has remained high over the last 6 years highlighting the strong interest in health literacy in the healthcare sector in Ireland.

This year fifteen candidates were recognised for their outstanding efforts to communicate with people in a crystal clear way. See [www.healthliteracy.ie](http://www.healthliteracy.ie) for more information.



Dr. Austin O'Carroll, General Practitioner working in the inner city, Dr. Gerardine Doyle, Senior Lecturer, UCD Business School and Fidelma Browne, Head of Public Communications, HSE all spoke at our Health Literacy Event during National Adult Literacy Awareness Week.

## Building relationships

Over the year NALA met with a number of organisations to raise awareness of, and discuss the role of, health literacy in their work. This included the benefits of using plain English, for example we:

- gave an awareness input to Irish Hospice Foundation Bereavement programme;
- met with academics from the Royal College of Surgeons and had a stand on health literacy at their conference on 'Maximising Day Surgery in Ireland' for nursing / medical delegates;
- met with the Irish Platform for Patients' Organisations, Science and Industry (IPPOSI);
- met with Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) Social Care Standards staff and gave a 'lunch and learn' to staff;
- gave a workshop on health literacy at the Open Conference of the Institute of Public Health (IPH) ;
- presented to multidisciplinary weekly academic meetings of staff at St Patrick's Mental Health Services;
- presented health literacy at the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) Conference; and
- met with the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland to discuss the role for health literacy awareness training.



# Strengthening our effectiveness as an organisation

## Communications

The primary goal of our communications strategy is to support and reinforce our strategic objectives in relation to policy, practice and access. Communications is particularly important for us as it is central to the impact and effectiveness of our work.

In 2013 we continued to improve our communications to members, educational partners and the general public by providing interesting and relevant content on [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie), our Facebook page, on our Twitter account and information in our monthly e-zines and bi-annual newsletter.

This resulted in more than 57,000 people visiting our website in 2013, which is a 2% increase on 2012 visits. Over a third of these people were returning visitors to the website. People typically spent longer on the site and visited more pages than they did in 2012.

We also developed a new area on our website for tutors at **[www.nala.ie/tutors](http://www.nala.ie/tutors)**. It is packed full of new and proven teaching, training and reference material. It includes:

- essential information, videos and resources for teaching reading, writing, maths and more;
- recommended websites, apps and resources to support learning;
- latest videos, upcoming training, conferences and professional development courses; and
- hundreds of free downloadable worksheets that are searchable by subject, level or award.

We continued to build our Facebook and Twitter presence. We now have 1,855 'likes' on our Facebook page, a 76% increase from 2012. We have 1,323 followers on our Twitter account, an 86% increase from 2012.

Also in 2013, we provided our members with 12 **ezines** and two '**Literacy Matters**' newsletters.

## Administration

2013 was another busy year for our administration team. Over the year, they:

- dealt with more than 7,184 telephone queries, of which 5,092 came through our Freephone service;
- dealt with 38 customers seeking information and resource material;
- processed 237 orders for resources;
- provided administration support for 35 events and training programmes, catering for 1,152 people; and
- processed membership forms for 666 NALA members.

## Membership

At our 2013 AGM, we introduced free membership for students, volunteer tutors and members of the public with an interest in literacy who wish to support our work. One-hundred and nine people became free members.

By year end we had 666 members (414 individuals and 252 organisations). This represented a 30% increase on membership numbers from 2012. Student membership represented 12% of our membership (85 students).

Sixty-three organisations availed of our membership benefit of accessing QQI accreditation for students in their centre, through our Distance Learning Service and **www.writeon.ie**.



# Structure and funding

We are a member-based organisation. Our membership is open to all people and organisations interested in or involved in adult literacy development. At our annual general meeting, members elect an executive committee that oversees our work. The executive committee includes students and tutors, adult literacy organisers and people involved in adult and further education and training.

We are a registered company with limited and charitable status. We receive a grant from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) through SOLAS that enables us to staff our office in Dublin. The DES, along with other Government Departments, State Bodies, the European Union and the private sector, also funds specific research and development work. All staff are paid according to the public sector general service pay scales.

NALA complies with the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations.

You can view or download a copy of our full audited accounts, details of our organisation's structure, staff and executive committee and all our publications from **[www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)**.

# Some acronyms and terms explained

## **Advocacy**

Actively supporting or arguing for a cause, idea or policy, which may involve raising awareness, recommending particular action and, or, speaking up for individuals' rights.

## **AGM**

Annual General Meeting

## **ALOA**

Adult Literacy Organisers' Association

## **AONTAS**

The national adult learning organisation

## **Blended learning**

This refers to a mixing of different teaching and learning techniques. For example, a blended learning approach can combine face-to-face tuition with computer based learning

## **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

This is the way members of professional associations maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives

## **DES**

Department of Education and Skills

## **Distance learning**

Distance Learning occurs when learners and tutors are separated by either space or time. For example, a student can follow an online computer programme from their home while their tutor is in another location

**DSP**

Department of Social Protection

**ESOL**

English for Speakers of Other Languages

**ESRI**

Economic and Social Research Institute

**ETB**

Education and Training Board

**ETBI**

Education and Training Boards Ireland – the national representative association for Ireland’s sixteen Education and Training Boards

**EU**

European Union

**Evaluation**

A process of studying something carefully and measuring its features against certain standards to see what is good or needs to be improved

**FÁS**

Foras Áiseanna Saothair – the former national training and employment authority – now SOLAS

**FET**

Further Education and Training

**FETAC**

Further Education Training Awards Council

**Framework**

A model or system used to organise information or to plan, develop or decide something

**HSE**

Health Service Executive



**Implement**

Put something into place, for example carrying out the recommendations in this plan

**Integration of literacy and numeracy**

Designing and delivering education and training programmes in a way that develops the course-related language, literacy and numeracy as part of the core subject

**INO**

Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

**ITT**

Institute of Technology Tallaght

**Learning opportunities**

The range of literacy learning options, including individual and group tutoring, workplace literacy programmes and distance education, among others

**Level (1 – 10) qualification**

One of the 10 levels of qualifications a person can get in Ireland

**Mission**

An aim of a group, an organisation or a person

**MSD**

Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (Human Health) Ltd

**NGO**

Non-governmental organisation

**Numeracy**

A lifeskill that involves the competent use of everyday mathematical skills and the confidence to manage the mathematical demands of real-life situations

**Objectives**

Planned results to be achieved within a stated period in the future

**Outcome**

It means what happened or the result of something

**Partnership**

Two or more people or groups working together on an activity or to reach a particular goal

**Plain English**

Plain English is a way of presenting information that helps someone understand it the first time they read or hear it

**Policy**

A course of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or person

**Putting People First**

An Irish Government plan to improve Local Government

**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

**Recognition of prior learning (RPL)**

A process used to evaluate skills and knowledge acquired outside the classroom for the purpose of recognising competence against a given set of standards

**SOLAS**

The new authority for further education and training (replacing FÁS)

**Stakeholder**

A person or group with an interest (a stake) in the actions or policies of an organisation, which means that they may affect the actions or policies and or be affected by them

**Strategic**

Something that forms part of or relates to a long-term plan to achieve an aim

**WIT**

Waterford Institute of Training

# Our Vision

We want Ireland to be a place where:

- adult literacy is a valued right,
- everyone can develop their literacy and numeracy, and
- individuals can take part more fully in society.

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[www.writeon.ie](http://www.writeon.ie)  
[www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie)

Plain English website:  
[www.simplyput.ie](http://www.simplyput.ie)

Freephone support line:  
1800 20 20 65

# What's next

## Looking ahead to 2014

**Policy** We will work with a range of policy makers concerned with the implementation of Government policy. This will include those responsible for the Further Education and Training Strategy, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Children and Young People, Pathways to Work, Healthy Ireland and Putting People First, as well as the Public Libraries Strategy. **Practice** We will work with the range of practitioners to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These will include supplying relevant learning content and information on new and proven teaching and learning approaches and methods. **Access** We will work with the general public, including learners, to build awareness of the importance of having strong literacy and numeracy skills to more effectively manage their employment, health, family and community life.

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[www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)



National Adult Literacy Agency  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh