

# Review

## Our year and our work, 2015

**Policy** We worked to ensure that government policy that supports adults to improve their literacy and numeracy skills was implemented.

**Practice** We provided professional development events, training and new resources for adult literacy and numeracy tutors to improve the quality of teaching. **Access** We encouraged adults with literacy and numeracy difficulties to take up a learning opportunity and secured the public's support for the greater use of plain English.

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## Summary Annual Report 2015



National Adult Literacy Agency  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Our mission is to be  
the voice of adult  
literacy and numeracy  
in Ireland, and, with  
our partners, influence  
policy and practice  
to support people  
in developing their  
literacy and numeracy.

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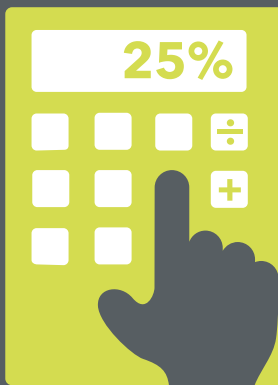
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Some acronyms and  
terms explained



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



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

# 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 has a literacy difficulty and one in four people has difficulty with numeracy in Ireland.

Since we were established by volunteers in 1980, we have been a leading campaigning and lobbying group on adult literacy issues. We have been involved with:

- policy-making;
- tutor training;
- developing teaching materials;
- distance education services;
- research; and
- national awareness campaigns.

Many people and organisations have contributed a lot to adult literacy work in Ireland. For our part, we have put literacy on the political agenda and secured funding for adult literacy services. Currently, 50,000 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 2015. The sections follow the same order as our Strategic Plan 2014 – 2016 which has three main objectives under the themes of policy, practice and access. Each objective has five actions. You can read and download information about our strategic plan, accounts and publications at [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie). On page 66 some acronyms and terms in this review are explained.

# Our key achievements in 2015

## Individuals

We raised awareness of services and helped people improve their literacy.



**1,500**

referrals to adult literacy services



**1,000**

people got QQI accreditation through our Distance Learning Service

**3,600 level 2 minor awards**

**890 level 3 minor awards**

**5,000 leaflets and 1,500 posters**

distributed through ETBs, Citizen Information Centres, Intreo and at events

**High profile media coverage on RTÉ and in national papers**

**TV advertising campaign**

**52,000**

clicks to our website from a Facebook campaign

## Students

We represented the views of adult literacy students and supported their learning.

**1,600**

students took part in learning activities funded by our Student Development Fund

**58**

organisations received grants from our Student Development Fund

**160**

students attended our student days in Dublin and Cork

**7**

Student subcommittee met 7 times and informed our work

**1060 members:  
an increase of 45% +**

# Further Education and Training tutors

We helped to improve the quality of teaching.

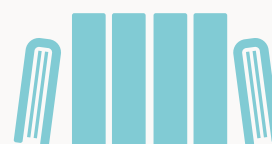


We developed new resources for tutors

A **new workbook** for maths  
**10 tutor worksheets** shared through our ezine

200

FET professionals took part in integrating literacy workshops



We researched and shared **6 new reports** to support teaching and learning, including

**2 reports** with best practice case studies on teaching literacy and numeracy

**1 new framework** for the CPD needs of numeracy tutors

**3 new research reports** on PIAAC data

460

tutors attended our professional development events

98%

of tutors at our events said they learned something new

80

centres used our elearning website writeon.ie to get learners QQI accreditation

160

tutors received training on how to use writeon.ie

# Parents

We helped parents support their children's literacy and numeracy development.



130,000

people used our website helpmykidlearn.ie

160,000

z-cards were sent to parents through primary schools



19,000

people 'Liked' our helpmykidlearn Facebook page

1,500

parents have signed up to get our e-zine

# Policy makers

We worked with key stakeholders to implement national policies that support adults improve their literacy and numeracy through:

[Meetings](#)

[Briefing Papers](#)

[Presentations](#)

[Workshops](#)

National Strategy	Stakeholder
<b>Further Education and Training Strategy and National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SOLAS</li><li>- Department of Education and Skills</li><li>- Education and Training Boards</li><li>- Education and Training Boards Ireland</li><li>- QQI</li><li>- Adult Literacy Organisers, Tutors, Adult Education Officers</li><li>- Students</li></ul>
<b>National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Children and Young People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Schools</li><li>- Home School Liaison Coordinators/ TULSA</li><li>- Department of Education and Skills</li><li>- National Parents Council</li><li>- Parents</li></ul>
<b>Pathways to Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Department of Social Protection (DSP)</li><li>- Front line staff and case managers in 9 DSP divisions</li></ul>
<b>Healthy Ireland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Department of Health</li><li>- HSE</li><li>- GPs</li><li>- Irish College of General Practitioners</li><li>- Pharmacies</li><li>- Irish Pharmacy Union</li><li>- HIQA</li><li>- Health media</li></ul>
<b>Putting People First</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Local Authorities</li><li>- Local Community Development Committee</li><li>- Local Development Companies</li></ul>
<b>European Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- EPALE</li><li>- ELINET</li><li>- EAAL</li><li>- EBSN</li></ul>



# Healthcare providers

We worked with people in the health sector to help make their services more accessible to people with literacy needs.



Spoke at 4 conferences about health literacy

Developed **2 information guides and videos with HIQA** to help healthcare workers communicate effectively with the general public

**New CPD programme** developed with the Irish College of General Practitioners



Secured **50 articles** about health literacy in medical and national press

**5 pharmacies and 1 general practice** were awarded the **Crystal Clear Mark**



Designed a health and wellbeing programme for older people

# Information providers

We helped remove barriers for people with literacy difficulties through our plain English campaigns and service.

**600**

participants did plain English training



**5,000**

people signed our petition for plain English

**250**

delegates attended PLAIN 2015 - our international plain language conference

**70**

organisations entered our plain English awards



Research shows that **8 out of 10 Irish adults** are aware of 'Plain English'. This is a 30% increase on 2014

**18 countries**

**5 continents**

**70 contributors**

**100**

organisations used our editing service

# A message from our chairperson



Dear members,

2015 was a busy year for the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). A large volume of work was completed in line with the Strategic Plan 2014-2016. An overview of these activities is outlined in this Annual Review.

On a personal note, I was honoured to be elected as NALA Chairperson at last March's Annual General Meeting. After serving terms as Honorary Secretary and Ordinary Member, it was a privilege to step into the role of Chairperson.

The commitment and diligence of the board has made my job easier. New structures were introduced to the board with the creation and expansion of subcommittees. Willing volunteers came forward to offer their time to ensure these new structures worked effectively. The result has been increased participation and transparency.

The audit subcommittee was extended to include audit and finance under the stewardship of Treasurer Thomas McManus. Vice Chairperson Theresa Byrne made a valuable contribution before recently stepping down from the board. The subcommittee reviewed risk, financial control and audits.

A new staff and policy subcommittee was formed. Honorary Secretary Sonia Weafer and Mary Bambrick were part of the new group to drive this subcommittee forward. The subcommittee contributed to recruitment, succession-planning and implementation of policy.

The student subcommittee continued its sterling work. Accounts of its activities were fed back to the board through students Frank Locke, Olive Phelan and Laura Foley.

I would like to thank the director and staff of NALA who work tirelessly to ensure the organisation achieves its objectives.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of our members. The membership of NALA is rapidly growing which is a sign of a healthy, developing organisation.

I hope you enjoy the Annual Review of NALA's work, and I thank you for your loyal support.

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

**Trevor Moore**  
**Chairperson**  
**National Adult Literacy Agency**

# An overview from our director



**“Literacy, as a gateway to participation in society, is a fundamental right and must be a priority for all who are concerned with human rights and equality. Recognising it as a right carries with it an obligation on the part of the State to ensure that the necessary interventions are put in place at the most effective stages, which means as early as possible”.**

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**President Michael D Higgins from his speech at the launch of National Adult Literacy Awareness Week 2015.**

Dear members,

The quote from President Higgins highlights the State’s obligation to support all citizens to develop their literacy so that they can participate fully in society. This provides a useful starting point from which to assess NALA’s work in 2015, the mid-way point through our strategic plan.

The first objective in our strategic plan is to work to support the implementation of **policy** across a number of state departments and agencies. This follows from our previous work in getting adult literacy and numeracy prioritised in national policy. Chief amongst these is the Further Education and Training Strategy which contains the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. It is being implemented by SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), with NALA’s support. During the year, that represented on average, two meetings per month with SOLAS and a further six meetings of the National Advisory Committee.

Additionally, SOLAS asked us to write briefing papers to inform future decisions in four key areas related to adult basic education. These were English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities, broadening access and informing targets. These papers are now under consideration by the relevant stakeholders.

The mid-term review of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Children and Young People gave us another opportunity to augment our work. Specifically, it allowed us to call for the clear linking of this strategy to the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. For example, to develop family literacy and numeracy in the context of lifelong learning, an underpinning principle of education policy in Ireland. We continued to collaborate with professionals concerned with children's education on the shared purpose of supporting literacy and numeracy development for all.

Health literacy policy and its implementation was another area of exciting work during the year. Seeing how to embed health literacy in the roll out of Healthy Ireland, working with the Healthy Ireland Council, the HSE and others, has been an interesting challenge. The health and wellbeing of us all is very dependent on our capacity to be aware of and adopt healthy lifestyle options. Literacy and numeracy remains a significant barrier to much health information and education, and better health outcomes.

Finally, our efforts to roll out literacy and numeracy policy in local authorities continued, albeit with slower progress than we would have liked. Like in most areas of our work, there are early adopters and we are grateful for their enthusiasm in exploring how they can improve their services to better support people with literacy and numeracy needs.

Our second objective in our strategic plan is to work with adult literacy and numeracy practitioners to improve the quality of teaching and learning **practice**. During the year, there was more demand from ETBs and others for training to meet the national recommendations set out in the Department of Education and Skills Review of the Adult Literacy Service. We met this demand and provided training events for over 500 practitioners. We also supported 200 practitioners to integrate literacy and numeracy across further education and training programmes.

We continued our research and shared case studies that capture best practice in adult literacy and numeracy tuition around the country. In addition, our work to break down the findings from the OECD Adult Skills Survey provided a great insight into how adults with low literacy levels use their skills at home and in the workplace.

In response to demand from practitioners, we also completed and made available level one learning content on our e-learning website [writeon.ie](http://writeon.ie). Subject to the conclusion of the QQI review of levels one to three, which NALA is also contributing to, we will explore offering accreditation at level one. In the meantime, [writeon.ie](http://writeon.ie) continues to support many learners develop their skills and get accreditation.

NALA strives to improve access to information through the use of plain English. Our work in this area hit unprecedented heights during the year. First of all we hosted the international PLAIN Conference in Dublin. It was attended by 250 delegates from 5 continents and established NALA as a key player in this global field. This was followed by the achievement of over 5,000 signatures on our petition for plain English in information aimed at the public. In the midst of all that activity, the service reached more clients and is well set for continued growth in the future.

Our third objective in our strategic plan is to build awareness of literacy and numeracy and increase **access** to services. Adults who have experienced literacy and numeracy issues are vital to our work in this area. They act as advocates for others to return to learning and help improve services that are aimed at them. NALA has a very long history in this area, a vibrant student subcommittee, huge demand for our student fund and increasing attendance at our student development days.

Throughout the year, NALA engaged in a number of high profile awareness raising campaigns. This included interviews and national media coverage, an advertising campaign sponsored by An Post, an online Facebook campaign and our attendance at major events. All our awareness work encourages people to return to learning and we recorded 1,500 referrals to ETBs and other services during the year as well as a surge of visitors to our website.

We were delighted when President Higgins launched National Adult Literacy Awareness Week, and again helped us raise awareness of literacy in Ireland through the national media. We continued to promote the importance of family literacy using our website [helpmykidlearn.ie](http://helpmykidlearn.ie) through an online marketing campaign.

NALA also contributed its expertise in awareness raising to ELINET, a European network of nearly 80 organisations in 28 countries concerned with literacy across all ages.

Importantly this year, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection invited us to make a presentation in November which provided us with a great opportunity to highlight progress to date in relation to addressing the adult literacy issue as well as our pre-election demands.

We also made a point of meeting representatives from all the political parties and asked them to include adult literacy development in their manifestos, which most of them did.

Both in Ireland and at EU level, adult literacy and numeracy remains a topic of interest amongst politicians, civil servants, educators, the media and the general public. NALA remains on track to meet all its objectives and fully implement our strategic plan in its final year, a year that will also bring the challenges of a new government. NALA is well set to continue to realise our mission, so beautifully captured by our patron, President Michael D Higgins:

“Let us strive to eradicate illiteracy from our society, realising our shared obligation to ensure that no one is denied the important tool of citizenship that is literacy; and let us never forget that citizenship is more than about rights, it is about belonging; of being ‘at home’ in one’s world without fear or shame. It is only through the envisioning of such a citizenship that we can craft together a future built on inclusion, a creative society, and a real Republic”.

On a sad note, our former colleague Peter Kiernan died during the year. While he no longer worked for NALA, he was a valued and much loved member of staff and a great supporter of literacy issues in Ireland.

Thank you for your support.



**Inez Bailey**  
**Director**  
**National Adult Literacy Agency**

# Policy

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## NALA Strategic Plan: Objective 1 **Support the implementation of policy**

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The OECD Survey of Adult Skills<sup>1</sup> shows that about 18% of Irish adults are at or below level one on a five level literacy scale. Twenty five per cent of Irish adults scored at or below level one for numeracy.

Unmet adult literacy and numeracy needs have devastating consequences for individuals, communities and the economy. People at the lowest literacy and numeracy levels earn less income, have poorer health and are more likely to be unemployed.<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, we worked with a range of stakeholders to implement national policies that support adults improve their literacy and numeracy skills. These national policies include:

1. Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019<sup>3</sup>,
2. National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Children and Young People 2011-2014<sup>4</sup>,
3. Pathways to Work<sup>5</sup>,
4. Healthy Ireland<sup>6</sup>, and
5. Putting People First<sup>7</sup>.

Our policy work provides significant opportunities to meet national targets to reduce the number of adults with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

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1 OECD Survey of Adult Skills (2012) also known as the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

2 OECD Survey of Adult Skills (2012)

3 Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS (2014)

4 Department of Education and Skills (2011)

5 Department of Social Protection (Action Plan for 2016 – 2020)

6 Department of Health (National framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland 2013-2025)

7 Department of the Environment and Local Government (Action Programme for Effective Local Government 2012)



## 5 actions:

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1. Work with SOLAS to contribute to the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy, including the national adult literacy and numeracy strategy, and its implementation through the development of briefing papers.
2. Work with key stakeholders involved in the education of children to identify and influence ways to help parents support their children's learning.
3. Work with the Department of Social Protection in designing labour market activation measures which will help unemployed people deal with literacy and numeracy issues.
4. Develop and implement a health literacy action plan to build health literacy in Ireland.
5. Roll out a literacy and numeracy friendly programme across a number of local authorities to improve their communications.

Students Michael Power, Liz Corkish and Tony Moloney pictured with President Michael D Higgins at the launch event for National Adult Literacy Awareness Week 2015.

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## Objective 1

### Action 1

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Work with SOLAS to contribute to the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy, including the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, and its implementation through the development of briefing papers.

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A key area of our work is to support the implementation of the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy<sup>8</sup>. The aim of the FET Strategy is to develop a world-class education and training system that meets the needs of all citizens. NALA sits on the Strategic Implementation Advisory Committee which oversees progress on implementing the FET Strategy and met four times during the year.

In particular, our work centres on supporting the implementation of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy within the FET Strategy.

There are 12 elements in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Each element is being led and managed by SOLAS<sup>9</sup>, in cooperation with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) and NALA. These three stakeholders are joined by representatives of senior and middle management in the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). This includes two Education Officers, two Adult Education Officers and two Adult Literacy Organisers. This group makes up the National Advisory Committee for the implementation of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. During the year, we met with this committee six times plus two sub group meetings, and contributed to a number of draft papers, including 'The Wider Benefits of Learning'.

NALA also engaged in four meetings with ETBI concerned with supporting adult literacy and numeracy themed continuing professional development (CPD) for all ETB staff.

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<sup>8</sup> The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019 (SOLAS)

<sup>9</sup> SOLAS is the Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland.

John Sweeney, economist and social activist takes questions from the audience at our event 'Learning and life chances: promoting equality through basic education'.

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In 2015, SOLAS asked NALA to develop briefing papers on four topics:

- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL),
- Inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in literacy services,
- Broadening access, and
- Informing targets.

The aim of these papers was to both document the current position and inform future decisions regarding each of these areas. These papers are now under consideration by the relevant stakeholders. We also started work on a new national literacy and numeracy awareness raising campaign to elicit higher levels of engagement in the literacy service.

Also under the FET Strategy, NALA:

- contributed to the QQI Review of Levels 1-3 and recommended that essential language, literacy and numeracy is integrated in learning and awards at levels 1-3; and
- submitted a response to the consultation document for the new National Skills Strategy.

## Objective 1

### Action 2

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Work with key stakeholders involved in the education of children to identify and influence ways to help parents support their children's learning.

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In 2015, we worked with a range of professionals and organisations who interact with parents on a regular basis. Our aim was to identify ways we could work together to support children's literacy and numeracy development in the home. These stakeholders include:

- Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)<sup>10</sup>,
- Home School Community Liaison Coordinators (HSCLCs)<sup>11</sup>,
- TULSA – the child and family agency,
- Department of Education and Skills, and
- National Parents Council.

During the year, we had meetings, gave presentations and provided resources to these professionals and organisations. Our work showed them how they could influence and help parents they came in contact with, to support their child's literacy and numeracy development.

You can read more about this work on page 54.

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<sup>10</sup> DEIS are schools that get special resources to meet the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities.

<sup>11</sup> HSCLCs are teachers who link with parents in DEIS schools.

## Objective 1

### Action 3

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Work with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) in designing labour market activation measures which will help unemployed people deal with literacy and numeracy issues.

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People with literacy and numeracy difficulties and those without a basic qualification are at the greatest risk of unemployment and already form the greatest group who are unemployed<sup>12</sup>. Therefore DSP front line staff are often the first people who can help unemployed people with literacy and numeracy issues.

This year NALA gave literacy-awareness training and guidelines to the front line staff and case managers in nine divisions of the DSP. In total, since 2014 we have given training to twelve out of the thirteen DSP divisions. The sole remaining DSP division is scheduled to have four literacy awareness trainings delivered by NALA in 2016.

The feedback from these sessions has been extremely positive. The majority of participants felt that they are now better equipped to identify individuals with literacy needs as a result of the training. Participants also felt better equipped to refer someone with a literacy need. Most importantly, all participants identified small changes that they would make to their work to better assist people with literacy needs.

We look forward to building on these relationships with DSP divisions nationwide, and to doing repeat literacy awareness trainings in the future.

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<sup>12</sup> OECD Survey of Adult Skills (2012)

## Objective 1

### Action 4

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## Develop and implement a health literacy action plan to build health literacy in Ireland.

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Health literacy and numeracy involves a person being able to understand health information and to make informed decisions about their health.

People working in the healthcare sector play an important part in improving health literacy and numeracy by communicating clearly and making information and services accessible to patients. In 2015, we continued our work to improve health literacy by promoting it with healthcare professionals and the general public.



Inez Bailey, Director, NALA, Kathleen Lynch, TD, Minister for State for Primary and Social Care, Dr Michael Wolf, health literacy expert and Brian Longstreet, Managing Director, MSD Human Health at the launch of the Crystal Clear Programme.

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## Crystal Clear Mark for Pharmacies and General Practices

In March, Ireland's first health literacy quality mark, the Crystal Clear Pharmacy and General Practice Programme, was launched by NALA and Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (MSD). The programme was developed to recognise the critical role pharmacies and general practices play in helping patients understand their health issues and the practical steps they can take to improve their health. A Crystal Clear Mark will be awarded to pharmacies and general practices that show their commitment to providing a health literacy friendly service to patients. This means they take account of the literacy and numeracy needs of their patients. Kathleen Lynch, TD, Minister of State, Department of Health launched the programme.

Since the launch, five pharmacies and one general practice have been awarded the Crystal Clear Mark.

The Crystal Clear Mark was nominated for an award by the Irish Medical Times for its success as an educational tool, and received a commendation during the awards ceremony, which took place in November.

## Working with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP)

This year we wrote, developed and launched a continuing professional development (CPD) programme with the ICGP. This was launched in September and is available online to all registered GPs.

NALA also spoke at this year's ICGP Summer School on 'Health Literacy in General Practice', and contributed an article to the ICGP's *Journal Forum* on 'Promoting Health Literacy in your Practice'.

## Working with the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)

In association with HIQA, we developed two guides to help health and social care providers communicate effectively with all those using their services. It includes a guide for communicating with adults and a guide for communicating with children and their families. We also worked with HIQA on a short educational video which explains the concept of using plain English in practice.

You can download the guides and watch the video on [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

## Working with older people

We designed a literacy-friendly 'Health and wellbeing programme for older people', which was piloted by An Cosán Community Education Centre in Tallaght. It was funded by South Dublin County Council (SDCC). SDCC Social Inclusion Unit recruited eight participants for the pilot programme and NALA worked with An Cosán to support its delivery and evaluation. The participants' and tutors' evaluation of the pilot programme was very positive. Their feedback and recommendations have informed NALA and SDCC in finalising the programme design.

## Healthy Ireland

NALA's director, Inez Bailey was appointed to the Healthy Ireland Council and contributed to the health literacy commitment in the HSE Implementation Plan for Healthy Ireland.

## Improving awareness of health literacy

This year NALA spoke at a number of conferences about health literacy.

- NUI Galway's 'Health Literacy: Research, Policy and Practice' Health Promotion Conference.
- ICGP's Summer School.
- 'Nursing in Contexts of Marginalised Health' Conference, organised by the School of Nursing and Human Sciences in Dublin City University.

In December NALA was also invited to Waterford to give a training session on health literacy as part of the Healthy Waterford initiative.



This year we also edited our health literacy videos so that we can use them in new ways, make full use of social media platforms, and make health literacy resources available to wider audiences. We now have four short videos that can be used to explain: health literacy; health literacy research in Ireland; how adult learners experience the health system and what changes they would like to see made. We also have a video aimed directly at healthcare professionals. These are all available for free on NALA's YouTube channel.

## Media coverage of health literacy

During the year, there were over 50 articles in medical magazines, local and national newspapers about health literacy:

Publication	Number of articles
Irish Pharmacy Union Review	7
Irish Medical Times	5
Irish Pharmacist	4
Irish Pharmacy News	8
Pharmacy Assistant	3
Nursing	2
Forum	1
Medical Independent	1
Hospital Pharmacy News	2
Regional newspapers	17
National newspapers	3

## Objective 1

### Action 5

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Roll out a literacy and numeracy friendly programme across a number of local authorities to improve their communications.

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Local authorities play a particularly important role in helping members of the public to access, understand and fulfil their rights, entitlements and obligations at a local level. In recognition of this role, NALA has developed the Crystal Clear Mark for local authorities.

This quality mark builds on the work that NALA has done with local authorities in the past. A number of these have gone on to receive awards in excellence for their outstanding customer service practices, including South Dublin County Council and Longford County Council.

In October of this year, NALA met with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) to discuss how best to roll out this quality mark in local authorities nationwide.

When this is agreed, the Crystal Clear Local Authority mark will acknowledge the literacy friendly practices of local authorities, and the literacy friendly services they provide to the public.

We are looking forward to developing this project in 2016 which supports the Department of the Environment and Local Government Action Programme for Effective Local Government (2012).



Student Shaun Dixon encouraged others to return to learning in interviews with the media during the year. Here he is pictured with Mary Roche Cleary, Adult Literacy Organiser in Clonmel.

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# Practice

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## NALA Strategic Plan: Objective 2 **Improve the quality of teaching, learning and information provision**

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Well-resourced tutors with excellent teaching practices are required to enable literacy students to achieve success in adult and further education and training.

An important recommendation from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) review of adult literacy services<sup>13</sup> is that stakeholders such as NALA work with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) to develop a national approach to continuing professional development (CPD) across the service. This will in turn improve teaching practice.

In 2015, we provided a range of supports for literacy and numeracy professionals to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This included training events, learning resources and information on new and more effective approaches to literacy and numeracy tuition.

Together with our education partners, our work in this area has helped to improve the quality of teaching, learning and information provision.

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<sup>13</sup> Department of Education & Skills Review of ALCES funded Adult Literacy Provision (2013)

## 5 actions:

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1. Provide practitioner events and resources to facilitate the integration of literacy and numeracy across further education and training.
2. Supply professional development events to meet the needs of literacy and numeracy tutors, including volunteers and organisers.
3. Provide training to practitioners who want to use writeon.ie as a tool for blended learning and for the recognition of prior learning.
4. Provide a plain English information, editing and training service to those providing information to the general public.
5. Conduct research to help improve teaching and learning.

Student Rosaleen Rice shared her inspirational story about returning to education with the media. Here she is pictured with Carmel Glynn, Tutor and Alison Jones, Deputy Director of Galway Adult Basic Education Services.

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## Objective 2

### Action 1

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#### Provide practitioner events and resources to facilitate the integration of literacy and numeracy across further education and training.

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The aim of integrating literacy development into vocational courses is to ensure that no one is excluded from education and training programmes because they have a literacy or numeracy difficulty.

In 2015, we cooperated with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) to provide professional development workshops for ETBs on integrating literacy development into vocational courses.

Most participants were vocational teachers, tutors and instructors. Others included college principals, centre and programme managers, guidance counsellors and administration staff.

In the workshops participants learned methods to overcome literacy barriers to learning in any subject. In addition they learned how to develop course-related literacy and numeracy. They identified and shared their current good practice in integrating literacy and explored ways to develop it further.

Over 180 participants from five ETBs attended nine NALA workshops as part of this programme. At the invitation of Maynooth University (MU) NALA also provided an introductory training day in integrating literacy for participants on the MU Higher Diploma in Further Education.

#### The impact

Over 200 further education and training professionals took part in introductory or 'review and planning' workshops on integrating literacy. They identified current good practices in integrating literacy and shared these with colleagues in their centres and programmes. At the end of the workshops participants made a personal 'one small change' plan, identifying specific actions to further integrate literacy into their work with learners.



## Objective 2

### Action 2

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Supply professional development events to meet the needs of literacy and numeracy tutors, including volunteers and organisers.

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In 2015, we organised ten professional development events for literacy and numeracy tutors, including volunteers and adult literacy organisers. The aim of each event was to provide tutors with information on the best and the most effective ways to teach. Over **460** people attended these events. After each event we did an anonymous survey with participants to measure the impact. We were delighted that the majority of respondents to our survey said that they learned something new and more importantly, that they would use what they had learned in their work. Here is a summary of each event and the survey results.

### National Forum for Adult Literacy Tutors

**One hundred** tutors attended our National Forum for Adult Literacy Tutors in January. The theme of the forum was 'Reading and writing strategies for teaching'. The day-long event provided tutors with valuable information about different techniques and strategies that can be used when teaching reading and writing. There were also practical workshops on ideas for teaching reading and writing using phonics, working with students with dyslexia, teaching beginners to write and a range of other techniques.

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

**Sixty** ESOL tutors attended our conference in April. The title of our conference was 'QQI accreditation for ESOL students at levels 1 to 3'. It covered topics such as looking at how accreditation and awards can facilitate ESOL students and using grammar and phonics in the ESOL classroom.

## Numeracy Conference

**Sixty** tutors attended our numeracy conference in June. The title of the conference was 'Communicating everyday mathematical concepts and ideas to students'. The morning session focussed on introducing maths to the reluctant learner and ideas for helping students to see, read and use mathematical information. There was a choice of seven different workshops about teaching numeracy in the afternoon.

## International Literacy Day Conference

**Ninety** people attended our International Literacy Day conference in September. It was about supporting tutors who are providing adult literacy and numeracy tuition. It included presentations from tutors, students and researchers on different ways of teaching and learning, including intensive literacy tuition, family learning models from Scotland, as well as ideas for blended learning and team teaching.

## Family literacy Conference

**Ninety** participants attended our conference in November on 'Strengthening relationships between home and community'. It was a great event that gave tutors useful ideas on how to support parents whose children are on the autistic spectrum and strategies for helping to develop children's oral skills.

## Numeracy Workshops

We organised **five** numeracy workshops during Maths Week in October. These events, run in conjunction with local ETBs, took place in Ballyhaunis, Tullamore, Drogheda, Tralee and Clonmel. The themes of the workshops included teaching and learning statistics using real data, materials and technology for teaching numeracy at QQI levels 2 and 3, fractions, decimals and percentages, and teaching numeracy to reluctant learners at levels 2 and 3.

**Seventy** participants in total attended the five workshops.



## What is impact of our events?

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of the participants that attended our events in 2015 learned something new. This increased from an average of 93% for our events in 2013 to 98% in 2015. There was also an increase in the number of participants who said that our events had inspired them to make changes to the way they worked. This went from 82% in 2013 to 93% in 2015.

**Table 1: Impact of NALA conferences 2013 to 2015**

	2013	2013	2014	2014	2015	2015
	Learned something new	Inspired changes to work	Learned something new	Inspired changes to work	Learned something new	Inspired changes to work
National Tutors' Forum	96%	87%	92%	78%	100%	94%
Numeracy conference	94%	93%	100%	82%	100%	100%
International Literacy Day conference	Information not available	Information not available	95%	92%	100%	50%
ESOL conference	92%	85%	100%	100%	93%	73%
Family literacy conference	91%	64%	100%	100%	100%	Survey results not available until 2016.

Our surveys were done anonymously through the online platform Survey Monkey.



President Michael D Higgins (pictured with Adult Literacy Organisers) commended literacy tutors at the launch of National Adult Literacy Awareness Week 2015:

**“Helping such fellow citizens of ours requires great skills, skills of the heart as well as skills of the head. I have admired so many who have given this task their empathy, their patience and their love”.**

### Guidelines for good adult literacy work

Before attending the 2015 Tutors’ Forum 64% of tutors who responded to our survey reported that they were aware of ‘Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work’. This is a decrease on the previous year when 76% of tutors said they were aware of our guidelines. This publication is the main document for tutors working in the adult literacy sector so it is important that tutors use them as a key reference for teaching and learning. We will continue to promote the guidelines in all our work in 2016.

## Objective 2

### Action 3

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Provide training to practitioners who want to use [writeon.ie](http://writeon.ie) as a tool for blended learning and for the recognition of prior learning.

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The aim of our Distance Learning Service (DLS) is to provide high quality free education for people who want to improve their basic skills without leaving home.

Our DLS allows people to learn by:

- working with our Distance Learning Tutors over the phone, email or post; and or
- studying online using our website [writeon.ie](http://writeon.ie).

We offer level 2 and 3 QQI accreditation on our website [writeon.ie](http://writeon.ie).

This year, we provided training to **160** tutors on how to use [writeon.ie](http://writeon.ie) as a tool for blended learning and for the recognition of prior learning.

We are delighted that almost **80** adult education centres used [writeon.ie](http://writeon.ie) to support their students learn and get accreditation.

Table 2 on the next page outlines how the DLS supported people improve their basic skills in 2015.

**Table 2: 2015 Summary of Distance Learning Service**

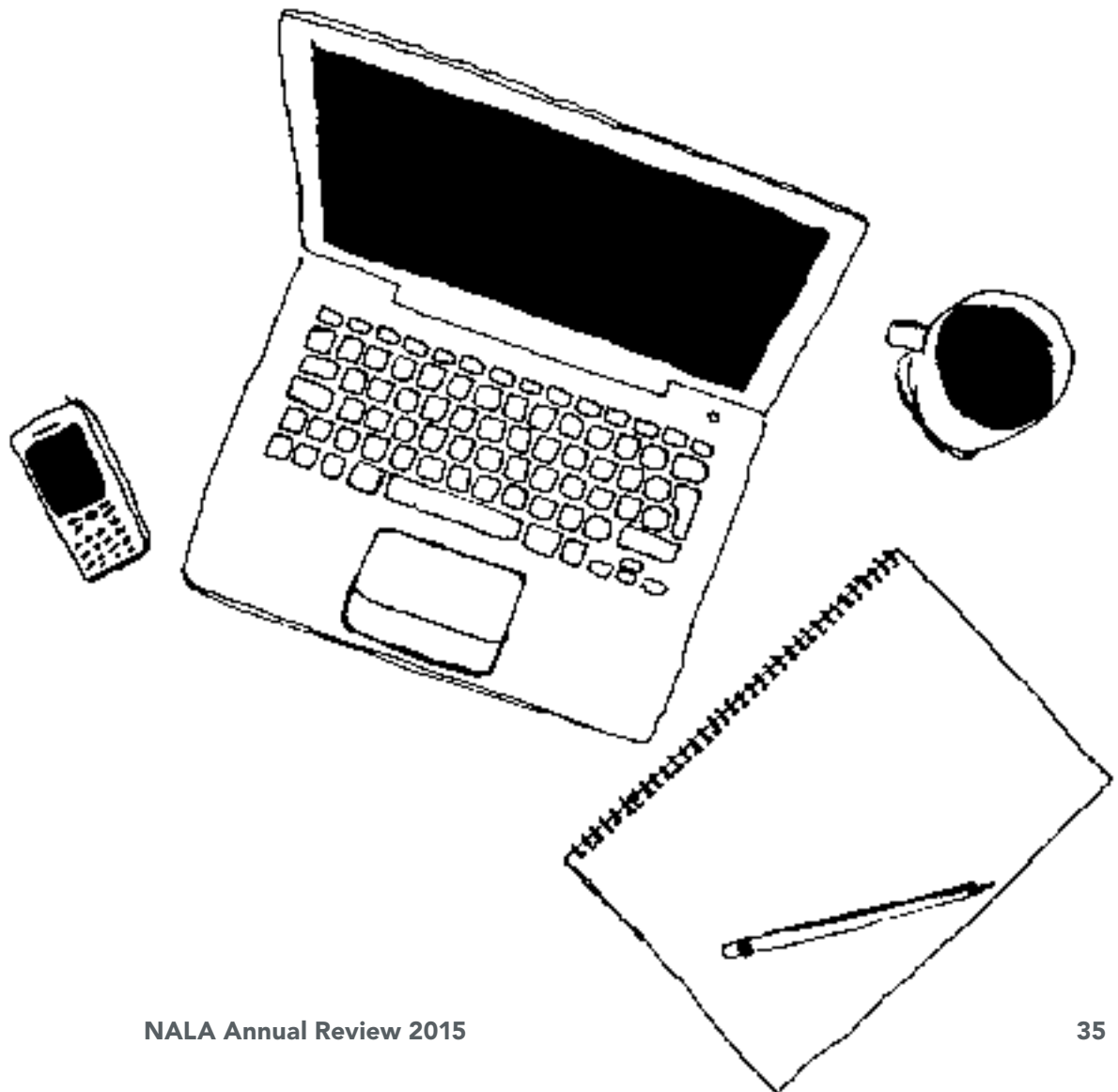
<b>Initial assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>3</b> Learning Support Workers</li><li>• <b>307</b> initial assessments were done with potential new learners</li><li>• Learning Support Workers do an initial assessment with every potential new learner. If the learner is suitable for distance learning, they are then matched with a Distance Learning Tutor.</li></ul>
<b>Distance learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>8</b> Distance Learning Tutors</li><li>• <b>306</b> learners availed of 2,611 learning sessions with a Distance Learning Tutor</li><li>• Distance Learning Tutors work with learners over the phone, email or by post - sending and receiving learning resources. On average each learning session is 30 minutes.</li></ul>
<b>Accreditation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1,000</b> learners received awards</li><li>• This includes: <b>3,625</b> level <b>2</b> minor awards and <b>890</b> level <b>3</b> minor awards</li></ul>
<b>Adult Education Centres using our DLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners from <b>79</b> centres received awards using writeon.ie</li></ul>
<b>WriteOn.ie</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>6,685</b> new learning accounts set up</li><li>• <b>12,928</b> different visitors to the website</li><li>• <b>21</b> minutes and <b>6</b> seconds was the average time on the website</li></ul>
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>11</b> free training sessions provided</li><li>• <b>160</b> tutors provided with training</li><li>• <b>73</b> centres represented in training</li></ul>

## New level 1 content

Our Distance Learning Service reached out to more learners this year and also broadened its range of programmes on writeon.ie to include learning content at level 1. Twelve subjects are now available at level 1 in the areas of Words, Numbers, Learn to Learn and Technology. Topics on the site now include:

- Family
- Work
- Technology
- Sport and Leisure
- Money
- Health
- Environment

NALA also commissioned a review of writeon.ie and will implement its recommendations in 2016.



## Objective 2

### Action 4

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Provide a plain English information, editing and training service to those providing information to the general public.

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Our editing and training service was busier than ever this year which means more organisations are providing information in plain English. We provide a plain English services to help organisations remove literacy-related barriers to customers accessing their services.

### Plain English editing

We edited materials for over a 100 organisations. Documents that earned our Plain English Mark were from organisations such as the Road Safety Authority of Ireland, the Director of Public Prosecution, the Adoption Authority of Ireland, and many others.

**Case study:** One of our most recent clients was EirGrid. We were invited to provide plain English support to its staff. We did a detailed audit of a selection of its documents; trained staff in plain English and developed a Plain English Style Guide.

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## Plain English training

This year we delivered plain English training to **600** participants. Participants came from all sectors.

Some examples of organisations that used our Plain English Training Service included:

- Government departments – The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Social Protection;
- Mason Hayes & Curran;
- regulatory bodies – Health and Safety Authority and CORU; and
- public and private hospitals and other healthcare providers and services.

We won a number of important bids for work. Of particular note, was our bid for plain English support to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

We also continued to share plain English writing for the web writing skills with members of the Plain English Network – a network for community and voluntary groups funded by the Wheel's Training Links Grant Project.

Our initial work on the development of a plain English accredited course also paid off when Waterford Institute of Technology told us that we could run the first nationally **accredited** Plain English Course in Ireland and the UK. So, exciting times ahead! We expect that many agencies and individuals will welcome the course as part of their continuing professional development.

## Providing information to the public

SimplyPut.ie is our website that provides free information to help organisations to communicate in plain English. In 2015, over 14,000 individuals visited the website. This is a 122% increase in hits compared to 2014 when there were 6,500 visits. This is due to an online marketing campaign using LinkedIn and Google advertising.

## Other important plain English work

We also hosted an international plain language conference, got 5,000 signatures on a petition for plain English and ran the first ever plain English awards. You can read about these highlights on page 58.

## Objective 2

### Action 5

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## Conduct research to help improve teaching and learning.

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The purpose of our research is to produce new teaching resources and to provide an opportunity for tutors to develop new knowledge and skills.

In 2015, we were involved in three main research projects that included case studies, continuing professional development and an analysis of PIAAC data.

### Case studies

We researched and wrote two case study reports that document innovative adult literacy and numeracy teaching and learning methods.



The reports are:

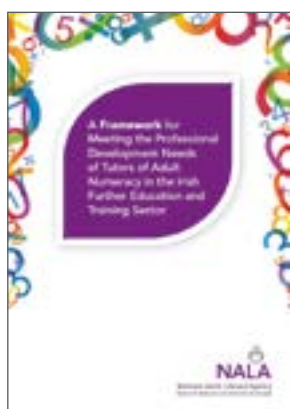
- Read all about it again: action learning project with literacy tutors.
- A wealth of practice: case studies of financial numeracy practice in Ireland.



In our research, we worked with ETB Adult Literacy Organisers (ALOs), literacy and numeracy tutors and a number of managers and tutors from the National Learning Network (NLN). This collaborative approach to research allows tutors to share their teaching practice with other practitioners. It has been very successful with tutors as it has given them an opportunity to learn more about different aspects of each other's work.

These reports are now a resource for tutors working in the area of adult literacy and numeracy. They provide useful ideas and tips on teaching reading, spelling and money matters to help tutors develop a learner's literacy and numeracy skills.

## Continuing professional development needs of adult numeracy tutors



Teaching adult numeracy is a complex, multidisciplinary process. It requires that tutors develop specialised knowledge and skills to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners.

It is in this context, that we researched and published a **National Framework** for meeting the professional developments needs of numeracy tutors working in the Further Education and Training sector in Ireland.

The framework is based on the findings from research that we carried out in 2013 and the recommendations from a working group of numeracy experts and representatives from SOLAS, ETBI and WIT.

It sets out very clearly ten key components for training those who teach numeracy and mathematics to adults.

We launched the National Framework at a seminar during National Adult Literacy Awareness Week in September. Dr Terry Maguire, Director of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education was a key contributor and presented the Framework at the seminar. It was well attended by groups and individuals including representatives from SOLAS, ETBI, ALOA and colleges for further education and training, including WIT. The seminar provided a useful forum to explore opportunities for partnership and further research in the area of adult numeracy provision in Ireland.

We will continue to share the framework in 2016 and encourage organisations to use it in the design of programmes and qualifications for numeracy tutors in Ireland.

## Analysis of PIAAC data

In October, we launched the results from an in-depth analysis of the Programme for the Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) results for Ireland. The research examined the literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology rich environments (PSTRE) skills of participants at or below **level 2**. The information from the research will now inform the future education and training needs of this cohort of the population.

The launch was attended by 70 people working in the area of adult literacy practice and policy. Three workshops were held to discuss the findings and implications for adult education and skills training in Ireland. In a follow up evaluation of the day attendees said they will use the information from the seminar to improve their work and to raise awareness of the needs of adults at or below level 2. The research was done by Dr Sarah Gibney and funded by the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) in partnership with AONTAS.

Berni Brady,  
Director AONTAS  
and Dr Sarah  
Gibney, PIAAC  
Researcher at our  
seminar to launch  
the research for  
policy makers,  
tutors and  
researchers.

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## Sharing our research

NALA is keen to maximise the impact of our research so we continued this year to share our work online as well as in publications and at events.

### Online

We promoted our research through our e-zine, facebook and twitter pages and produced a number of short **videos** for our YouTube channel. The topics covered in these videos are:

- Tips for teaching measuring
- Tips for teaching algebra
- A snapshot of numeracy tips
- Teaching the topic of time
- Teaching financial literacy and numeracy
- Teaching fractions, decimals and percentages.

### Publications

This year NALA had its research published in the RaPAL journal, AONTAS' Adult Learner and our own magazine for members, Literacy Matters.

### At events

We presented the findings from our research at NALA events and shared our research with organisations at home and abroad including, SOLAS and ETBI, RaPAL and the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research.

## Find out more

All our research reports are available to download for free at [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)

NALA's videos are available to view on NALA's YouTube channel.

# Access

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## NALA Strategic Plan: Objective 3

### **Build awareness of literacy and numeracy**

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There are many barriers to participation in adult literacy tuition, including the stigma that still exists about the issue. Often people feel too embarrassed to return to learning and hide their difficulties from their friends and family.

Much of our work involves breaking down these barriers and creating awareness of the supports that are available through national campaigns. We do this work with the help of students. Students have been crucial in ensuring that we hear, consider and communicate their views. In addition, we promote the importance of involving parents in their child's learning as parents are their child's first and most important teacher.

We also campaign to secure the support for the greater use of plain English in all public information. Plain English benefits all of us and is particularly helpful for people with low literacy levels.

## 5 Actions:

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1. Promote awareness of available learning opportunities.
2. Work with adult learners to gather their views and support them to contribute to the organisation of learning options.
3. Promote awareness of the importance of involving parents in their children's learning and encourage the use of the website [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie).
4. Run awareness campaigns aimed at developing the public's health literacy.
5. Build a campaign to secure the public's support for the greater use of plain English in communications with the public.

International speakers David Marsh and David Berman with Claire O'Riordan from NALA at the international PLAIN 2015 Conference in Dublin.

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## Objective 3

### Action 1

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## Promote awareness of available learning opportunities.

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The aim of our promotional work is to:

- raise awareness of the benefits of having good literacy and numeracy skills;
- encourage people to take up a learning opportunity; and
- promote the social and economic benefits of investing in education services.

All our promotional work directs people to contact our Freephone or website for more information on adult literacy services. Our Freephone is staffed by experienced operators who can identify a caller's needs and advise them on literacy services available to them. Callers are usually referred to their local ETB adult literacy service and our Distance Learning Service. Most callers also get posted an information pack.

Here is a summary of our promotional work in 2015.



## **1. Interviews with literacy students**

Literacy students are vital in bringing to life literacy issues and motivating others, in a similar position, to improve their literacy. In 2015, we secured interviews and features with literacy students in the following national media:

- RTÉ Six One News
- RTÉ Morning Ireland
- The Irish Times
- Irish Independent
- Irish Daily Mail
- The Herald

## **2. An Post 'Take the first step' TV advertising campaign**

This advertising campaign profiles individuals who have addressed their literacy difficulty and aims to encourage others to contact NALA for help. It is sponsored by An Post. We recorded the highest volume of calls and texts to our Freephone during the advertising period in January and September. In January we recorded 740 calls, 353 texts and we made 687 referrals. In September we recorded 585 calls, 209 texts and we made 550 referrals.

## **3. Facebook campaign**

Our Facebook advertising campaign uses age appropriate images and messages, and targets adults with an unspecified education level in their Facebook profile. It has resulted in 52,000 website clicks to the 'Need Help?' section of NALA's website and 900,000 impressions of the advert on Facebook. (Impressions are the number of times an advert is displayed in people's Facebook newsfeed)

## **4. Leaflet campaign**

We distributed 5,000 leaflets through the Department of Social Protection and Citizen's Information offices and at small fairs and events. The leaflets show people how they can improve their basic skills and the learning options available to them.

## 5. Poster campaign

We produced **1,500 posters** for 45 ETB adult literacy centres to promote their local services. Each centre received a selection of 35 A3 and A4 posters.

## 6. Events

- **National Adult Literacy Awareness Week 2015**

During National Adult Literacy Awareness Week (NALAW) in September, we organised a number of events and promotional activities. Our aim was to raise awareness of the literacy issue in Ireland and encourage people to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. We worked with various stakeholders, including the ETB adult literacy service to promote local literacy services and highlight the benefits of returning to education. We also attended the National Ploughing Championships and set up media interviews to encourage people to participate in adult literacy courses. Here are some highlights:

- **President Michael D Higgins launches Awareness Week**

On Monday 21 September, the opening event of National Adult Literacy Awareness Week 2015 was a public seminar called, **'Learning and life chances: promoting equality through basic education'**. At this event, **Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland and Patron of NALA** provided the keynote speech about how we can work together to create a more ethical and inclusive society. This was followed by a number of high profile speakers who discussed how education affects the individual, the family, the community and the economy. They included: John Sweeney, Researcher; Aine Lynch, CEO, National Parents Council; and Owen Metcalfe, Institute of Public Health. 150 people, including tutors and students from the adult education sector, attended the event. The journalist Joe Little covered the event for the RTE Six One News and it was also featured the following day in the Irish Times.

- **Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands briefs politicians**

On Wednesday 23 September we invited **Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands**, to brief politicians in Leinster House. The Princess is the UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development and is at the forefront of literacy development both in the Netherlands and across Europe.



The Princess met numerous politicians from different political parties and brought them up to speed on current literacy issues in Europe. She was able to discuss the need for a pan-European approach to improving literacy levels in Europe and we in NALA were able to provide them with the local context and reasons for supporting literacy development in Ireland. The briefing was organised by Senator Jillian van Turnhout as part of National Adult Literacy Awareness Week.

- **National Ploughing Championships**

We took a stand at the National Ploughing Championships in September as it is a unique opportunity to meet people from rural Ireland. As always the crowds were mammoth with an estimated 280,000 attending the three day event. We like to think that our stand was the loudest and most colourful, attracting anyone walking by to have a chat with us. Once again, our team of students were very popular with the media and did a great interview with Morning Ireland about why we attend the event. It was repeated on RTÉ radio during the week and many people have mentioned hearing it.

Amy McArdle, Princess Laurentien and Senator Van Turnhout at our early morning briefing for politicians at Leinster House.

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## The impact of our promotional work

Our promotional work in 2015 resulted in over 1,500 referrals to adult literacy services. This represents the number of **individuals** who were given literacy advice. Individuals were often referred to more than one service, for example an ETB Adult Education Centre and or NALA's Distance Learning Service. The table below counts **each referral to a service** and this comes to 2,060. Over 1,500 information packs were sent out to callers. See Table 3.

**Table 3: Number of referrals made to services**

<b>Service caller was referred to:</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cavan and Monaghan	<b>25</b>
City of Dublin	<b>289</b>
Cork	<b>94</b>
Donegal	<b>11</b>
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire	<b>171</b>
Galway and Roscommon	<b>56</b>
Kerry	<b>17</b>
Kildare and Wicklow	<b>63</b>
Kilkenny and Carlow	<b>23</b>
Laois and Offaly	<b>25</b>
Limerick and Clare	<b>37</b>
Longford and Westmeath	<b>33</b>
Louth and Meath	<b>53</b>
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim	<b>34</b>
Tipperary	<b>27</b>
Waterford and Wexford	<b>50</b>
WriteOn	<b>400</b>
DLS	<b>608</b>
Other	<b>15</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2060</b>

A study of the impact of referral and literacy advice calls was carried out in Q2 2015. The Admin Team phoned back callers who had rang for literacy advice and who had been sent an information pack. Some interesting points emerged:

- » Three months after the initial phonecall for information, 24% of participants had taken up a learning opportunity (16% of all participants had taken up learning through an ETB Adult Education Centre).
- » Between 6 months and 12 months after the initial phonecall for information, 46% of callers had taken up a learning opportunity (34% of all participants had taken up a learning through an ETB Adult Education Centre).
- » The main barriers that participants specified to taking up a learning opportunity were (from most reported to least reported):
  - No time to follow up
  - Illness
  - Family Commitments
  - Took up another course instead
  - No follow-up from the Adult Literacy Centre

## **ELINET: European Literacy Policy Network**

At a European level, we continued to work with 80 organisations from 28 countries who are all members of ELINET. The network aims to analyse and influence literacy policies for children and adults, as well as raise awareness of literacy issues across Europe.

Inez Bailey, Director of NALA is a member of the ELINET management board. Her work involved attending meetings and contributing to the governance of the project as well as its future.

We also worked with an ELINET team responsible for sharing the best 'literacy awareness raising' practices in Europe. This team developed a section on the ELINET website that includes:

- awareness raising top tips and guidelines;
- case studies of good practices on awareness raising; and
- checklist of do's and don'ts of awareness raising.

See [www.eli-net.eu](http://www.eli-net.eu) for more information.

## Objective 3

### Action 2

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Work with adult learners to gather their views and support them to contribute to the organisation of learning options.

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Through our student development work we hear the views and opinions of literacy students and share it with educators, policy makers and government. This year our work included two student days and the student development fund.

### **160 people attended our student days**

The NALA Student Days give adult literacy students a chance to meet other students, hear interesting speakers and take part in workshops. The student days also give NALA a chance to hear what issues are affecting students. This is an important element in the Further Education and Training Strategy<sup>14</sup>.

This year, **160** students attended two Student Days, which were held in Dublin and Cork. Almost all the students were attending ETB adult literacy centres. And, for 50 students, this was their first time at a NALA Student Day.

During the Student Days, participants were invited to take part in workshops on the following themes:

- Saving photos from your phone and getting them ready for printing
- How to be heard
- Learning through acting and play
- Moving debate
- Suggestions on how to manage stress (Dublin Student Day only)

The workshops themes were suggested by participants at previous Student Days and were facilitated by both student subcommittee members and external speakers. These included David Treacy, Education Officer, City of Dublin ETB and Ted Owens, CEO, Cork ETB.

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<sup>14</sup> Benchmark learners' views and satisfaction with their FET programme on an on-going basis through the establishment of a Learner Forum and appropriate Learner Surveys.

Participants on both days reported that they got good tips to take away with them from the workshops. The feedback from the 'Learning through acting and play' workshop was particularly positive. Students said they would use mind mapping and storyboards again. Importantly, 87% of students who filled in evaluation forms about the Student Days said they felt their views were heard through the day.

Issues that were raised by students include:

- Classes should not stop during the summer as you lose skills during this time.
- Student cards for discounts in shops and on travel.
- Students' children having difficulties in third level courses.
- The difference between centres in terms of the service people receive. For example one person could receive extra hours tuition for an extra course when they were not working. Another person only had the option of one hour a week.
- Privacy as an issue. In some centres students said they didn't have enough space to talk to their tutor.

The wonderful student subcommittee pictured at our student day in Dublin.

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## Over 1,600 students take part in events funded by NALA

In 2015, 58 organisations received small grants from our Student Development Fund. This meant that 1,619 students were able to take part in new learning activities outside the classroom. This is a 22% increase from last year when 1,320 students benefited from the fund. Most of the organisations and students were from ETB adult literacy centres.

The funding was spent mainly on student trips to places of historic interest and with an educational value, for example:

- Trinity College Dublin
- Ferns castle and heritage centre
- Gartan outdoor adventure centre
- Ulster American Folk Park
- Glasnevin Cemetery and World War One exhibition
- Croagh Patrick

A condition of receiving our grant is that recipient organisations have to gather student feedback on topics set by NALA. This is one of the ways we gather the views and experiences of adults who are improving their literacy and numeracy skills. This helps to inform our work and the Further Education and Training Strategy<sup>15</sup>. In 2015, NALA agreed the topics with AONTAS<sup>16</sup> and ETBI<sup>17</sup>. The topics that we asked students for feedback on were:

1. National Learner Forum in 2016
2. Customer Services Charter
3. Plain English

NALA looks forward to sharing this feedback with you in 2016.

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We are grateful for the support of Adult Literacy Organisers and tutors in letting students know about our Student Days. We would also like to thank the NALA student subcommittee for the work they do in organising the Student Days.

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15 Benchmark learners' views and satisfaction with their FET programme on an on-going basis through the establishment of a Learner Forum and appropriate Learner Surveys.

16 AONTAS is the National Adult Learning Organisation.

17 Education and Training Boards Ireland. The national representative organisation for 16 Education and Training Boards.



## Links with Learner Representatives in Education and Training Boards

In May, AONTAS and NALA brought together seven of the twenty Learner Representatives on the Education and Training Boards (ETB). This was to network and discuss their experiences. We also gave the feedback from learners who had availed of our Student Development Fund from the previous year.

AONTAS gave an input about the National Learner Forum being developed as part of the Further Education and Training Strategy. Representatives discussed their general experiences, what supports they receive now and what they might need in the future. NALA sent a report on this event to Learner Representatives.

NALA also sent Learner Representatives a report on the 2015 NALA Student Days.

## Advisory Group for setting up the National Learner Forum

NALA participated on the Advisory Group for setting up the National Learner Forum in 2016. This group is made up of representatives from AONTAS, SOLAS, Education and Training Boards Ireland, the Adult Education Officers' Association, the INOU and the Department of Education and Science. NALA looks forward to supporting this work in 2016.

Michael Power and Kevin O'Duffy worked at the NALA Stand at the National Ploughing Championships. Here they are pictured in their campervan at the event.

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## Objective 3

### Action 3

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Promote awareness of the importance of involving parents in their children's learning and encourage the use of the website [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie)

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The role of parents in the development of their child's literacy cannot be over emphasised. However not every parent finds it easy to help their child develop and learn. In 2015, we continued to support parents with their children's literacy and numeracy development through our **stakeholder work** and **online activity**.

### Stakeholder work

Because there is already a wide range of people and organisations working with children and parents we try to link with them and support their work. Here is a summary of our work with stakeholders:

#### **Working with Home School Community Liaison Coordinators, DEIS schools, TULSA and ETB family learning projects**

In February, we gave a presentation about how [helpmykidlearn.ie](http://helpmykidlearn.ie) can support parents to new **HSCLCs** at their continuing professional development training.

In May, we carried out a survey to see how HSCLCs and adult literacy practitioners in the **ETBs** were promoting [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie) to parents. We found that almost half of the HSCLCs and over 60% of Adult Literacy Organisers had used the website with parents as part of their work. This included telling parents about the website, for example when they visited the family home or when they heard a child needed help.

We then thought about how HSCLCs and family learning practitioners in ETBs could introduce the website to parents in a more systematic way. We identified adult literacy centres that had family learning activity and worked with **TUSLA** to identify **DEIS** schools who were willing to take part in a pilot programme.



Between September and November 2015, four DEIS schools and four adult learning centres took part in a pilot project to introduce **www.helpmykidlearn.ie** to parents in a one hour session. NALA provided a one hour Power Point presentation that the teacher could adapt to the group they were meeting. The one hour session included time for parents to explore the website themselves. NALA provided a small amount of promotional material to give to parents. The findings of the taster programme were that teachers and tutors found it an easy way to bring the website to parents' attention.

In September we had information about **www.helpmykidlearn.ie** included in the online resource pack for new HSCLCs.

## **Department of Education and Skills**

In April, the Department of Education and Skills included information on **www.helpmykidlearn.ie** in a circular to school principals. 140 schools then contacted NALA and were sent promotional material for Help My Kid Learn. We also disseminated 160,000 z-cards to parents of children in primary schools. These are small fold out cards with information on how to support children learn.

In August NALA took part in the review of the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020. **www.helpmykidlearn.ie** is part of this strategy, to raise awareness about the important role parents and guardians play in building children's literacy and numeracy skills.

## **National Parents' Council**

In June NALA gave a presentation about fun things parents can do with their children from **www.helpmykidlearn.ie** at the National Parents' Council Primary Conference.

## **On the international stage**

NALA gave a presentation to a Family Learning Conference in Luxembourg organised by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth in October. At this event NALA learned about what is happening in different countries on family learning.

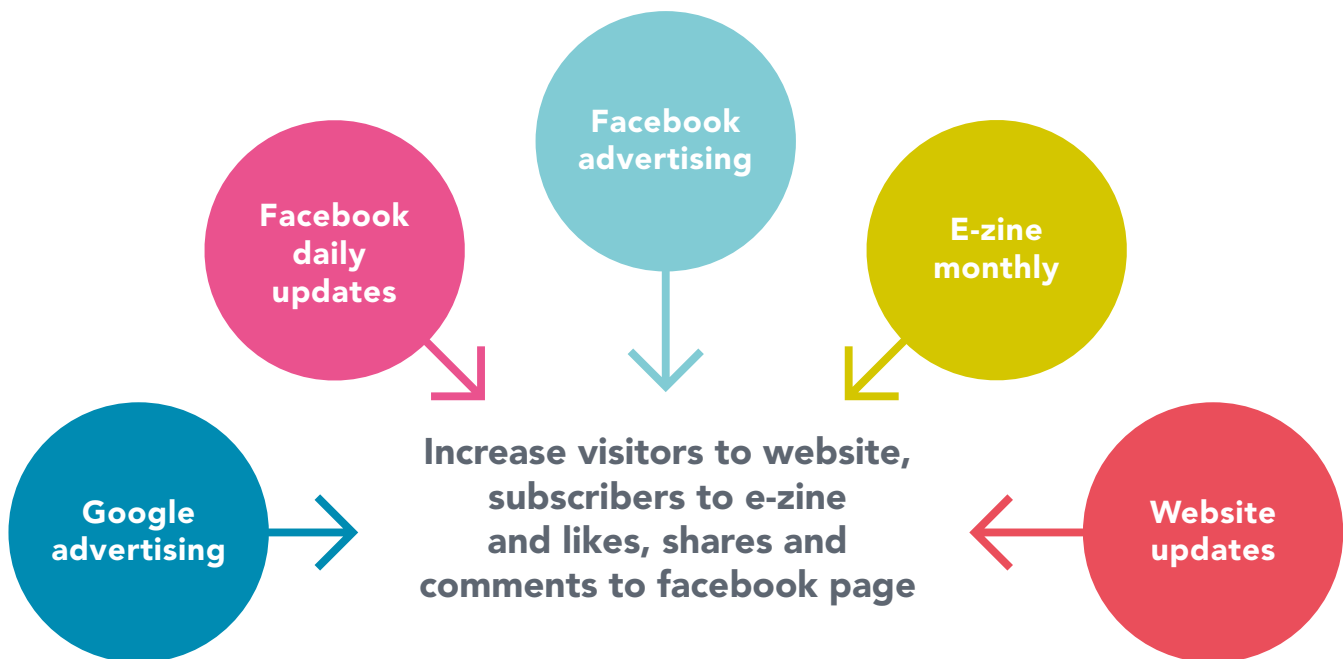
UNESCO also wrote an article about **www.helpmykidlearn.ie** as a programme for effective literacy practice. This is to encourage organisations to share their experiences, pass on the lessons that they have learned and gain inspiration from innovative approaches in the field of literacy.

## Online activity

Our online activity provides parents with lots of practical things they can do to help their children learn every day. They receive this information through daily updates on Facebook, an e-zine every month and regular updates on our website [helpmykidlearn.ie](http://helpmykidlearn.ie). We also promoted our website through Facebook and Google advertising. This has resulted in:

- **30% increase** in unique visitors to [helpmykidlearn.ie](http://helpmykidlearn.ie) website (140,000 in 2015 vs 106,000 in 2014);
- **6,500** more likes on our HelpMyKidLearn Facebook page. We now have 19,000 likes; and
- **1,500** people receiving our e-zine - we have 30% open rate which is above the industry average open rate of 21%.

Summary of our online activity in 2015.



Aine Lynch, CEO of the National Parents Council spoke about the importance of parental involvement in children's education at our event 'Learning and life chances: promoting equality through basic education'.

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## Objective 3

### **Action 4:**

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Run awareness campaigns aimed at developing the public's health literacy.

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See page 20 for information about our campaigns to raise awareness of health literacy.

## Objective 3

### Action 5

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Build a campaign to secure the public's support for the greater use of plain English in communications with the public.

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This was the year of plain English and we worked at a frenetic pace to keep up with work and developments. We were the proud hosts of the highly successful Plain Language Association's (PLAIN) International conference – its 10th. We organised the first ever plain English awards for Ireland and we got 5,000 signatures on a petition for plain English. All this work resulted in greater awareness of plain English. 8 out of 10 (82%) Irish adults are now aware of 'Plain English'. This is a 31% increase compared to results from 2014 (51%).

### PLAIN 2015

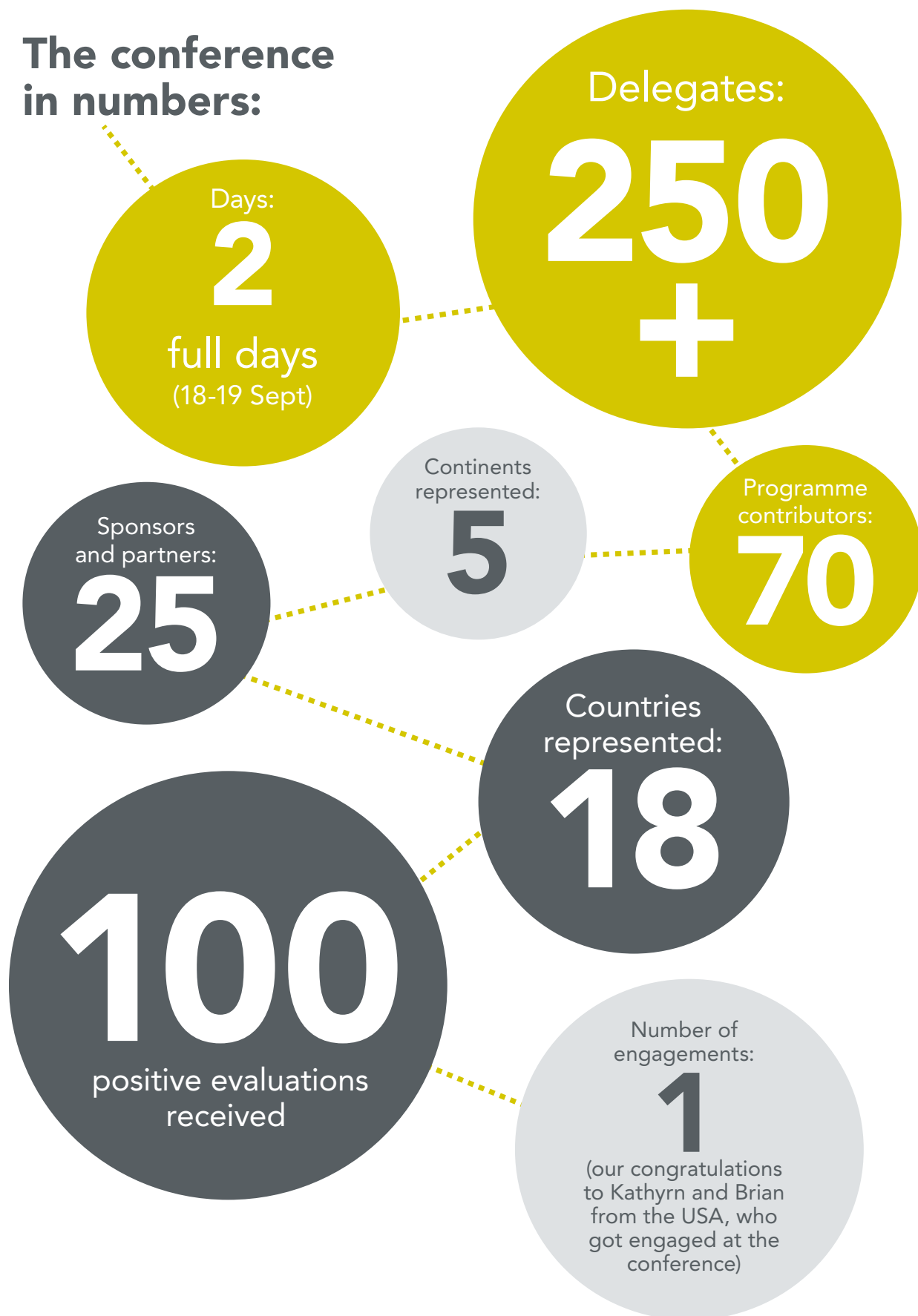
Certainly, a highlight for Ireland and for the world of plain language practitioners and those interested in plain language, was PLAIN's conference **Clearer language, greater efficiency and effectiveness** in Dublin in September. As hosts of this very important conference we worked exceptionally hard to make it a success. Our work paid off. We had **283** delegates, 71 contributors including five fantastic keynote speakers:

- Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman
- Dr Richard Murray, Chief Medical Officer, MSD
- David Marsh, Production Editor of the Guardian
- David Berman, Usability expert and high level adviser to the United Nations
- Colm Kincaid, Central Bank of Ireland

The conference outcomes were hugely impressive. The conference generated:

- a fresh stock of valuable materials for plain language – housed on [www.plain2015.ie](http://www.plain2015.ie);

## The conference in numbers:



- considerable profile for the importance of plain English in political, legal and other arenas; and
- greater awareness of the benefits of plain English to achieve cost savings while also communicating in an ethical and fair way with the public.

The contributors and delegates came from 18 countries across five continents. Claire O’Riordan, NALA, also addressed delegates with an impressive overview of our work in plain English. PLAIN members told us that it was the best conference in the history of all nine previous conferences held in places such as Washington DC, Sydney, Stockholm, Amsterdam and Vancouver.

Another significant impact of PLAIN 2015 was the way it raised the public profile of plain language through the media. The conference attracted media interest, providing an excellent opportunity to promote plain language to the public. The media coverage includes interviews in The Irish Times, The Sunday Times, Marian Finucane Show and several trade magazines.

Since the conference, we noticed an increase in clients using our plain English editing and training service. We have achieved what we wanted – a recognition of the necessity to use plain English in communications intended for the public. Plain English makes information fast and easier for everyone to understand – but particularly for people with literacy issues.



Representatives from Inclusion Ireland accept their Plain English Award from Declan Black, Mason Hayes & Curran (pictured left).

## Plain English Awards

There was great excitement when the winners of Ireland's first ever Plain English Awards were announced at a gala dinner in September. Over 150 people attended the event which was organised as part of the PLAIN 2015 Conference.

The aim of the Plain English Awards is to reward organisations that communicate clearly in plain English. Over **seventy** organisations entered the competition by submitting documents and websites that they thought were outstanding examples of plain English and an independent panel of plain English experts judged the entries.

**Inclusion Ireland** and **The Cope Foundation** won the award for presenting their information clearly in plain English. The independent judges were very impressed with how Inclusion Ireland used visuals in its document to explain a difficult subject and meet the information needs of survivors of sexual abuse. They were also impressed with how The Cope Foundation communicated directly to the intended reader throughout its website in a language that was easy to read and understand.

Other shortlisted entrants that were highly commended by the judges included:

- **Alzheimer Society of Ireland** for their booklet 'I have dementia, first steps after diagnosis',
- **Longford County Council** for their 'Safety Statement',
- **HSE** for their website [www.breastfeeding.ie](http://www.breastfeeding.ie), and
- **KARE** for their website [www.kare.ie](http://www.kare.ie).

We would like to thank Mason Hayes & Curran for sponsoring the Plain English Awards.

## Over 5,000 people signed our plain English petition

Last year we launched a petition calling on Government and its agencies to provide information in plain English. Over 5,000 people signed the petition - helping to create greater public awareness for plain English and a preference for it.

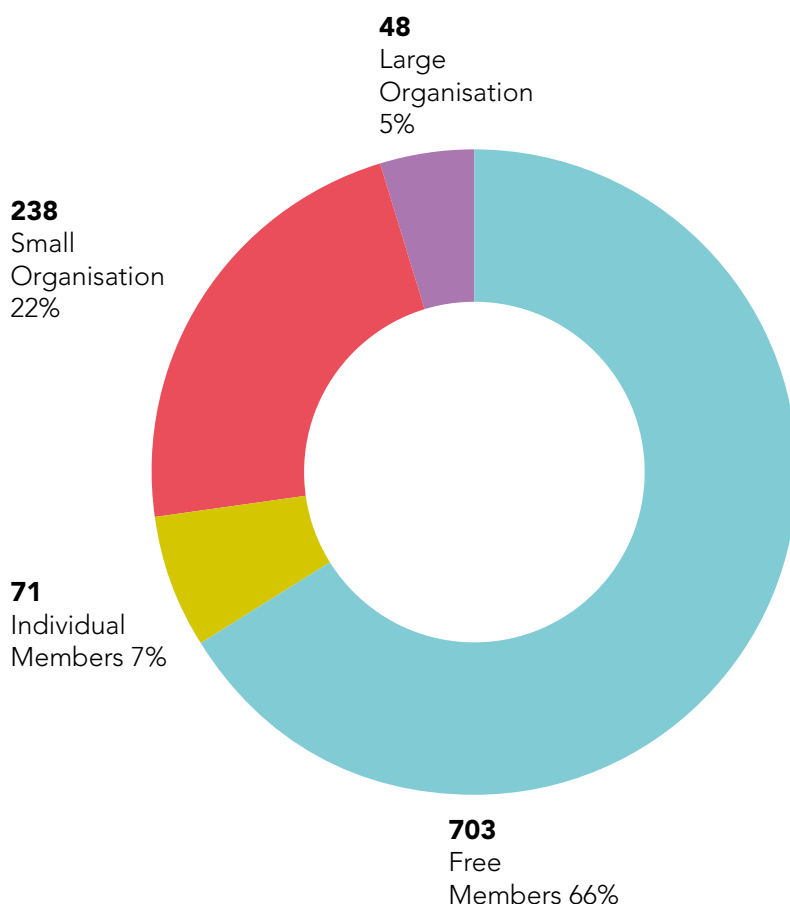
We presented our petition to **Minister Brendan Howlin** at the **Department of Public Expenditure and Reform** in January 2016 and look forward to reporting on his response in our next annual report.

# Strengthening our effectiveness as an organisation

## NALA membership up by 45% in 2015

NALA had **1060 members** in 2015. This represents a 45% increase in members since 2014.

The biggest percentage increase was in our large organisation members. Last year we had 28 large organisation members. This year we have increased the number of large organisations to 48. We were also delighted that the number of free members has increased from 459 in 2014 to 703 in 2015.



NALA very much appreciates its members support.



## Communicating our work

Our communications work allows us to keep our members, education partners and the general public up to date with changes in the sector and the work we do.

In 2015, we continued to provide information through our website **www.nala.ie**, social media and newsletters.

Here is a summary of our work.

### 2015 vs 2014

	2015	2014	% difference
www.nala.ie unique visitors	114,000	81,000	41% increase
www.nala.ie page views	490,000	406,000	20% increase
Ezine subscribers	3,680	3,400	8% increase
Facebook followers	3,000	2,140	40% increase
Twitter followers	2,000	1,600	37% increase
Literacy Matters	2 Magazines issued	2 Magazines issued	

## Administration

- The Administration Team provided event support to 1,287 delegates at 18 events in 2015. Delegate numbers were up just over 50% in 2015.
- The Information Helpline helped refer over 1,575 callers to educational opportunities, including to Adult Education Centres and NALA's Distance Learning Service. Over 1,500 information packs were sent out to callers.
- The Team had a busy year supporting members, with the membership growing by 45% in 2015. The Administration Team provided support with invoicing, renewal of memberships and registering new members.
- The Team provided support to the Plain English service in a number of ways: support with the preparation of training materials, invoicing and credit control and support in the organisation of the PLAIN 2015 conference.
- Members of the team contributed to working groups over the year, most notably the Sharepoint / Information Management group and the Membership Team.
- NALA sold 745 books to members through the Resource Room and Online Bookshop.

# Our structure and funding

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The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a member-based organisation. Our membership is open to all people and organisations interested in adult literacy and numeracy development.

At our annual general meeting, members elect a Board that oversees our work. The Board includes students and tutors, people involved in adult and further education and training, and people from the private sector. In 2015, the Board met seven times.

NALA is a registered company with limited and charitable status. We receive a grant from SOLAS that enables us to staff our office in Dublin and carry out our work. SOLAS, 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 is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association and a Constitution which you can view at [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)

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 board and all our publications from [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie).

**CEO: Inez Bailey**

**Chairperson: Trevor Moore**

**Patron: Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland**

**Registered company number: 342807**

**Charity number: CHY 8506**

# Some acronyms and terms explained

**Advocacy** — Actively supporting or arguing for a cause, idea or policy, which may involve raising awareness, recommending particular actions 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 mix of different teaching and learning techniques. For example, a blended learning approach can combine face-to-face tuition with computer based learning

**CPD** — Continuous Professional Development. This is the way members of professional associations maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills

**CORU** — CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health regulator. Its role is to protect the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education and training of health professionals

**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 16 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

**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

**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

**INOUE** — Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

**ITT** — Institute of Technology Tallaght

**Learning opportunities** — The range of literacy learning options, such as individual and group tutoring, workplace literacy programmes and distance education

**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

**NCGE** — National Centre for Guidance in Education

**NGO** — Non-governmental organisation

**Numeracy** — A life skill 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

**PIAAC** — Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, also known as the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (2012)

**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 to recognise 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

**Survey Monkey** — Survey Monkey is an online survey tool

**WIT** — Waterford Institute of Technology

**YMCA** — YMCA is an organisation that offers a variety of services to the community, including youth programmes, job training and education programmes.

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Literacy learning websites:  
[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 2016

**Policy** We will ensure that important policies that support people who want to improve their literacy and numeracy are implemented.

**Practice** We will improve learning outcomes by supplying relevant training and resources on effective teaching approaches. **Access**

There will be wide spread public recognition of the importance of strong literacy and numeracy skills and increased use of plain English in society.

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



National Adult Literacy Agency  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh