

The National Adult Literacy Agency

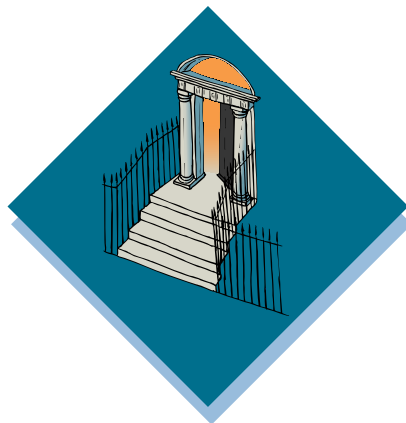
An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta
Lítearthachta do Aosaigh

Strategic Plan
2002 – 2006



NALA





NALA

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The main funder of NALA's work is the Department of Education and Science.

The local literacy service is provided by the 33 Vocational Educational Committees (VECs)
and funded by the National Development Plan (NDP).



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HISTORY

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a non-profit membership organisation, concerned with national co-ordination, training and policy development in adult literacy work in Ireland. The Agency was established in 1980 and from that time has campaigned for recognition and response to the adult literacy problem in Ireland. Our recent achievements include:

- ◆ the development of recognised third level professional qualifications for adult literacy practitioners;
- ◆ inclusion of our key proposals in the White Paper on Adult Education, 2000;
- ◆ the development of a quality framework, including an assessment framework, for the adult literacy service;
- ◆ a major basic education distance learning project on TV and radio;
- ◆ bringing Irish literacy practice onto the international stage.

STRUCTURE

An Executive Committee is elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to ensure the aims of the Agency are put into practice. NALA currently employ a staff team of 17 people. The Agency is a registered company with limited and charitable status.

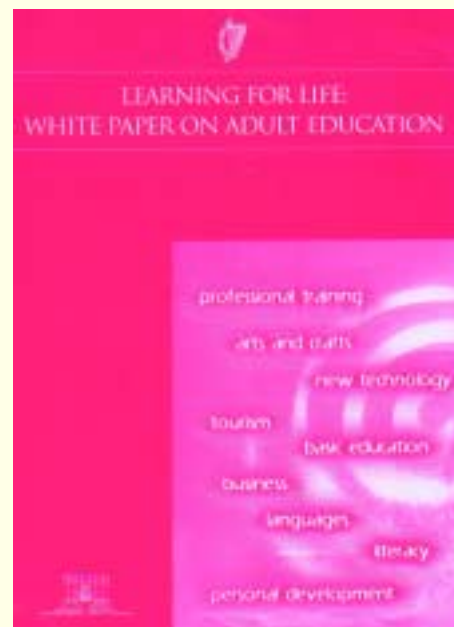
FUNDING

NALA receives a grant from the Department of Education and Science, which enables the Agency to staff national and regional offices. In addition, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs provide NALA with a grant towards staffing and publicity costs. The Department of Health and Children and FÁS also fund specific development work.

INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Adult literacy is about all aspects of human development, enabling people to live full and meaningful lives and to contribute towards the enrichment of the communities in which they live. We live in a society in which information is power, and the gap between rich and poor is widening. This makes adult literacy all the more important but also complex. We know that 1 in 4 adults have low literacy skills, and a recent survey has shown that 1 in 10 children are leaving primary school with reading difficulties.¹ It is therefore essential that there are quality opportunities for people throughout their lives, to learn and update their literacy skills. Despite increased funding for adult literacy work, only 4% of those with basic education difficulties are in tuition.

To successfully address the adult literacy issue, clarity of purpose, gained through the strategic planning process, is essential. This is the second strategic plan produced by NALA and comes at a critical time in the development of adult literacy work internationally. The impact of the International Adult Literacy Survey: Results for Ireland (1997) led to the prominence of the adult literacy issue in the Government's first ever White Paper on Adult Education, Learning for Life, published in August 2000. NALA consulted widely on this document, and the

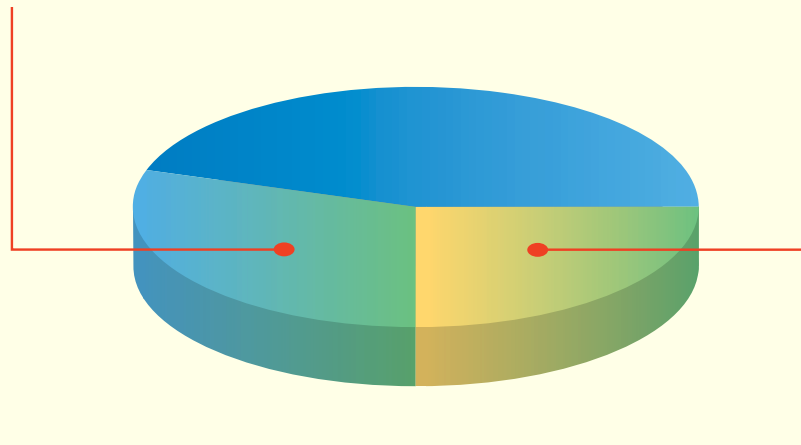


¹ Sources: OECD 1997 and Kelleghan 2000

membership was generally positive about its contents. It contains a range of proposals and targets under the National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP), to be addressed within the timeframe of the National Development Plan, 2000 – 2006 (See Appendix A).

This is the first ever Government national adult literacy strategy. As a result, the literacy issue has moved in from the fringes and can be found in a range of other policy documents from the economic, Expert Group on the Future Skills Needs (2000), to one of the cornerstones of the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2001). It is a very exciting and challenging time for NALA, its membership and for all people working for equality in Ireland and Europe.

30% of the adult population can only cope with very simple material



25% of the adult population have poor literacy skills

RESOURCES

To implement the strategic plan over the next 5 years, will require a phased increase in the Agency's budget and the support of the Government. This will be necessary to carry out much of the innovative and challenging development work outlined throughout the plan.

MONITORING OUR PLAN

The NALA Executive Committee will monitor the implementation of the strategic plan, and progress evaluation reports will be published in successive annual reports and reported to the membership at the AGM.

CONCLUSION

The adult literacy landscape has greatly changed in the recent past and no doubt will be enhanced further by planned developments. Success for NALA, however, will be greater participation in accessible high quality learning opportunities and significantly less people in Ireland with literacy difficulties by 2006.



20,000
adults are
attending
literacy tuition.
Why not join them?

Your local contact:


National Adult Literacy Agency, 76 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 855 4332 e-mail: literacy@nala.ie Website: www.nala.ie

DEFINITION OF ADULT LITERACY – THE CORE OF THE ADULT LITERACY ETHOS

All good adult literacy work starts with the needs of the individual, known as the learner centred approach. Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and numeracy. It also encompasses aspects of personal development – social, economic, emotional – and is concerned with improving self-esteem and building confidence. It goes far beyond the mere technical skills of communication. The underlying aim of good literacy practice is to enable people to understand and reflect critically on their life circumstances with a view to exploring new possibilities and initiating constructive change.

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure all adults with literacy difficulties have access to a range of high quality learning opportunities.

ORGANISATIONAL AIMS

The organisation aims to:

- ◆ Develop public awareness and understanding of adult literacy issues;
- ◆ Secure adequate resourcing of adult literacy work;
- ◆ Develop and support high quality adult literacy provision.

STRATEGIC INTENT

To increase the capacity of the National Adult Literacy Agency to deliver the aims of the organisation and raise adult literacy levels in Ireland.

GOALS

Over the next five years, we want to ensure that:

- ◆ the central Government strategy to address low adult literacy levels is fully implemented, informed by the NALA membership;
- ◆ there is well-resourced high quality adult literacy provision throughout Ireland in a range of different settings;
- ◆ there is greater participation by adults with literacy difficulties in learning opportunities;
- ◆ there is greater national awareness and understanding of adult literacy issues;
- ◆ there is a significant increase in the literacy levels of the adult population in Ireland;
- ◆ there is strong communication between NALA and the membership;
- ◆ NALA is a healthy developmental learning organisation at the forefront of adult literacy research and innovation, nationally and internationally.



Steps Towards Implementation

In order to achieve the above goals we need to take the following steps:

- 1** aid the implementation of central Government policy on adult literacy;
- 2** carry out research on adult literacy issues;
- 3** implement the NALA quality framework, including the assessment framework, in a range of literacy settings nationally;
- 4** implement a training strategy for high quality adult literacy provision;
- 5** implement a development strategy for high quality adult literacy provision;
- 6** support the development of new approaches to literacy;
- 7** deliver an adult literacy promotion campaign to develop awareness and understanding at national level;
- 8** develop an organisation plan, with particular emphasis on communications, Executive Committee development and staff development.

**IN RELATION
TO STEP**



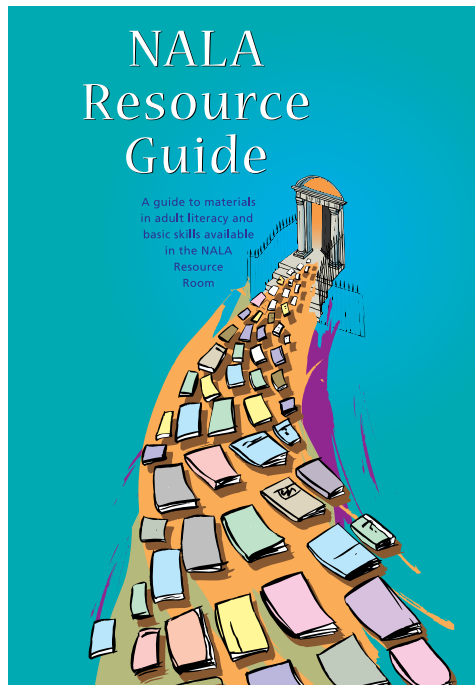
Aid the implementation of central Government policy on adult literacy

NALA will:

- ◆ continue to work with the Department of Education and Science towards our common goals;
- ◆ establish an implementation group, made up of key stakeholders, e.g., the VEC sector, to develop a plan to assist in the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme;
- ◆ maintain and develop links with other Government departments and state agencies, in particular Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Department of Health and Children, FÁS and Teagasc;
- ◆ maintain and develop strategic alliances with the community and voluntary sector, trade unions, employer and farmer organisations, as well as political representatives;
- ◆ support adult literacy organisers (ALOs) and their VEC in the development of local literacy strategic plans;
- ◆ build the capacity of the membership to campaign at local, regional and national level;
- ◆ inform the membership of policy developments and ascertain their views through the AGM;
- ◆ review and prioritise areas for policy development informed by membership.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Regular meetings with the Department of Education and Science.
2. Number of meetings of the Implementation group.
3. Published implementation plan for the National Adult Literacy Programme.
4. Participation by stakeholders in policy consultation meetings.
5. Number of activities focused on lobbying.
6. Survey of participants at the AGM on policy developments.



IN RELATION TO STEP



Carry out research on adult literacy issues

NALA will:

- ◆ analyse the key gaps in research in adult literacy in Ireland;
- ◆ prioritise key areas of research previously identified by the membership for attention and highlighted by the White Paper on Adult Education and other relevant policy documents, e.g., effective teaching methodologies, gender specific recruitment and retention strategies;
- ◆ draw up an action plan for the strategic use of research in the areas of policy development, service provision, etc;
- ◆ promote research in adult literacy by individuals and organisations, in line with NALA's ethos;
- ◆ collect and maintain research data to support NALA aims and objectives;
- ◆ explore the possibility of providing an information and library service in support of external research;
- ◆ research literacy practice locally, nationally and internationally for distribution to the members.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Annually published action plan for research.
2. Published research in the areas of assessment, workplace and health.
3. Extent of adult literacy research activity.
4. Survey of membership views on impact of research activity.



IN RELATION
TO STEP



Implement the NALA quality framework, including the assessment framework, in a range of literacy settings nationally

NALA will:

- ◆ publish the implementation plan for the NALA quality framework;
- ◆ provide support structures for the implementation process;
- ◆ continue to evaluate and develop the NALA quality framework;
- ◆ integrate the quality framework into all NALA work;
- ◆ pilot the draft NALA assessment framework in a range of literacy settings;
- ◆ mainstream the NALA assessment framework into adult literacy practice in Ireland.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Published implementation plan for the mainstreaming of the quality framework.
2. Number of Adult Basic Education Providers using the quality framework.
3. Number of Adult Basic Education Providers using the assessment framework.
4. Evaluation and review system developed.

**IN RELATION
TO STEP**



Implement a training strategy for high quality adult literacy provision

NALA will:

- ◆ conduct on-going evaluation of our training programme;
- ◆ develop a framework for training and a quality training plan;
- ◆ provide training for adult literacy organisers, paid and volunteer tutors and learners;
- ◆ provide training to trainers and educators wishing to integrate literacy into other training areas;
- ◆ provide literacy awareness training to staff in organisations wishing to respond to clients with literacy difficulties;
- ◆ develop materials to support training programmes as required;
- ◆ liaise with relevant statutory and voluntary sector representatives in respect of accreditation.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Number of training courses provided to a broad range of target groups.
2. Number of training programmes and materials developed.
3. Regular evaluations of training courses.
4. Participation in meetings on accreditation issues.



IN RELATION
TO STEP

5

Implement a development strategy for high quality adult literacy provision

NALA will:

- ◆ develop the use of distance learning in literacy work;
- ◆ develop a family literacy policy and strategy, involving parents, teachers and adult literacy workers;
- ◆ promote and facilitate the development of workplace literacy programmes;
- ◆ support educators and trainers to integrate literacy skills development into their programmes;
- ◆ develop a range of resource materials for adult literacy work, e.g. computer software;
- ◆ develop and implement a strategy for the provision of literacy resources, with a focus on Irish based materials;
- ◆ support the development of intensive literacy programmes, e.g. Return to Education model.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Availability and use of distance learning materials and opportunities.
2. Published family literacy policy and strategy.
3. Number of workplace literacy programmes in operation.
4. Range of Irish published resource materials.
5. Extent of intensive literacy programmes in operation.
6. Range of further education and training centres integrating literacy.

**IN RELATION
TO STEP**



Support the development of new approaches to literacy

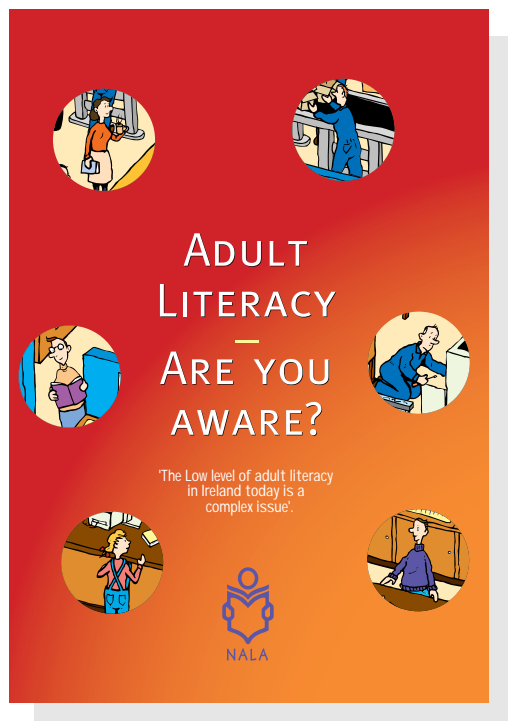
NALA will:

- ◆ support the development of new literacy programmes in a range of settings in partnership with local providers, e.g., those working with homeless people or substance users;
- ◆ develop and implement a plan for the integration of ICT into literacy work;
- ◆ implement our health and literacy strategy, working in partnership with practitioners in the development of literacy and health programmes;
- ◆ develop policy guidelines and supports for practitioners working with adults whose first language is not English;
- ◆ develop and promote a dedicated numeracy strategy;
- ◆ develop policy guidelines and supports for practitioners working with adults experiencing specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia;
- ◆ promote the use of plain language in materials aimed at the general public.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Dedicated literacy programmes for specific groups.
2. Review of use of ICT as part of adult literacy work.

3. Published health literacy policy and materials.
4. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) policy and development programme in place in the literacy service.
5. Feedback from literacy providers on extent of numeracy activity.
6. Review of services for adults with specific learning difficulties.
7. Number of plain language promotional activities carried out.



IN RELATION TO STEP



Deliver an adult literacy promotion campaign to develop awareness and understanding at national level

NALA will:

- ◆ carry out a range of promotional activity to encourage adults with literacy difficulties access learning opportunities;
- ◆ continue to develop awareness and understanding among the public of the adult literacy issue by engaging in promotion activities;
- ◆ promote the NALA literacy awareness training programme;
- ◆ develop new and build on existing relationships with the media and other communication partners;
- ◆ continue to produce NALA information packs and leaflets;
- ◆ manage and develop our website;
- ◆ promote our national referral service, including the marketing of the free phone facility, and launch a new awareness and promotion campaign.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Participation rates of adults with literacy difficulties in learning opportunities.
2. Levels of awareness of the adult literacy issue.
3. Number of visits to our website.
4. Number of calls to the freephone.



IN RELATION
TO STEP

8

Develop an organisation plan with particular emphasis on communications, Executive Committee and staff development

NALA will:

- ◆ draw up and implement a quality framework for the organisation;
- ◆ plan and implement a programme for continuous staff development;
- ◆ deliver a training and development programme for all new Executive Committees;
- ◆ implement recommendations from the communications review, most importantly, those related to the membership;
- ◆ set up a management team consisting of staff and Executive Committee Officers to oversee, monitor and review the implementation of the strategic plan;
- ◆ examine developmental changes in the management structures of the organisation and make recommendations to the membership.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Quarterly evaluation meetings.
2. Number of Staff and Executive training and development activities carried out.
3. Feedback on new communications activities.
4. Review of organisational structures in similar size organisations.

APPENDIX A

This is a summary of the key points from the National Adult Literacy Programme, in the White Paper on Adult Education, Learning for Life, (2000) which aims to:

- ◆ increase the number of adults benefiting from tuition;
- ◆ prioritise those with the lowest literacy levels;
- ◆ implement the NALA quality framework;
- ◆ increase integration of literacy provision for people on Community Employment by combining resources at local level;
- ◆ develop a referral system at local level between all providers;
- ◆ develop new strategies to address the under-representation of men;
- ◆ develop specific initiatives for disadvantaged groups, e.g. asylum seekers;
- ◆ explore the potential of ICT and broadcasting;
- ◆ expand workplace literacy provision;
- ◆ increase collaboration with public libraries;
- ◆ increase collaboration with Teagasc and other farming organisations.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ABE | Adult Basic Education, development of competence in adult skills that are needed for everyday life. We also use the term 'adult literacy' |
| AGM | Annual General Meeting |
| Aims | What we are setting our sights on |
| ALOs | Adult Literacy Organisers |
| Assessment Framework | Guide to know where a learner is upon starting tuition and how well they are progressing |
| CE | Community Employment – supported work programme provided by FÁS |
| Distance education | Learning at home |
| ESOL | English for speakers of other languages |
| EU | European Union |
| FÁS | Irish Training and Employment Authority |
| Goals | What we want to see in the end |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IVEA | Irish Vocational Education Association |
| Key Performance Indicators | Signs of achievement |

Mission statement

Statement that explains why we exist as an organisation

NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency

NALP

National Adult Literacy Programme

NDP

National Development Plan 2000 - 2006 – Government medium term plan, which includes adult literacy

Plain language or**Plain English**

Use of clear words and sentences for easier reading

Quality Framework

Standards of best practice in adult literacy services

Return to Education

A 9 hour a week basic education programme for people on Community Employment

Strategic intent

What we need to do

Teagasc

Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority

VEC

Vocational Education Committee

White Paper

A published Government policy document