

**Department of Education
and Skills**

**Consultation on Statement
of Strategy 2016-2018**

**Submission from the National
Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)
June 2016**

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NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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Introduction

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) welcomes the opportunity to consult on the proposed new Strategy for Education and Skills 2016-2018. We support the messages in the new Programme for Partnership Government that says:

- “We want an Ireland where everybody is given the opportunity to succeed, where nobody is left behind” (page 10)
- “A new Government working to give every person equality of opportunity in a fair society” (page 10)

In the Department of Education and Skills Strategy 2015-2017 we welcome the commitments:

- “We will focus on ensuring learners are provided with more flexible learning options and removing barriers to progression between levels of education and training to meet the needs of the individual learner and the requirements of the modern workplace” (Goal 1, Strategy 3)
- “We will drive the implementation of the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019 to ensure the systematic delivery of high quality programmes which are integrated, flexible, value for money and responsive to the needs of learners and ensure the labour market relevance of FET provision nationally, regionally and locally” (Goal 1, Strategy 4)

Summary

Literacy is a human right and improving adult literacy and numeracy levels should be prioritised in the lifetime of this Government. Unmet adult literacy and numeracy needs have devastating consequences for individuals, communities and the economy. The long term cost of this is evident across the domains of physical and mental health, educational disadvantage and unemployment, homelessness, addiction and suicide. The proposed new strategy needs to **prioritise people who have not benefited from our education system during bust or boom.**

The OECD Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)¹ found one in six Irish adults at PIAAC level 1 literacy and one in four at level 1 numeracy. The National Skills Strategy 2025² target is to upskill 165,000 people from PIAAC level 1 or below in literacy and 256,000 people from PIAAC level 1 or below in numeracy, by 2025. The educational architecture currently in place is insufficient to cater for the number of adults who need second chance education and to meet these targets.

We need to:

1. Provide a **meaningful guaranteed universal system of second chance education** underpinned by a ‘whole system’ approach and the concept of lifelong learning. Integrate literacy and numeracy support and development into all publicly funded education and training.
2. Guarantee learners **more intensive and more flexible learning options** and **remove any barriers to progression** between levels of education and training to meet the needs of the learner and the workplace.
3. Ensure the **systematic delivery of high quality programmes** which are integrated, flexible, value for money and responsive to the needs of learners and the labour market nationally, regionally and locally.
4. Develop and implement a **national strategic framework for family literacy** that integrates family literacy with other strategies addressing educational disadvantage.

We need to move beyond a system of education that reinforces silo working and one that limits opportunities for cooperation and collaboration within the education and training field. This should in turn be a part of an integrated plan across Government Departments to reduce poverty, disadvantage and inequality.

¹ Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012 Survey Results for Ireland: CSO, Dublin

² https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf

Context

The economic cost of unmet literacy needs is spread across the domains of physical and mental health, addiction, suicide and homelessness, the skills trap and unemployment. The OECD Adult Skills Survey³ shows that one in six Irish adults (**521,550 people**) find reading and understanding everyday texts difficult: for example, reading a bus timetable or medicine instructions. One in four (**754,000 people**) has difficulties in real world maths, from basic addition and subtraction to calculating averages. The survey also showed that people who scored at the lowest literacy and numeracy levels often have no or low qualifications, earn less income, were unemployed and had poorer health.

The European Commission response highlights that the least skilled are caught in a "**low-skills trap**", which contributes to high unemployment and threatens growth and competitiveness.⁴ In Ireland people with the lowest educational attainment have benefitted least from education and training, including FET. Irish evidence acknowledges that further education and training (FET) is not "optimally aligned" with labour market needs⁵, and significant development is required.⁶

The National Skills Strategy 2025⁷ target is to upskill 165,000 people from PIAAC level 1 or below in literacy and 256,000 people from PIAAC level 1 or below in numeracy, by 2025. The educational architecture currently in place is insufficient to cater for the number of adults who need second chance education and to meet these targets.

Current provision

The Further Education and Training Sector funds the adult literacy service where adults can currently receive between 2 and 6 hours adult literacy tuition per week. There are also some intensive programmes at QQI Levels 3 and 4 funded through the Back to Education Initiative. There are currently 55,000 people in adult literacy services.

Whilst NALA welcomes the current focus on the adult literacy and numeracy within the FET strategy, and is working closely with SOLAS and ETBs towards its implementation, we are seeking a more ambitious programme and approach.

³ Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012 Survey Results for Ireland: CSO, Dublin

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/PIAAC%20EU%20Analysis%2008%2010%202013%20-%20WEB%20version.pdf>

⁵ A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed (2013)

http://www.nesc.ie/assets/files/Sec_Non_NESC_Papers/A%20strategic%20review%20of%20FET%20and%20Unemployed_Oct13.pdf

⁶ See *DES Review of ALCES Funded Provision 2012*, and *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019*

⁷ https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf

Submission on the Consultation Paper

1. How well does the Education service meet the needs of children and students?

1(a) What improvements can be made within existing resources?

The concept of lifelong learning underpins all education and training policy. The Strategy 2015 - 2017 talks about a “whole-of-system” approach and outlines a large number of education and training strategies as well as other initiatives from other Government Departments. However educational services are divided on an age basis which reinforces silo working and therefore limits opportunities for cooperation and collaboration within the education and training field.

We recommend:

- Adopting a **systemic approach to the sharing of existing resources, information and training** amongst the education and training community.
- The DES lead out on and coordinate **all age education and training thematic policy fora**.

1(b) What improvements can be made through new provision?

Ireland needs to provide a **meaningful guaranteed universal system of second chance education**. This is currently not in place and will not be realised under the current FET strategy.

A meaningful guaranteed universal system of second chance education would mean that any adult with literacy, numeracy and basic ICT needs or less than a Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification, should be fully supported to get those competencies and standard of qualifications from a local education and training provider, in a timely fashion and with appropriate supports as required (income, transport, child and elder care).

This new provision should include:

- Intensive tuition options
- Greater flexibility in availability of provision such as weekends and summer
- A guidance intervention to enable people develop their learning and career plan
- Recognition of prior learning
- Use of distance, self-directed and blended learning provision
- Supports such as income, transport, child and elder care
- Work placement where appropriate
- Supports for adults with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia

- Specific measures for target groups such as lone parents, travellers

This new provision will be essential to achieving the targets in Ireland's National Skills Strategy (NSS) 2025.

2. Comment on work currently being undertaken by the Department in your area of interest and/or expertise. (What are we doing well, what could we do better)?

Reform of the FET system in Ireland

The DES has undertaken an ambitious reform of the FET system in Ireland and has set challenging targets in the new National Skills Strategy, especially in relation to those with low or no educational qualifications. We commend and welcome the leadership and drive displayed in both these areas.

Historically, supporting this group, both in terms of labour market and social inclusion, has been a key thread through all education and training policy since the 1990s. Despite this, the State has largely failed to meet its own targets relating to adults with low educational attainment, as set out in the previous National Skills Strategy and National Anti-Poverty Strategy. Clearly there are complex socio economic factors underpinning educational disadvantage which will require the DES to increasingly work across government to achieve the necessary commitment to supporting all adults achieve basic minimum educational standards. We welcome the Programme for Partnership Government commitment to:

“... pursue an integrated plan across Government Departments to reduce poverty, disadvantage and inequality, by enabling individuals in jobless households back into the workforce, by breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty and by ensuring that our educational programmes at every level offer excellence in outcomes for all” (p131).

NALA welcomes the commitment in the Programme for Partnership Government which will see ‘an immediate review of the **financial supports** available to the unemployed or those returning to the education system to ensure the greatest possible uptake of continuing education by eliminating current barriers (p134)

We suggest:

- The relationship of this proposed Strategy to other existing strategies **requires transparent elaboration of how they relate to each other**, in order to ensure on-going relevance. For example, this Strategy should clearly articulate how the FET strategy and its literacy and numeracy strategy works to meet the targets in the National Skills Strategy for adults with the least educational attainment.

- **Greater inter-departmental working**, in particular with the DSP and DEJI.
- The DES should support an exercise of **linking the macro policy and targets** of the National Skills Strategy **to the meso policy and implementation** level.

Integrating literacy and numeracy development into all publicly funded education and training

Integrating literacy and numeracy means designing and delivering education and training programmes in a way that develops core skills in different contexts and courses. This will produce the “double duty dollar” effect, where for example, the state pays for vocational training, but gets a second return – improved literacy and numeracy levels. International evidence clearly indicates the efficacy of the integrating literacy approach (Casey et al (2006) and Hegarty & Feeley (2009)).

Adopting an integrated approach is predominately cost neutral, but it involves the **prioritisation of continuous professional development and training budgets**. Albeit delayed, SOLAS is seeking research to look at integration in the Irish context and how best to deliver it across further education and training programmes.

We suggest prioritising this area as it will make a real difference to quality delivery and outcomes for all learners.

DES Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Children and Young People

There is no meaningful relationship between the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Children and Young People and the literacy and numeracy strategy for adults in the FET strategy. As this strategy was recently reviewed, we await the outcome.

We recommend the DES should explore how it can enable greater collaboration, cooperation and transparency.

3. Are there opportunities (e.g. new areas of work) which the Department should consider when developing the 2016 - 2018 strategy which would advance the achievement of our mission, vision and objectives across the continuum of education and skills?

We recommend:

- **Involving the Inspectorate in FET provision** - it would be very useful to carry out a project to identify the literacy and numeracy competencies standards required on entry to and at achieved by the end of FET programmes. Akin to the Education Passport which helps in the transition from primary to second level, there is a need to assist the transition from the second level to further and higher education and training.
- The DES should explore the development of a '**Learning Workplaces**' initiative, which would complement existing workplace programmes as well as the forthcoming workplace development strategy. Essentially this initiative would seek to engage employers and unions to explore the benefits of and opportunities for learning.
- **Family Literacy support** should be a key part of the plan for 'a National Parenting Support Plan with a range of practical and supportive measures for all parents.' (p77)
- It would be useful to explore the opportunities for **increased inter-departmental working** that would enhance the DES strategy. This might include extending work with the Department of Health to the further education and training sector, as opposed to just settings for children. This extension to include FET would also be relevant in the work of the Department of Local Government (libraries), which is once again exclusive to children. In addition, and building on the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to strengthen the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).
- As per the Programme for a Partnership Government, DES should work with the proposed independent electoral commission on **voter education and citizenship**.

4. How should success on achieving our strategies be measured?

We suggest:

- (a) Ireland should participate in the next OECD PIAAC survey and in line with commitments be able to measure the targets set in the NSS.
- (b) A benchmark of the number of adults with less than a Level 4 qualification and the number who are supported to achieve a higher qualification should be monitored.
- (c) There should be greater transparency about how success will be measured at all levels including the DES and its agencies.

5. Comment on any issues relating to the continuum of education and skills, in addition to your particular area of interest and/or expertise

The DES should apply **greater all age focus** in recognition of the continuum of education and skills. We learn everyday of our lives and the lifelong learning message is often lost amongst the emphasis on formal schooling and progression to higher education.

With early years and adult education now part of education and training policy, **renewed attention should be paid to the principle of lifelong learning and its role** in contributing to Ireland's social and economic development.

6. Any other observations that you would suggest the Department should consider in the formulation of our strategy for education and skills 2016 - 2018

The DES, in line with the Reform Agenda, should **adopt plain English** in all its communications with the public, as well as in circulars. NALA would be happy to support the DES in this work, similar to our work with other government departments.

Finally NALA would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of staff in the Further Education and Training section, as well as staff dealing with the Literacy and Numeracy strategy for Children and Young People within the DES.

1. Prioritising Early Years

1(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The focus and commitment to prioritising and investing in the Early Years is positive and welcome. The measures outlined if matched with an investment that targets areas of disadvantage will have an impact. However the Programme for Partnership Government does not make any reference to an essential element of early years – **family literacy**.

Family literacy is a continuum starting in early years 0 to 6 and continuing throughout the school years 6 to 17 and later as school leavers become workers, parents and active citizens.

1(b) How should progress on Prioritising Early Years be measured?

It should be measured through:

- Increase in the numbers of family members engaging in Family Literacy programmes and measure improvements in child literacy and parental support skills
- A Social Return on Investment evaluation of Family Literacy programmes linked to DEIS schools
- Investment in research and evaluation to capture evidence of good practice and inform National strategic objectives.

1(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

The *Growing Up in Ireland* longitudinal study shows that one in four Irish children have poor economic, social and educational outcomes. Early vocabulary is a critical determinant of verbal and literacy skills in later life. We know that parental engagement in a child's learning has a bigger impact on school performance than school effects (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Sacker et al 2002).

Research has found that good family literacy programmes improve parents' ability to support their children's cognitive and non-cognitive development, leading to long-term educational benefits. These programmes are effective, both in improving child literacy and in improving parental support skills (Carpentieri et al., 2011). Such programmes support the development

of the human, social and cultural capital parents need to better support their children, while also providing parents with motivation to engage in learning. NALA supports the view that the two for one approach where both parents and their children benefit is an effective way to maximise limited funding.

We suggest these priority actions:

- Develop a **national strategic framework for family literacy** that integrates family literacy with other strategies addressing educational disadvantage.
- Allocate a **dedicated budget** for family literacy.
Within this provide a **budget for a DEIS family literacy initiative** to support family learning initiatives in all schools in designated areas of disadvantage. Every DEIS school should offer a family literacy programme in conjunction with relevant local providers (ETBs).
- Develop and support **strategies to promote partnerships** between families, schools, community and voluntary organisations and other stakeholders as part of improving access to and provision of family literacy programmes.

Outcomes include:

- Increased number of family literacy programmes in place.
- A social return on investment evaluation of family literacy program completed.
- Research and evaluation of family literacy programmes completed.

2. Tackling Disadvantaged

2(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

We welcome a “new updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion” – this is a good idea, however provision for a family literacy strategy with a focus on disadvantaged communities should be prioritised.

While it is positive to see a commitment for “provision of relevant educational programmes, specifically aimed at early leavers and second chance learners should be made available throughout the year, on a modular basis” – we believe it does not go far enough.

People with the lowest educational attainment have benefitted least from education and training, including FET. Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate for 2014 was 6.7% which is well below the EU average of 10.7%.⁸ We must give all adults the right to a universal guaranteed opportunity to access and achieve a basic education, specifically targeting people caught in a 'low skills trap'.

We recommend:

- Providing a **meaningful guaranteed universal system of second chance education**. This would mean that any adult with literacy, numeracy and basic ICT needs or less than a Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification, should be fully supported to get those competencies and standard of qualifications from a local education and training provider, in a timely fashion and with appropriate supports as required (income, transport, child and elder care).
- Providing funding incentives to work with people with low educational attainment and target groups such as lone parents, travellers, unemployed. Funding for target groups should be estimated for each Local Education and Training Board (LETBs) and aligned to national targets (for example, National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy (NAPs Inc) and National Skills Strategy (NSS)). This can be best achieved through the Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures for people with less than a level 4 qualification. Funding should be made available based on the estimated need in an area and numbers who can be supported within the FET infrastructure.

Additional areas to consider:

- We need to adopt a **holistic approach to tackling educational disadvantage** that is:
 1. inclusive of the family and other community stakeholders; and
 2. built on adult education and community development principles.
- Approaches to address educational disadvantage should be **collaborative** and based on the principles of **interagency work** with the **service user at the centre of the process**.
- Programmes should be designed with built in evaluation and monitoring tools.

⁸ Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf

2(b) How should progress on Tacking Disadvantage be measured?

- Reduction in people over 25 who have no or low qualifications, not as a result of population change
- Reduction in people over 25 who have less than a QQI level 4 qualifications, not as a result of population change
- Increase in the numbers of family members engaging in Family Literacy programmes and measure improvements in child literacy and parental support skills
- Close the gap between literacy and numeracy performance of children in DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools

2(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

We suggest priority actions:

- Providing a **meaningful guaranteed universal system of second chance education**. This would mean that any adult with literacy, numeracy and basic ICT needs or less than a Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification, should be fully supported to get those competencies and standard of qualifications from a local education and training provider, in a timely fashion and with appropriate supports as required (income, transport, child and elder care).
- SOLAS should support family literacy programmes for adults through the ETBs, on the basis that schools and adult education providers work with parents, guardians and other family members to support literacy development and to combat educational disadvantage for children and adults.
- Provide additional support for second chance education for parents taking part in family literacy programmes in educationally disadvantaged areas (DEIS schools). This should be done in partnership with the ETB's, through increased support for Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education Programme (ITABE).

8. Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future

8(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

We welcome the new structures and systems and we are delighted to see an adult literacy and numeracy strategy in the FET Strategy.

The Programme commits to:

“ensure that these new structures and systems are empowering those who did not get an equal opportunity for education in their youth, and that implementation of educational programs and skills training for those unemployed or underemployed are effective in supporting their path to quality employment.”

While we welcome this commitment, it does not specifically name upskilling around literacy and numeracy. Our worry is that when basic skills are not identified then they are often not addressed. Literacy and numeracy needs to underpin any education or training intervention offered to someone.

NALA believes that raising literacy and numeracy levels will assist people in upskilling so they can move off the live register, stop people dropping out from courses where there is no literacy support and prevent people from becoming long term unemployed. NALA calls for intensive opportunities where adults can address their literacy and numeracy in a meaningful and appropriate context and the development and delivery of an integrated literacy strategy into all education and training.

We suggest:

- Intensive and flexible courses for both unemployed and those in work
- Better use of blended and distance learning
- Integrate literacy and numeracy support and development into all publicly funded education and training.
- Supports needed for adults with specific learning difficulties, in particular dyslexia
- Offering income support and others where necessary such as childcare, elder care

8(b) How should progress on Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future be measured?

- Meeting the National Skills Strategy 2025 target to upskill 165,000 people from PIAAC Level 1 or below in literacy, and 256,000 people from PIAAC Level 1 or below in numeracy, by 2025.
- Reduction in people over 25 who have no or low qualifications, not as a result of population change
- Reduction in people over 25 who less than a QQI level 4 qualifications, not as a result of population change

8(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

We suggest priority actions:

- Providing a **meaningful guaranteed universal system of second chance education**. This would mean that any adult with literacy, numeracy and basic ICT needs or less than a Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification, should be fully supported to get those competencies and standard of qualifications from a local education and training provider, in a timely fashion and with appropriate supports as required (income, transport, child and elder care).
- **Integrate literacy and numeracy support and development** into all publicly funded education and training. This would allow adults to attend an education/training programme while also raise confidence and skill in literacy. In particular the apprenticeship system should consider how best to address literacy and numeracy needs in an integrated way.
- Maintain and develop the **Skills for work** programme (Workplace basic education fund) and offer more intensive programmes to employees. There could be more work to look at integrating basic skills into job specific training – such as contract cleaning, security and so on. Monitoring and evaluation of this fund and its effectiveness is also essential.

Appendix 1 Feedback from NALA members

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) has 1,100 members and we asked them what they would like to see in a new Education Strategy. We received 27 responses and here is a summary under a number of headings.

Heading	Suggestions
Awareness	More awareness to promote literacy and numeracy for those with low levels
	Raise awareness and support people and services to be more aware of literacy and numeracy issues
Access	Transport available or costs for those in rural areas so they can attend intensive courses in the centres
	More hours for adult literacy and numeracy – should offer more intensive programme
	More classes in a week and term
	Longer classes and longer term time
	Support during the summer break
	Income support
	Help people who work to go back to learning
	More hours for learning and fitted in around work
	More flexible work schedule
	More support from workplaces
	More flexibility with tuition locations
	Offer a place to study in centre
Childcare	
Better internet service	
Less pressure from Department of Social Protection (DSP) and more support from staff in DSP and agencies to attend classes	
More online training	
Look at offering up to at least Level 5 or 6 QQI, Leaving certificate free to all	

Heading	Suggestions
Programme development	Need more time - stop rushing people as if missing your whole basic education is a gap which can be filled in a six week course, or even a six month course
	More 1:1 support Small classes are better
	More IT courses to improve IT skills
	On-line tutor support or telephone support
	Look at oral literacy and conversation more - confidence
	Make integrating literacy mandatory and implement in any further education and skills training centres
	Financial literacy so people understand especially the cost of credit before signing credit agreements when getting a loan
	Expand the framework for accreditation at levels 1, 2
	Develop QQI modules for family literacy - Family Literacy is absolutely vital and needs to be part of parenting skills. This can range from confidence in reading to children to supporting them in the move to secondary school and all sorts in between
	More tutors more variety of classes.
	More field trips/ more motivational talks
	Accreditation
Outcome and progression	Like to do level 3 & 4 with the ETB in life situations and a career course
	Level 4 & 5 in Maths, English and Computers
	More opportunities after my course
	Would like a job at the end Less red tape around jobs

Heading	Suggestions
Specific Learning Difficulties	Consideration for learning difficulties with acknowledgement that achievements can take place within a level, that progression to another level may be unrealistic.
	Recognition that dyslexia really exists and requires intensive instruction both in school and when adult learners are trying to catch up
	Specialised equipment and software for people with dyslexia more funding.
	More learning on dyspraxia not enough is known
	Additional tuition for students with moderate learning disability
Staff training and development	Access and time to gain high quality relevant qualifications for literacy/numeracy practitioners - it is becoming more and more difficult for tutors to get the time off to attend WIT/NALA courses as their classes are not being rescheduled and they are losing pay
	More support for practitioners to participate on the recognised higher education qualifications delivered by the Literacy Development Centre in Waterford Institute of Technology
	Removal of the moratorium on Adult Literacy Organisers and other front line staff, including Resource Workers
	Training needed on integrating numeracy - a lot of tutors are afraid to 'take on numeracy' as they are concerned about their lack of knowledge and the dearth of quality high standard in depth training in the area
	Get adult literacy tutors recognised as professionals by other teaching staff so that family literacy can be fully mainstreamed in DEIS schools.
	Develop formal qualification for all voluntary tutors
Funding	More recognition and funding for literacy centres is a must Need more staff, more hours for students
	Secure funding (for classes and up to date IT equipment and materials)
	Maybe a reward at the end of the year such as a meal voucher

Heading	Suggestions
Other – adult and community education	Recognition of the role of community education as core to kick starting the return to education, learning and personal development in particular in relation to those with numeracy and literacy needs
	Support community education and non-accredited literacy education for learners who do not wish to go down the certification route. Respect adults' choices
	More opportunities for peer and shared learning within community settings – and formally include in strategic policy statements and action plans
	A waiver system needs to be introduced to ensure that community education provision is included in our Quality Assurance Framework - The changes to QQI in terms of voluntary and community providers and the associated validation of programmes and prohibitive costs – are detrimental to community education in supporting literacy and numeracy issues.
	More choices for adults ... not all adults want a FETAC/QQI qualification starting at Level 5 as that can be hard for some adult learners, especially are they are forced to do so
	Don't overlook the Further Education Sector, for both learners and teachers
Other - education	At primary school level perhaps foreign languages such as German or French should be taught
	At secondary school more qualified career guidance teachers need to be recruited
	More science subjects need to be offered at Junior and Leaving Cert to Adults or least to those over 16, who find the school system not suitable to their needs for a variety of reasons
	Need for the implementation of programmes at a national level which integrate speech and language therapy services into the early years' education settings and into health promotion within the community in order to target early detection, early intervention and prevention of communication difficulties during the formative years of child development

Appendix 2 Family Literacy Evidence

The role and value of family literacy is supported by international evidence.

Effectiveness

Carpentieri et al. (2011) concluded that family literacy programmes are effective, both in improving child literacy and in improving parental support skills. Evidence suggests that long-term gains in child literacy are particularly likely when family literacy programmes emphasise the importance of providing parents with training not just in educational support skills but also in socio-emotional support skills.

Family literacy interventions support long-term child literacy development, including improved social and cultural capital, improved parental self-confidence and self-efficacy (Swain et al, 2009), and improved child self-concept as a reader and learner (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

Family learning works as a bridge between home and formal education. A 'Learning for Life' approach improves access and participation in education from early years to higher education. Indeed, in a meta-analysis of parent training programmes, Reyno & McGrath (2006), found that parents attending PT in the community reported greater reductions in child behaviour problems, and argue that services offered in the community can have the potential to improve programme outcomes for families by reducing psychological and practical barriers to attendance.

Return on Investment

There is also evidence of the broader societal impacts of family literacy interventions. A recent Social Return on Investment (SROI) of Bookstart in the England produced an estimate of savings to society of £25 saved for every £1 invested.

Parent child book reading

International evidence suggests that parent-child book reading experiences during childhood were thought to set the stage for future progress in academic achievement (Bus et al., 1995). This meta-analysis concludes that parent-pre-schooler book reading was positively related to important outcome measures including language growth and literacy development. This is also supported by Senechal & Young (2008) study of 1,340 families, found parent-child reading activities had a positive impact on children's reading acquisition. This identifies the need to support parents where reading is a challenge for them.

Parent to Parent Literacy

Further research on family literacy suggests a move towards holistic approaches with parent to parent delivery increase the positive outcomes across the family system (Steencel et al., 2011). These programmes should aim to improve child literacy and socio-emotional development, while also (and in part through) developing parents' ability to support their child's cognitive and non-cognitive development. Lamb et al (2009) argue that family programmes aim to encourage family members to learn together and programmes have “explicit outcomes for adults and children.”

Family literacy and lifelong learning

Family literacy is a powerful tool for linking parents into learning and development as lifelong learners.

Summer reading programmes

Research by Kim & Quinn (2013) provides evidence for the effectiveness of summer reading programmes to improve literacy levels, particularly among children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Book gifting programmes

Research on the impact of book gifting programmes such as Bookstart on child literacy is limited, but does suggest sustained literacy improvements (Wade, 2003). In their meta-analysis, Senechal and Young (2008) found particularly large benefits from programmes in which parents were trained to teach specific literacy skills to their children.

Examples of good practice

Evidence based models of good practice are starting to emerge, for example, the Childhood Development Initiative based in Tallaght West has developed the Doodle Families Literacy Programme (Biggart et al., 2010) designed to be delivered to groups of up to 12 first class children and their parents over an eight week period. One of the key benefits of the programme was the opportunity for children and parents to spend dedicated time together engage in fun literacy activities, and enhancing of the parent child relationship as a result of this.