

Our year and our work

Summary Annual Report

2019



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Our mission

Our mission is to advocate for literacy as a right and to collaborate with our partners to influence policy and practice to support the development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

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481,000

(24–64 years) have less than a Leaving Certificate (Level 4) qualification²



1 in **4** adults struggle with everyday maths such as working out a 20% discount or dividing up a bill



1 in **6** adults find everyday text, such as a bus timetable or medical instructions, hard to read and understand



In a recent study¹, Ireland came **17th** out of **24** countries in an adult literacy survey



1. OECD Survey of Adult Skills (2012) also known as the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
2. SOLAS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) analysis of CSO (Labour Force Survey data)

About NALA

NALA stands for the National Adult Literacy Agency. We are a charity and a membership organisation. NALA membership is open to all people and organisations interested and involved in adult literacy.

We exist to support people with literacy and numeracy difficulties so that they can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. We are committed to making access to literacy and numeracy development a human right.

We want to ensure that no adult is left behind. To do this we:

- lobby for further investment to raise adult literacy levels;
- help people to develop the literacy, numeracy and digital skills they need to play their full part in society;
- engage with and respond to the needs of our members;
- work with education providers, particularly the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), to identify and share best practice in how we teach adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills;
- help to make learning and courses more accessible to people with literacy and numeracy needs;
- support organisations and services to be aware of literacy and to communicate clearly; and
- conduct research into literacy needs and best practice teaching and learning.

Our achievements in 2019



Individuals

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



985

Our information helpline staff referred 985 callers to ETB adult education services, NALA's distance learning service and WriteOn.ie



84%

Among the people who saw our awareness campaign, 84% believe it was effective at encouraging people to seek help to improve their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills



1,320

people got QQI accreditation through our distance learning service

- **3,225 Level 2 minor awards**
- **1,125 Level 3 minor awards**

630

We sent 630 information packs about adult education services to members of the public

145 ETB adult literacy centres or services received

1,400 promotional posters during our awareness campaign



We did interviews and raised awareness about literacy on **11** national and regional radio shows, **two** TV shows and in **56** national and regional newspapers

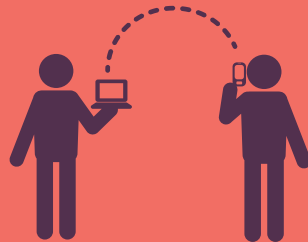


The media coverage we received during 2019 was worth the equivalent of **€125,000** in advertising value and **€375,000** in public relations value



Further Education and Training (FET) tutors

We helped to improve the quality of teaching.



220

learners received 2,455 learning sessions with our distance learning tutors



70,000

There were 70,000 sessions on WriteOn.ie



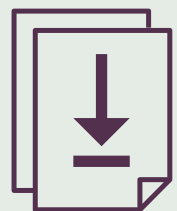
785

people attended our 18 professional development events

Webinars

We held **three** webinars focusing on critical literacy, technology skills and reading with children

We produced **10** distance learning worksheets and they were downloaded **500** times



685

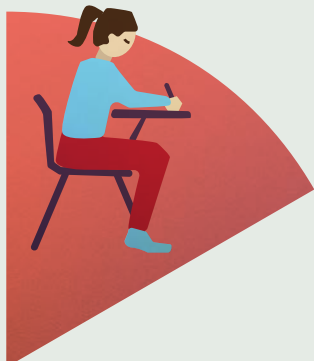
people took part in our literacy awareness training sessions



Our professional development event videos were watched **1,500** times

105

FET practitioners took part in our integrating literacy workshops



Students

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

1,970

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



€50,000

in grants was shared between 88 adult education centres through our Student Development Fund

180

people attended our student days in Dublin and Galway

16

students contributed to our student subcommittee, a national committee of adult literacy students. The subcommittee held 7 meetings during the year

20

students were involved as learner representatives in awareness raising events and activities



There were over 400,000 views of our online promotional videos of students during literacy awareness week



Parents

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



220,000

people used our website helpmykidlearn.ie

1,850

people received our monthly helpmykidlearn e-zine

We reached 170,000 people with posts on our helpmykidlearn Facebook page



Organisations

We worked with organisations to help make their services more accessible to people with literacy needs.



100

pharmacies and 5 general practices now have the Crystal Clear mark



120

people from 50 organisations attended our Plain English Awards



756

people did our plain English training and improved their communications skills



We delivered 9 health literacy workshops to healthcare professionals and spoke at 3 conferences about health literacy



94

organisations used our Plain English Editing and Training Service



Policy makers

We worked to make sure the views of adults with literacy and numeracy needs are heard by policy makers.



In 2019:

- We made 7 written submissions to the Government
- We prepared a pre-budget submission for the Department of Finance and the Department of Education and Skills
- We lobbied 52 politicians to advocate for increased investment in adult literacy
- Our CEO addressed 2 Oireachtas Joint Committees
- We contacted 36 candidates in the local and European elections asking them to support adult literacy
- We asked all political parties to progress the Plain Language Bill
- We attended 6 European conferences on adult literacy and adult education
- The Vice President of the European Parliament, Mairead McGuinness, spoke about adult literacy at our AGM

Working with stakeholders

In 2019 we worked with many stakeholders, detailed below, and contributed to national policies that support adults who want to improve their literacy and numeracy. We did this through:

- meetings,
- briefing papers,
- consultations with the public,
- presentations, and
- workshops.

National strategy	Stakeholder
<p>Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019 and National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy</p> <p>Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training 2016-2019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOLAS • Department of Education and Skills • Education and Training Boards and their staff • Education and Training Boards Ireland • QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland • Adult learners • People with unmet literacy or numeracy needs • Maynooth University • Cedefop • RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) Practitioner Network • Malta's Ministry of Education and Employment • Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) • Fønix AS
The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011 – 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and teachers • Home School Liaison Co-ordinators and Tusla • Department of Education and Skills • Parents

Pathways to Work 2016 – 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Healthy Ireland: A framework for improved health and wellbeing 2013 – 2025 Sláintecare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Health HSE – Health Service Executive Hospitals Pharmacies Irish Pharmacy Union Trinity College Dublin University College Dublin University College Cork
Putting People First: Action programme for effective local government Right to read campaign – Supporting literacy in the local authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities Local community development committees Local development companies Libraries South Dublin County Council Public participation networks
European Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPAL – European Platform for Adult Learning in Europe EAAL – European Agenda for Adult Learning EBSN – European Basic Skills Network
Community and voluntary groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Platform Disability organisations EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network Focus Ireland, Dublin Simon and Merchants Quay Irish Cancer Society The Wheel An Cosán AONTAS Concern
Partnership organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTÉ An Post Mason Hayes & Curran MSD Better World Books

Our vision

Our vision is an Ireland where adult literacy is a human right, where everyone can develop their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, and where individuals can take part fully in society.

A message from our chairperson

NALA staff and Board had a busy 2019 as we worked to complete the objectives of our Strategic Plan 2017-2019. We also planned the work of the organisation for the coming three years. This annual report tells you about what has been achieved so far.

This year the Board and its subcommittees continued to work to ensure the highest standards of corporate governance and organisational effectiveness within NALA.

A significant piece of work undertaken this year was the production of our Strategic Plan 2020-2022. The plan was completed with our external consultants O'Brien Governance Design, in consultation with our members, staff, Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS, ETBI and other external stakeholders. The plan sets out an ambitious and exciting direction for NALA and adult literacy in Ireland. It will allow us to contribute to the new FET Strategy 2020-2024 and explore a range of pathways to improve literacy in Ireland. It will also help us develop into the kind of organisation needed to meet and get ahead of 21st century demands on learners. We also did important work in the areas of governance and transparency. As a result, the minutes of all NALA's Board meetings are available to view on our website.

A number of subcommittees met and dedicated their time to specific areas during the year.

The student subcommittee continued to report to the Board on student issues and initiatives. They also helped raise awareness about literacy through their work at the National Ploughing Championships and NALA's student days. They were also involved in approving applications to our Student Development Fund. Four students stepped down from the subcommittee this year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their work. These students are Jude Holt, Ann Nicholson, Joe McDonagh and Lee Mitchell.

The finance and audit subcommittee ensures that financial controls are in place. They worked with our new internal and external auditors to ensure NALA meets our regulatory requirements.

The staff and policy subcommittee members carried out their work overseeing policy and staffing matters. The subcommittee was a great support as NALA re-organised some internal staff structures to best meet our needs.

The education and training subcommittee supported the distance learning service this year. They were involved in approving results and reviewing learner feedback to improve the service. They were also involved in developing Learn with NALA, the new version of WriteOn.ie

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of our subcommittees and Board for their commitment to our work. They have taken time out from their own professional, personal and student lives to help NALA as we strive to ensure the highest standards of governance possible. In particular, I would like to thank David Heylin, NALA Treasurer, Kevin Kelly, Noel Phelan and Louise Canavan who we will be losing from the Board at our next AGM.

The work and dedication of our CEO Dr Inez Bailey and the entire NALA staff must also be recognised. They are a small team who punch above their weight in meeting the needs of adult literacy on a local, national and European level.

On a personal level, it has been a privilege to serve as Chairperson of NALA this past year and as a Board member since 2014. It has been a pleasure to work with such an inspiring organisation. I wish you, the members, the staff and Board of NALA continued success in the future.



Mary Bambrick

Chairperson
National Adult Literacy Agency

An overview from our CEO

2019 was the final year of NALA's current strategic plan, which neatly coincided with the final year of the Further Education and Training Strategy.

It possibly also marks the end of a significant period of structural reform and reduced public spending. It also marked the final year of the current Government. Our day to day work with learners, practitioners, providers and funders in the areas of training, support, research and development went on as planned. At the same time, we prepared for a year of pre-election lobbying for adoption of our two asks:

1. a new Whole-of-Government Strategy for literacy, numeracy and digital skills over the next 10 years, and
2. a Plain English Act.

Raising awareness and plain English

On the day to day side, our awareness raising was greatly enhanced by a new campaign supported by RTÉ and a special NALA feature at the An Post Irish Book Awards, also broadcast on RTÉ 1. In recent years we have seen a decline in the number of calls to our freephone as more and more people get the information they need through our online and social media channels. Interestingly, many of the phone callers were looking for digital literacy support.

We reviewed our plain English service to develop capacity and efficiency. As a result, we gained a 25% increase in income and a decrease in expenditure. Client satisfaction remained high and our customer base grew.

Doing the research to shape our future direction

Support work with ETBs and SOLAS this year was very intense as planned work was finalised. Three research projects with frontline practitioners and their managers, as well as learners, covered the topics of family literacy, numeracy and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. By working with three separate university based teams (in Dublin, Maynooth and Limerick), we produced a series of rich accounts of the creative work going on with learners all over Ireland. I encourage you to read these fascinating documents when they are published.

In our efforts to extend our reach into communities, we discussed how to consider adult literacy beyond education policy with many groups such as libraries, community development projects and health related organisations. We met with politicians during the year to raise their awareness of the adult literacy issue and discuss our ideas for addressing it.

In addition to our research reports with universities, we worked with TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change), as well as individual sociologists and researchers, on three new adult literacy research reports that make a strong case for a new 10 year Whole-of-Government Strategy. This includes examining adult literacy investment as a necessary part of building the resilience of all Irish people to flourish. We see the increasingly complex information and decision-making demands on people in terms of their family, health, finances and career. Stronger literacy, numeracy and digital skills play a significant part in people's life chances and NALA believes public policy needs to reflect this position. NALA will publish the three reports and await the full consideration of the next Government who we hope will be as convinced by the research and analysis.

Setting the standard for training and innovation

As usual, we delivered a range of different training sessions during the year with varied topics such as literacy awareness trainings and critical

literacy seminars. Overall, we had just under 2000 participants from both ETBs and non-ETB settings. Within the ETB context much of the content and facilitation came from ETB staff sharing their learning and expertise with their colleagues. Similarly over 2,150 students from all over Ireland participated in regional workshops and benefitted from a fund for extracurricular activities.

We also set about replacing our eLearning platform, WriteOn.ie, which provides programmes leading to QQI awards. In its final year, WriteOn.ie helped 1,320 people get certification. Our new platform, Learn with NALA, will build on this success. Related to this, we re-engaged with QQI, after we had prepared our quality assurance system for examination by an independent panel.

Strengthening our effectiveness as an organisation

Following reviews within NALA, we decided to overhaul our staff performance management system and staff survey, as well as refine our reporting system, all of which will come into effect in 2020. Alongside this was the preparation for PQASSO level 2 assessment which will also take place in 2020.

Finally, the year also saw some changes to our Board and staff: Mary Bambrick became our new Chair, whilst Nuala Glanton and Sonia Weafer resigned after serving full terms; Dr Ann Hegarty, Elaine Cohalan and Seán Driver joined us and our esteemed colleague Blathnaid Ni Chinneide retired. I am grateful to all who served NALA and to our partners who contributed to making the year a great success.



Dr Inez Bailey

CEO
National Adult Literacy Agency

About this summary annual report

This summary annual report tells you about the work we did during 2019. The sections follow the same order as our Strategic Plan 2017-2019. They explain how we have worked to achieve our three main objectives under the themes of access, practice and policy. Each objective has a number of actions.

You can read and download information about our strategic plan, accounts and publications at www.nala.ie. To help you, on page 101 we explain some acronyms and specialist terms.

NALA Strategic Plan:

Objective 1

**Build awareness of
the importance of
literacy for a more
inclusive Ireland**



Why it matters

The OECD Adult Skills Survey shows that one in six Irish adults is at or below Level 1 on a five-level literacy scale. One in four Irish adults scores at or below Level 1 for numeracy, and two in five score at or below Level 1 on using technology to accomplish tasks. This has a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities. At these levels, people may not be able to fill in an application form, add up a bill, search the web, vote or help children with homework.

Improving people's literacy skills helps them to take part in a meaningful way in society. We know from our work in this area that literacy changes lives and benefits everyone – individuals, society and the economy. It enables people to reach their full potential and helps to address poverty and social exclusion. It opens up opportunity, enriches life experience and promotes equality. People with good literacy, numeracy and digital skills are more likely to be employed, to earn better incomes and to have better health and a longer life. NALA aims to create a more inclusive Ireland where no adult is left behind. We believe literacy is part of the solution to creating a more equal society and changing lives for the better. After all, equal societies are happier, healthier and wealthier.

Under Objective 1 we have five actions:

1. Use research to show why literacy matters to Irish society.
2. Work with our colleagues in the ETBs to make sure that learning experiences are accessible and enjoyable for all learners.
3. Support the ETBs to promote their service as the primary access point for adults.
4. Involve 'champions of learning' to encourage greater engagement in and enjoyment of lifelong learning.
5. Support organisations such as education and training services, health services, local authorities, libraries, private services, utilities, public bodies and charities to provide literacy-friendly services.

Research

We did research to show why literacy matters to Irish society and to ensure that learning experiences are accessible to everyone.



Pictured at a conference on family learning were Roisin Doherty from the Active Inclusion Unit at SOLAS; Andrew Brownlee, CEO, SOLAS; Dr Inez Bailey, CEO, NALA; Mary Flanagan and Triona Lynch from Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board.

Objective 1

Action 1

Use research to show why literacy matters to Irish society.

NALA's research projects help us to show the positive impact of literacy and numeracy on Irish society. Our research involves adult learners and further education practitioners. This evidence-based approach ensures that our research can be used to help inform and shape policies and practices that will improve the lives of adults with literacy and numeracy needs.

In 2019, we were involved in three research reports that were commissioned by SOLAS.

The three research projects are:

- Enabling Intergenerational Learning: Evidence from a Study of Family Literacy Practices in Irish Education and Training Boards (ETBs). We worked with Dr Maggie Feeley and Dr Ann Hegarty on this project which included interviews and focus groups with 157 research participants.
- Guidelines on the Inclusion of People with Intellectual Disabilities in Adult Literacy Services. We worked with Maynooth University's CRALE (Centre for Research in Adult Learning and Education) on this project which included the delivery of workshops to 86 participants.
- The Development of Good Practice Guidelines for Integrated and Standalone Numeracy Provision for Adults with Low Qualification Levels. We are worked with EPI-STEM, the National Centre for STEM Education in the University of Limerick on this project which included interviews and focus groups in all 16 ETBs.

The research projects, which will be published in 2020, will provide FET practitioners with models for developing good practice in their areas. We have also carried out planning for two further research projects that will take place in 2020. One of these projects will focus on the benefits to learners of engaging in adult literacy that enhances workplace and employment skills. The other project, which will be in partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), will improve awareness of and access to adult literacy and numeracy tuition.

Objective 1

Action 2

Work with our colleagues in the ETBs to make sure that learning experiences are accessible and enjoyable for all learners.

NALA works closely with staff and learners in the ETBs to do research that can help to make sure courses are accessible, enjoyable learning experiences for adults.

In 2019, we carried out research in a number of areas that will benefit both learners and FET practitioners.

The workplace

Our report 'Adult Literacy and the Workplace' looks at the benefits to learners of engaging in adult literacy that enhances workplace and employment skills. During 2019 we completed a literature review and also began the necessary field research. This research will continue in 2020 when we will carry out a case study with learners in an ETB.

Awareness and access

During 2019 we agreed to carry out, in partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), a report on awareness and access to adult literacy and numeracy services. The report, which will be carried out in 2020, will improve awareness of and access to adult literacy and numeracy tuition.

Research partnership

In 2019, NALA continued our research partnership with WIT. NALA and research staff from WIT work with our colleagues in the ETBs to carry out research that informs and ensures accessible and enjoyable learning experiences for adult learners and demonstrates how this benefits Irish society.

Our findings provide a basis for WIT curricular materials.

All of NALA's research reports are available to download on www.nala.ie

Sharing our findings and impact

To reach as many people as possible with our research, we shared our work in publications and at events in 2019.

In September, our Training Co-ordinator, Dr Ann Hegarty, spoke about our family literacy research at a conference in London. The 'Understanding, Reaching and Engaging Families' conference was organised by the National Family Learning Network.

We also shared a series of worksheets related to our report on 'The wealth model in adult literacy' on our website and in our e-zine. These worksheets were downloaded 100 times.

Our research also informed continuing professional development (CPD) workshops and seminars organised by NALA and other organisations.

Awareness campaigns

We raised awareness of ETB adult education services and other learning opportunities.



Pictured at the launch of 'Take the first step' were students Brian O'Donnell, Galina Moraru, Lisa Banks and Michael Duffy with author Emilie Pine.

Objective 1

Action 3

Support the ETBs to promote their service as the primary access point for adults.

Our media and public relations in 2019 focused on sharing the personal experiences and success stories of students who had returned to education. Throughout the year we implemented innovative communications and marketing tactics to promote free learning opportunities for people who want to improve their literacy, numeracy, maths and digital skills. During this time, we referred 985 people to ETB adult literacy and numeracy services. Our website takefirststep.ie received 40,000 visits during the year.

'Take the first step' campaign

In January and September we ran phase four of an awareness campaign called 'Take the first step'. Phase one happened in 2016, phase two happened in 2017 and phase three was in 2018.

The 'Take the first step' awareness campaign focused on students from local ETB adult education centres around the country talking about how their lives have changed since they returned to education. The students who took part spoke about how their new literacy, numeracy, maths or digital skills have enabled them to become more involved in their family lives and also in the wider community. Each person's story also emphasised that the service was free.

The campaign was developed following input and suggestions from ETB adult literacy centres. It included national and regional radio advertising as well as video, digital and outdoor advertising. The campaign also included print and public relations (PR) activity.

All national advertising and PR activity directed people interested in improving their reading, writing, maths or digital skills to call the

Freephone number 1800 20 20 65, text LEARN to 50050 or log onto takethefirststep.ie

NALA then put them in contact with their local ETB adult education centre or told them about other free services that would help them improve their skills.

Promoting local services

This year NALA produced four new videos promoting local learners and ETBs in Clare, Kilkenny, Wicklow and Wexford. Literacy is something that we all use every day, whether we're at home, at work or out and about with friends. To highlight this, the videos showed the learners going about their day-to-day lives – working, socialising, exercising and using local services.

The videos also featured the learners attending their local ETB adult education centre in order to show people what it was like and encourage others to find out about the free services they offer.

Similar to our campaign in 2018 we used regional radio ads to promote local ETB services and phone numbers. The local ads were 40-second interview style vox pops with students from each ETB talking about the positive impact returning to education has had on their lives.

The ETBs that were promoted, along with their radio stations, were:

- City of Dublin ETB on FM104;
- Cork ETB on 96FM;
- Limerick ETB on 95FM;
- Galway and Roscommon ETB on Galway Bay FM; and
- Waterford and Wexford ETB on WLRFM.

Reaching new audiences

One of the recommendations from the evaluation of the 2018 campaign was to promote a wider range of people and different scenarios so as to appeal to a greater cohort of the public. In 2019 we were delighted to do this when we shared stories of learners we had not featured before. This

included Margaret Donovan, a 53 year old woman from the Travelling community, who started attending Limerick and Clare ETB so she could help give her daughter more opportunities than she had growing up. We also shared the story of Galina Moraru, an ESOL student originally from Moldova but now living in Bray, who returned to education with Kildare and Wicklow ETB so that she could improve her English and get work.

Posters and public relations for adult literacy centres

NALA sent all ETBs and adult literacy centres or services posters with contact phone numbers, websites and corresponding ETB logos. In total, 75 centres received bespoke posters with local contact details while 70 centres received generic posters with national contact details.

NALA offered all ETBs and adult literacy services public relations (PR) support to promote local services. We also set up media interviews and talks for students and their tutors.

Exploring the world of podcasts

During this year's campaign we produced our first podcast called 'I forgot my glasses'. The podcast features learners from Cavan and Monaghan ETB, Mayo Sligo and Leitrim ETB, Kildare and Wicklow ETB and also an adult literacy organiser from City of Dublin ETB. The podcast, which has been listened to over 400 times, is available on Spotify, iTunes and NALA's YouTube channel.

The 'Take the first step' campaign is managed by NALA and SOLAS, the State Further Education and Training Authority, with support from Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). The campaign was a key action in Ireland's Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019. Adult literacy is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

The campaign in numbers

40,000

The campaign's website, takethefirststep.ie, received **40,000** views.

545

NALA answered **545 calls** from people who wanted information about improving their literacy and numeracy skills.

1,400

1,400 promotional posters were sent to literacy services around the country.

400,000

Promotional videos of students sharing their stories were played **400,000** times on Facebook.

60,000

Tweets about 'Take the first step' earned **60,000** impressions on Twitter.

400

Our new podcast, 'I forgot my glasses', has been listened to over **400** times.

39%

An independent evaluation showed that **39%** of the adult population in Ireland recall the campaign. More importantly, among people who have difficulties with literacy or numeracy, **57%** recall the campaign.

84%

Among the people who saw the campaign, **84%** believe it was effective at encouraging people to seek help to improve their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.

New media partnership with RTÉ

In 2019, we were delighted to agree a media partnership with the national broadcaster RTÉ. The partnership meant our videos and radio adverts from the 'Take the first step' campaign were reworked with voiceovers of well-known RTÉ personalities including Joe Duffy, Brenda Donohue and Marty Morrissey, and were broadcast **for free** on all RTÉ platforms (Radio, TV and Digital) for three weeks in March.

RTÉ got behind the campaign as literacy represents a very important public service message for them. Empowering their audience through learning and bringing the 'Take the first step' campaign into the mainstream world of media through RTÉ has had a significant impact on the conversation taking place around adult literacy and on ways in which it can be tackled. The campaign, which also highlights that there are many different types of literacy, has helped to de-stigmatise this issue.

The campaign is being broadcast again in January 2020 and we look forward to sharing the results of it then. In March 2019 alone, we received 300 calls and 19,000 visits to takethefirststep.ie as a result of the campaign.

We would like to thank RTÉ for supporting our work and helping us to raise awareness of literacy services in Ireland.

Digital marketing

In 2019 we continued to implement digital marketing tactics that brought success in 2018. This approach aimed to increase awareness of, and participation in, adult literacy and numeracy courses. Some of the tactics we used included:

- video testimonials; and
- geo-targeted ads.

As a result, the videos we shared on our Facebook page received 740,000 views. This increased awareness gave us new online audiences to target as part of our awareness campaigns. All online messaging encouraged

people to participate in ETB and distance learning adult literacy and numeracy courses.

We also focused on driving traffic to the takethefirststep.ie website and encouraging contact. We did this through boosted content, paid ads and remarketing that focused on promoting the benefits of the service such as free ETB group or one-on-one tuition and our distance learning service. We also promoted, through videos and articles, success stories of students who improved their lives by returning to education.

Students raising awareness in the media

We arranged media interviews with students to raise awareness of literacy issues and services, and received lots of great coverage during the year. Some of the highlights include:

- **Michael Duffy**, from Cavan and Monaghan ETB and member of NALA's student subcommittee, appeared on RTÉ's Today Show alongside Nuala Glanton from Cork ETB. Michael spoke about how going back to education at 53 changed his life. Michael's story also appeared in The Sun and the Daily Mail.
- **Margaret Donovan**, from Limerick and Clare ETB, was interviewed in the Travellers' Voice and The Clare Champion about returning to education through family learning. Margaret also appeared on Virgin Media's Weekend AM show and was interviewed on Clare FM during our awareness campaign.
- **Emilie Pine**, author and literacy ambassador, spoke about adult literacy on Today FM's show The Last Word with Matt Cooper.
- **Michael Power**, from Tipperary ETB, was interviewed about plain English in the Nenagh Guardian.
- **Kevin O'Duffy**, from Laois and Offaly ETB, was interviewed in the Offaly Independent to celebrate World Book Day in March.
- **Lisa Banks**, from Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, was interviewed alongside tutor Helen Walsh on their local station KCLR. Lisa's

involvement in our literacy awareness campaign was also featured in the Kilkenny People.

- **Tony Moloney**, from Cork ETB, was interviewed on Cork's 96FM during our literacy awareness campaign.
- **Mary Dunne**, adult literacy organiser with Limerick and Clare ETB, was interviewed on Live 95.
- Learners from NALA's distance learning service took part in an RTÉ radio documentary called 'A Tale Untold'. The documentary featured adult learners from all over Ireland sharing stories and poems that they have written since returning to education.

An Post Irish Book Awards

In 2019, An Post once again supported our work by producing a new short documentary about literacy that was filmed as part of the 2019 An Post Irish Book Awards.

The short documentary, filmed by noted documentary maker Ken Wardrop, follows Veronica Poole — a determined woman who has taken the brave step to return to education after many years.

Even though Veronica is only at the start of her journey back into education, the film sees her take on the sizeable challenge of writing a speech and reciting it in front of Ireland's greatest literary minds at the An Post Irish Book Awards.

With the help of her tutors at Coolock Adult Literacy Service at City of Dublin ETB, and the support of her family and friends, we see Veronica's confidence grow as she composes and practices her speech.

Interwoven with the story of her challenge we learn about Veronica's backstory, why she has chosen to return to education, and why the work NALA does is so important.

The film ends with Veronica delivering her speech at the An Post Irish Book Awards as she presents the "Booksellers Award for Non-Fiction".

"I left school at 12 years of age. I am returning to finish off an education I never got to do. I want to learn, I want to be able to go out there and meet all types of people and be able to talk to them about all kinds of things," Veronica says in the film.

We would like to thank An Post for continuing to support our work and raising awareness of adult literacy issues in Ireland.



Veronica Poole (right) and Mary Bambrick, NALA Chairperson, at the An Post Irish Book Awards.

Students raising awareness with the public

During 2019, 20 students shared their stories and raised awareness of ETB services with members of the public, FET practitioners and organisations. Some highlights include:

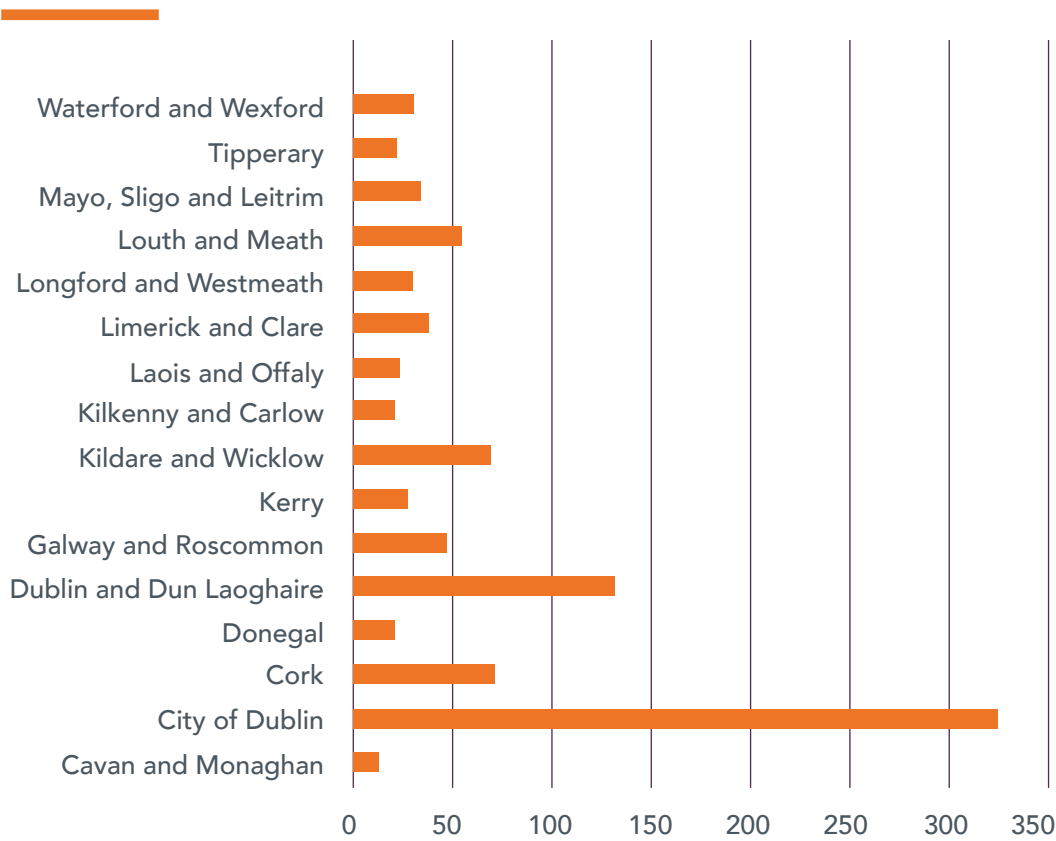
- **Catherine Devlin**, from Donegal ETB, spoke about her experience of returning to education to 90 tutors who attended our Tutors Forum in January.
- **Michael Duffy**, from Cavan and Monaghan ETB, was the guest student speaker at our Plain English Awards in February.
- **Michael Power**, from Tipperary ETB, shared his inspiring story with prisoners in Portlaoise Prison in April.
- **Noel Phelan**, from Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, **Michael Power**, from Tipperary ETB, **Lee Mitchell**, from Kildare and Wicklow ETB, **Olive Phelan** from Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB and **Kevin O'Duffy**, from Laois and Offaly ETB took part in a consultation with Maynooth University on the guidelines for inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in adult literacy centres.
- **Brian O'Donnell**, from Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, **Galina Moraru**, from Kildare and Wicklow ETB and **Michael Duffy**, from Cavan and Monaghan ETB, shared their stories about returning to education with 120 people at our conference to celebrate International Literacy Day.
- **Mary Devereux**, from Waterford and Wexford ETB, shared her story with ETB staff, managers and co-ordinators at a special event.
- **Michael Power**, from Tipperary ETB, spoke at a special event organised by the Human Rights Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to mark one year since Ireland ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- **Martina Kiely** and **Lisa Banks**, from Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, **Chris Carthy** from Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB, **Patrick Sutton**, from City of Dublin ETB, **Michael Power**, from Tipperary ETB and **Tony Moloney**, from Cork ETB, helped out at NALA's stand at the **National Ploughing Championships** in September.
- **Patrick Sutton**, from City of Dublin ETB, and **Chris Potts**, from Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, helped raise awareness at a world café event held by Concern. Chris also spoke at a health literacy event in Tallaght Hospital and at a literacy awareness event for staff at Dublin Airport Authority.

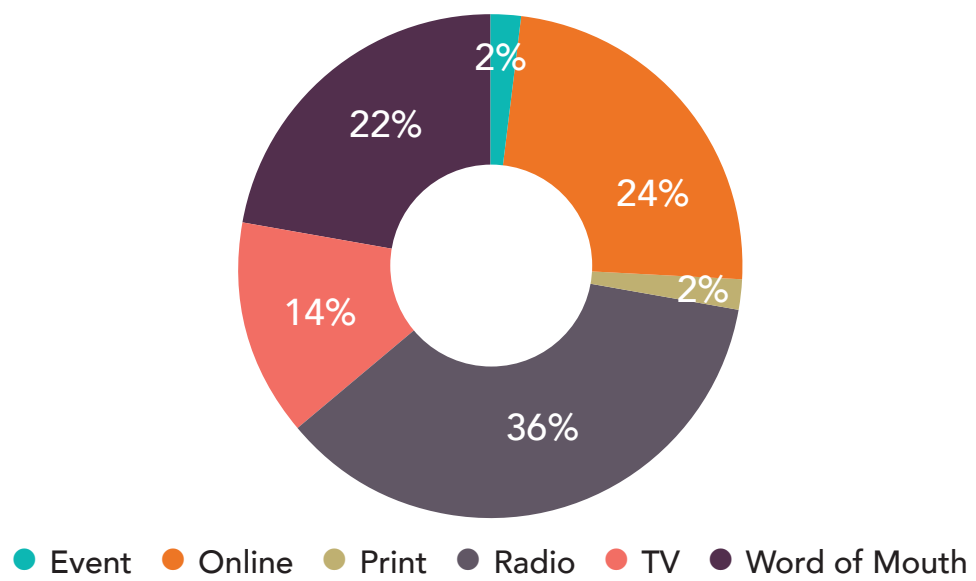
Impact of our awareness work

In 2019, NALA referred **985** people to educational opportunities, including to ETB adult education centres, NALA's distance learning service and to WriteOn.ie. We also provided information on takethefirststep.ie which received **40,000** views during the year. See next page for more information about where we referred people and where people heard about us.

Referrals to ETBs



Where people heard about us?



Student work

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



Members of NALA's student subcommittee Chris King, Thomas Campbell, Michelle Johnston, Mark Daly and Michael Duffy.

Objective 1

Action 4

Involve 'champions of learning' to encourage more people to engage with and enjoy, lifelong learning.

Our work is most successful when students are actively involved in what we do. Through our student development work we work closely with students from around the country. We ensure their views and experiences guide and inform the quality of our work, and are heard and taken into account by policy makers.

The feedback and suggestions we get from students also supports the learner voice element of the Further Education and Training Strategy.

This year our work included two student days and a Student Development Fund which was steered by the members of our student subcommittee.

NALA student days

Over 180 adult literacy students from 38 ETB adult education centres attended our student days in Limerick and Dublin this year. The student days are a relaxed and fun opportunity for students from different education centres to meet each other and learn new things during workshops.

The theme for the student days was 'Expand your learning' and at each event there was a variety of workshops for students on this topic. These included workshops on plain English, online safety and distance learning. The topics for the workshops were chosen following suggestions and feedback from students themselves. NALA was delighted to have George O'Callaghan, Chief Executive of Limerick and Clare ETB, as guest speaker at the student day in Limerick and Paddy Lavelle, Chief Executive of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, as guest speaker at the Dublin event.

The student days are also a platform where students can give feedback about their experience of adult education.

This year students gave feedback under the following themes:

- Access and participation;
- Teaching and learning; and
- Progression.

Access and participation

In their feedback students called on organisations to use plain English when they communicate with the public. All of the students who gave feedback spoke very highly about tutors. Many students said that their positive experience of returning to education was all down to the support and encouragement they received from tutors.

Teaching and learning

Students said that more awareness is needed about the availability of distance learning options. They also spoke about the importance of classes where they can improve their smartphone and computer skills.

Progression

Students said that fear of the unknown, lack of confidence, computer skills and lack of information can stop them from moving on and trying something new. The feedback also shows the importance of raising awareness about other learning options that students could avail of.

NALA shared this feedback with other stakeholders in the adult education sector at the National Advisory Committee on Literacy and Numeracy. We will put in place a number of actions arising from the feedback so that we improve the quality of our work and respond appropriately to the needs of learners.

In their own words

"I enjoyed doing the workshops and learned lots of new things."

"I met lots of very interesting people at it. It was a great day out."

"I always find these days useful and informative."

NALA published a short report on the student days in 2019. We got feedback on the report from stakeholders in the adult education sector including SOLAS, ETBI and the ALOA. The report is available on NALA's website.

The success of our student days is down to the people who come along and make them such enjoyable and useful occasions. We are very grateful to all learners who come along and contribute to the events. NALA also appreciates the work adult literacy organisers, resource staff and tutors do in encouraging students to attend the days. And of course a big thank you to the NALA student subcommittee for the work they do in organising and facilitating the student days.

NALA's student subcommittee

NALA's student subcommittee gather and discuss adult literacy student issues and provide feedback on those issues to NALA's Board. Students from the subcommittee contributed to both internal and external consultations and workshops during 2019.

Five new students joined NALA's student subcommittee in 2019. Four students stepped down from the committee at the end of their term and NALA would like to say a big thank you for their tireless work.

These students are Jude Holt, Ann Nicholson, Joe McDonagh and Lee Mitchell.

Lee says that he learned a lot through his involvement with the subcommittee.

"I got great experience on the NALA student subcommittee. It was good to meet other people who have the same issues. I also enjoyed being involved in awareness events such as the Ploughing Championship."

Almost 2,000 students take part in events funded by NALA

In 2019, we shared €50,000 in grants between 88 ETB centres as part of our Student Development Fund. The grants meant that 1,970 students were able to take part in new learning development activities outside the classroom. The students give suggestions as to what the money should be used for which always leads to lots of interesting trips and activities. For example, in 2019 the fund was used for everything from a trip to a heritage park in Wexford to a paintballing outing.

Organisations that receive the grant have to gather student feedback on topics set by NALA. This year, students gave us their thoughts and ideas about what would help them to expand their learning. The issues raised by students ranged from increased tuition hours to new ways of learning such as podcasts.

NALA published a short report on the Student Development Fund. We got feedback on the report from stakeholders in the adult education sector including libraries and SOLAS. The report is available on NALA's website.

In their own words

Here's what staff from some of the ETB centres had to say about the positive impact of the Student Development Fund:

"Students enjoy being asked to give feedback. They feel that their experiences and opinions are valued and heard."

Youthreach, Bandon

"The fund enabled the students to visit a place they never visited before. It also helped some students to overcome social challenges as travelling to new places would not be part of their lifestyle."

Teach an Leinn education centre, Tipperary

Plain English and Literacy Advisory Service

We worked with organisations to help make their services more accessible to people with literacy needs.



Dr Inez Bailey, CEO, NALA and Declan Black, Managing Partner, Mason Hayes & Curran with the winners of our Plain English Awards Grace O'Regan, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and James Hubbard, National Disability Authority.

Objective 1

Action 5

Support organisations such as education and training services, health services, local authorities, libraries, private services, utilities, public bodies and charities to provide literacy-friendly services.

Plain English is a way of writing and presenting information that helps someone understand it the first time they read or hear it. By using plain English, an organisation gives people information they understand and enables them to make informed choices.

Our plain English service aims to help organisations communicate more clearly with their customers or people accessing their services, including those who have literacy and numeracy difficulties.

NALA works closely with many organisations to show them how to become more literacy-friendly. A literacy-friendly organisation encourages commitment to remove literacy-related barriers in their organisation. Barriers might include unclear signage, unclear documents or a lack of awareness about what customers with literacy difficulties need.

Plain English editing and training

More organisations are now aware of the benefits of providing information in plain English so our editing and training service was very busy this year.

During 2019, 94 organisations used our dedicated Plain English Editing and Training service. The organisations are from several different sectors including the financial, regulatory, health and public sector.

Plain English Mark

Our Plain English mark is a logo that organisations can include on their websites or printed documents to show that their information meets international plain language writing and design standards. Many organisations use our Plain English Editing and Training Service because they want to achieve our Plain English Mark.

Among the organisations who were awarded our Plain English Mark for documents during 2019 were:

- An Bord Pleanála;
- The Health Service Executive;
- The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection;
- The Irish Cancer Society; and
- The Housing Agency.

Training

During 2019, NALA delivered plain English training to **756** people. Trainees evaluate the service they have received after training and consistently show high satisfaction levels.

Some examples of Government departments and other organisations who used our training services in 2019 include:

- The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- The Law Society of Ireland
- UL Hospitals Group
- The Public Participation Network
- Gov.ie, a central portal for online government services
- The Irish Naturalisation Immigration Service
- Wexford County Council

Plain English Awards

NALA once again teamed up with leading law firm Mason Hayes & Curran for the national Plain English Awards. The aims of the awards are to reward organisations that communicate clearly and to promote the use of plain English in all public information. We received 77 entries from 50 organisations across a range of sectors. Over 100 people attended the awards ceremony in February.

The winners in the 'Best use of plain English by an organisation' category, with a joint entry, were the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the National Disability Authority. Their winning entry was a Customer Communications Toolkit for the Public Service.

"We're absolutely delighted to have won this award because in the public service it is critical that citizens and customers can understand the information that is available to them," said Grace O'Regan from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

In the digital category, the Passport Service won first place for their online passport renewal website. The category showing the impact of plain English was won by AIB.

We also had a new category celebrating champions of plain English. A champion of plain English is someone who promotes the use of clear communication and plain language in their organisation. At this year's awards, the following people were recognised as champions of plain English:

- Liam Ronayne from Cork Library
- Patricia Carey from the Adoption Authority of Ireland
- Norma Deasy from the HSE
- Mike Gogan from AIB
- The facilitators of the knowledge transfer and exchange workshop at the All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care.

Media coverage

The announcement of the winners of the Plain English Awards was covered in The Times, the Law Society Gazette and in the Cork Echo. There was also a significant amount of Twitter activity at the Awards ceremony with many attendees tweeting live from the event.

Sharing our expertise

Finding out more about the developments in other countries, and sharing our own expertise, helps NALA's plain English service to improve the quality and clarity of information for the public. In September, our plain English co-ordinator Claire O'Riordan attended the Plain Language Association International (PLAIN) Conference in Oslo. The conference was attended by over 400 participants from 27 countries. Claire's attendance was funded by Léargas through the Erasmus + Programme.

We also contributed to consultations in many plain English related areas such as the development of standards in plain language as part of the international work to achieve ISO (International Standards Organisation) standards for plain language.

Review of service

In 2019, we carried out an internal review of our plain English service. The recommendations from this review will help us to further improve our already high-quality services to clients of our plain English editing and training service.

Students have their say

We involve students at our events to help us raise awareness of the importance of plain English. For example, in 2019 Michael Duffy, a learner from Cavan, spoke at our Plain English Awards.

Plain English tenders

In 2019, we continued working with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) as part of a three-year tender we won in 2018. This work involves NALA providing training to DEASP staff on how to write and present information in plain English. We will use DEASP materials and exercises to make our training relevant and transferable to staff's day-to-day work. We will also provide plain English writing and editing supports to ensure the DEASP produce clear communications.

Health literacy

Health literacy is the ability to read, understand and act on health information. It enables people to ask questions and make informed decisions about their health. During the year, we worked closely with healthcare professionals to improve health literacy across the sector.

Crystal Clear Mark

In 2019, the number of pharmacies that have our Crystal Clear Mark reached **100**. **Five** general practices have also achieved the mark. The mark is Ireland's first health literacy quality mark and has been developed as part of our Crystal Clear Pharmacy and General Practice Programme. The mark is awarded to pharmacies and general practices that show their commitment to providing a health literacy-friendly service to patients. It was developed by NALA, MSD and the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) in discussion with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP). It is supported by Healthy Ireland.

A full list of the pharmacies and general practices that have received the mark is available on our website.

Healthy Ireland

NALA was involved in supporting the Healthy Ireland initiative in libraries and the local community. We did this by taking an information stand at the Tallaght Health Fair in September and by sitting on the Irish Cancer Society Support Committee.

Improving awareness of health literacy

This year NALA spoke about health literacy at several conferences and seminars including:

- UCD European Health Literacy conference;
- National Obesity Forum; and
- Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) conference.

We delivered health literacy workshops and presentations to staff from:

- Naas Hospital;
- St Patrick's Mental Health Services;
- Well Now! course with Southside Partnership;
- HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre;
- HSE speech and language therapists;
- Bayer Healthcare; and
- Tallaght Hospital.

We also delivered health literacy workshops to pharmacy students in University College Cork and Trinity College Dublin.

We met with a number stakeholders to progress the area of health literacy. These included:

- Department of Health;
- UCD; and
- Trinity College Dublin.

Media coverage of health literacy

During the year, there were **11** articles in medical magazines and local and national newspapers about health literacy.

Working with local authorities

In 2019, NALA continued to work with a number of local authorities. We delivered literacy awareness training for staff in South Dublin County Council during Social Inclusion Week in November. We were also asked by Social Justice Ireland to provide four workshops on literacy awareness and plain English to Public Participation Network (PPN) members in Louth, Leitrim, Tipperary and Dublin. A PPN is a network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups around the country.

Working with libraries

This year NALA participated on two library groups:

1. Right to Read Steering Group

This group is overseeing the roll out of the Right to Read Campaign in local libraries. The campaign focuses on helping children become better readers and promotes family time at libraries. We also work with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), who lead out on this campaign, about supporting libraries in expanding the campaign to focus on adults.

2. Dublin City Literacy Network

This group is chaired by Dublin City Library and is made up of organisations who work on child, adolescent and adult literacy. NALA is involved with mapping all literacy services in the city and then looking at potential partnership projects.

Family literacy

Family literacy is about the way families use and develop literacy and numeracy skills together in the home. When parents are involved in their child's learning, it positively affects the child's performance at school.

More and more parents are using the internet to find out about fun things they can do to help their child learn. Our online activity involves delivering information through daily updates on Facebook, a monthly e-zine and regular updates on helpmykidlearn.ie. This website was developed as part of the Department of Education and Skills' national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people. We worked with our stakeholders to promote the website and we also promoted it through Facebook and Google advertising.

This has resulted in:

- 220,000 people using helpmykidlearn.ie which is a 10% increase on 2018;
- 1,850 people receiving our e-zine; and
- 170,000 people reached with posts on our helpmykidlearn.ie Facebook page.

Sharing family literacy expertise

In March, NALA delivered a family literacy research paper at an international family learning conference in Ennis. Dr Inez Bailey, NALA CEO, also delivered a talk about the forthcoming family literacy guidelines.

Online learning

We prepared content for an open education resource (OER) and massive open online course (MOOC) on the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE). The OER and MOOC aims to contribute to informing European policy makers on how to implement family learning strategies.

We also worked in partnership with Trinity College Dublin to develop an innovative family digital literacy module. The project, which is funded by the Irish Research Council, involved parents of children aged 5-8 years old and a number of DEIS schools.

Supporting primary schools

In February NALA gave an input to newly appointed Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Co-ordinators when they met for training. We provided information on:

- adult literacy and numeracy levels in Ireland;
- options for parents who want to improve their skills;
- helpmykidlearn.ie;
- plain English in communicating with parents; and
- family learning work in Ireland.

NALA also sent promotional material for helpmykidlearn.ie to 12 schools in May.

In October we gave a workshop to HSCLs in Tallaght. We also gave a workshop to 10 parents in the Sacred Heart National School in Killinarden about supporting their children's learning and awareness about literacy.

NALA Strategic Plan:

Objective 2

Lead innovation in the teaching and learning of adult literacy, numeracy and basic digital skills.



Why it matters

NALA is committed to developing innovative and accessible supports to help people fully take part in a society that is rapidly changing. We do this by putting the needs and interests of learners at the centre of our practice and practice-driven research. This enables us to develop the tools and resources people need to improve their literacy, numeracy, maths or digital skills.

Under Objective 2 we have five actions:

1. Work with SOLAS and the ETBs to implement the adult literacy and numeracy strategy as set out in the FET Strategy 2014-2019.
2. Support SOLAS in agreed aspects of work such as the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy, the Learner Forum and the FET Framework for Workforce Development.
3. Create self-directed, peer, blended, distance and eLearning programmes and supports that help people with literacy and numeracy needs to use everyday technology and digital media.
4. Provide continuous professional development (CPD) for tutors and other professionals involved in literacy and lifelong learning in line with the FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019.
5. Provide opportunities for those interested in literacy and numeracy to gather, discuss and share best practice.

Integrating literacy

We supported students with literacy difficulties to learn.



Tutors Elaine Clifford and Karis Goggin from Kerry ETB at our Tutors' Forum.

Objective 2

Action 1

Work with SOLAS and the ETBs to implement the adult literacy and numeracy strategy as set out in the FET Strategy 2014-2019.

An inclusive society is one where further education and training programmes are accessible to everybody. NALA works closely with organisations to integrate literacy development into vocational courses and training. This helps to ensure that people who want to take part in education and training programmes are not excluded because of the literacy and numeracy demands of the course.

Courses and resources

Integrating literacy workshops

In 2019, **105** FET practitioners took part in NALA workshops on integrating literacy and numeracy with vocational and other learning. These workshops were based on NALA's Guidelines on Integrating Literacy. The participants were from across the FET sector and included literacy tutors, adult education organisers, adult literacy organisers, Youthreach managers and staff, tutors from the Back to Education Initiative, resource workers and career guidance workers.

We also provided integrated literacy awareness training for **24** higher diploma students in adult and community education in Maynooth University.

Working with the prison service

Forty-one per cent of prisoners in Ireland left school before the age of 14. As a result the average literacy level of the prison population is much lower than the general population. In 2019, NALA was involved in several projects that aimed to improve prisoners' literacy skills.

We provided literacy awareness training to a group of prisoners, probation officers and staff in Portlaoise Prison's education unit.

Following this we designed and delivered a literacy action research project for a group of 11 prisoners in Portlaoise Prison. The Level 6 training programme, which is accredited by WIT, helps prisoners qualify as literacy tutors in order to provide peer-to-peer literacy support for other prisoners who are not accessing education support.

Objective 2

Action 2

Support SOLAS in agreed aspects of work, such as, the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy, the Learner Forum, and the FET Framework for Workforce Development.

Throughout 2019, NALA worked closely with SOLAS to help the organisation achieve the objectives set out in the FET Strategy 2014-2019. Part of the strategy is about SOLAS listening to and consulting with learners in FET. NALA's student day and fund ([see page 40 for student work](#)) contributes to that part of the strategy. We also contributed to the National Learner Forum and the meeting of Learner Representatives on ETBs.

Advisory Group for the National Learner Forum

NALA participated on the Advisory Group for the National Learner Forum with other stakeholders. The National Learner Forum is led by AONTAS and the Advisory Group met four times in 2019. At the Advisory Group, we shared feedback that we gathered from students who took part in activities funded by our Student Development Fund. NALA also participated in a policy discussion on the position of the learners' voice in the new FET Strategy.

Nominating ETB Learner Representatives

In 2019, NALA, along with 10 other nominating bodies, nominated students to become Learner Representatives on 12 of the 16 ETB Boards. Four of the students NALA nominated were selected. The role is voluntary and is a five year commitment.

NALA is very grateful to all the students who put their names forward for these positions. We are also grateful to the adult literacy organisers who helped us to identify students for these positions

Distance learning

We helped people to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.



Students Lisa Banks and Thomas Campbell at our student day in Dublin.

Objective 2

Action 3

Create self-directed, peer, blended, distance and eLearning programmes and supports that help people with literacy and numeracy needs to use everyday technology and digital media.

For some learners, it can be hard to find the time to do a course. NALA's distance learning service (DLS) makes it easier to avail of high quality learning opportunities. It enables people to improve their skills by working with a tutor over the phone or online. The free service provides learning that is designed around the learner's needs and lifestyle.

In 2019, our DLS supported **220** learners to improve their basic skills through one-to-one tuition over the phone. The service also enabled **1,320** learners, an increase of **32%** on 2018, to achieve Level 2 and Level 3 QQI accreditation through WriteOn.ie. This is an interactive learning website that learners can use at home on their own, with the help of a distance learning tutor, or through blended learning in an education centre.

Learners also have the option to gain a NALA certificate of achievement for learning at Level 1 on WriteOn.ie. Our DLS uses a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) tool that uses assessment to allow learners receive qualifications for what they have previously learned but never received formal accreditation for. This RPL tool is available at Level 2 and Level 3.

A new version of WriteOn.ie will be available in 2020. For more information, please see page **68**.

Table 1 outlines how the DLS supported learners in 2019.

Table 1: 2019 Summary of distance learning work	
Initial assessment	<p>3 Learning Support Workers involved in initial assessment.</p> <p>116 initial assessments were done with potential learners. If this assessment shows that a learner is suitable for distance learning, they are matched with a distance learning tutor.</p> <p>86 learners were matched with a distance learning tutor.</p>
Distance learning	<p>9 distance learning tutors worked with learners over the phone, email or by post.</p> <p>220 learners availed of 2,455 learning sessions with a distance learning tutor.</p>
Accreditation	<p>1,320 learners received awards.</p> <p>There were 4,350 minor awards in total. This includes 3,225 Level 2 minor awards and 1,125 Level 3 minor awards.</p>
Adult Education Centres using our DLS	Learners from 93 centres received awards using WriteOn.ie
Writeon.ie	<p>7,400 new learning accounts set up</p> <p>18,500 different visitors to the website</p> <p>17 minutes and 56 seconds was the average time on the website</p>

Education, Training and Assessment Subcommittee

A new Education, Training and Assessment (ETA) Subcommittee was set up in 2018 to assure the quality of NALA's distance learning service. The subcommittee is made up of NALA staff and Board members as well as Tim Savage, Assistant Professor in the School of Computer Science and Statistics at Trinity College and Leo Casey, Director of Education Programmes at National College of Ireland. The subcommittee oversees the education provision in NALA and advises on the future development of programmes.

The subcommittee met four times during 2019. Their focus was to review the development of the new eLearning website and to review self-evaluation findings in the distance learning service. They were also focused on overseeing the results approval process for WriteOn.ie and to review policies and procedures in relation to NALA's education provision.

Re-engagement with QQI

NALA has been working on a re-engagement process with Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI). This process will ensure that NALA's programmes and services are quality assured. As part of this process, we developed NALA's Quality Assurance Manual. In April this was approved by the Board and is available on our website www.nala.ie

NALA submitted the re-engagement application to QQI in June and took part in the QQI re-engagement panel meeting in September. We submitted additional documentation to the panel in December. As a result, NALA's quality assurance procedures have been approved.

Goodbye WriteOn, Hello Learn with NALA

NALA's WriteOn.ie online learning platform closed for certification in November and closed down fully at the end of December. The system ran successfully for 11 years and assisted over 200 centres and thousands of learners in their learning at Levels 1 to 4. In that period, over 10,000 learners achieved over 40,000 QQI awards at Level 2 and 3 on WriteOn.ie.

Our new elearning platform, Learn with NALA, will be launched in early 2020. We are very excited about this new chapter in our online learning offering to centres and students. Learn with NALA will have lots of new and improved features that will help learners improve their skills and get a qualification.

To create Learn with NALA, we partnered with a new elearning provider called Desire2Learn (D2L). D2L is a global education company and provide online solutions for all education levels around the world. Their Brightspace elearning platform is used in many educational settings around the world and Ireland including UCD and Technological University Dublin.

In January 2020, we will launch a test version of Learn with NALA with two education centres. We will use this period to test the functionality and user experience of the system. Throughout 2020 we will be adding new centres to the platform and migrating over 27,000 pages of content from WriteOn.ie. Once testing is complete and any issues arising are fixed, we will begin registering centres who have completed the re-engagement process.

Check-In-Take-Off

In 2019, NALA started working on the development of a new online assessment tool for the ERASMUS+ Check-In-Take-Off (CITO) project. The online assessment tool will be used by members of the public to assess their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The project will create a free, accessible, motivating online tool that learners can use to self-assess their skills and find out about learning opportunities that suit their needs.

Our partners in the project include Malta's Ministry of Education and Employment, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), and Fønix AS from Norway.

According to the European Commission, one in five European adults struggle with basic reading and writing, numeracy or using digital tools in everyday life. Adults with basic skills and with a low-level qualification are at a higher risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Education has the power to transform the lives of learners, their families and their communities and plays an important role in addressing social division and inequality. The new CITO online assessment tool will help people start on a learning journey and it will show, in a clear and simple manner, a range of flexible learning options available to them.

The CITO project is funded by the European Commission under ERASMUS+. It is the only ERASMUS+ funded project with a focus on adult learners. NALA updates our national partners on the project at the Upskilling Pathways Advisory group meetings which are chaired by the Department of Education and Skills.

Tutor training and professional development

We led innovation in the teaching
and learning of adult literacy,
numeracy and digital skills.



Dr Ciarán Ó Mathúna, Co-Ordinator of the Professional Diploma in Education at Marino Institute of Education and Kate Fox from Dublin Adult Learning Centre at our Tutors' Forum.

Objective 2

Action 4

Provide continuous professional development (CPD) for tutors and other professionals involved in supporting literacy and lifelong learning in line with the FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019.

Action 5

Provide opportunities for those interested in literacy and numeracy to gather, discuss and share best practice.

There was great demand for the range of specialised professional development events we provided for FET practitioners in 2019. In total, **785** tutors, resource workers, co-ordinators, managers and adult literacy organisers attended **18** different events – this is an increase of **30%** on last year. As well as the events, we also organised and hosted **three** webinars which **55** people participated in.

The topics and workshops covered at our events and webinars are based on feedback and suggestions from literacy, numeracy and ESOL workers. The impact of each event is measured through anonymous online surveys which are carried out afterwards.

Almost everybody who attended said that they learned something new at the events. Most people also said the event inspired them to make some changes to their work practices. Participants also highlighted the importance of the events for meeting and sharing knowledge with other further education practitioners.

Here is a summary of our events in 2019.

National Forum for Adult Literacy Tutors

In January, **87** tutors attended our National Forum for Adult Literacy Tutors. The event was chaired by Blake Hodgkinson, Director of Further Education and Training, City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB). The theme of the event was 'Transformation through learning'.

Many important and useful topics were discussed including how tutors can use creative reading and writing to bring about transformative change in learners' lives. Tutors heard from Catherine Devlin, a student from Donegal ETB and member of NALA's student subcommittee, about her own experience of returning to learning. Participants were also able to take part in workshops where they learned about strategies for engaging and motivating learners and guidelines for creating boundaries with students.

Numeracy conference

In March, **66** tutors attended our numeracy conference which we once again held in Trinity College Dublin thanks to the support of their School of Education. The conference explored techniques and strategies for tutors to improve their numeracy teaching skills. The keynote speakers were Professor Diana Coben from the University of East Anglia, Javier Diez-Palomar from the University of Barcelona and Bernie O'Donoghue from the University of Limerick.

In her presentation, Bernie discussed the definition of numeracy as outlined in the national strategy for literacy and numeracy. She mapped numeracy onto the maths curriculum and raised the question of whether maths education leads to numerate behaviour.

Critical Literacy seminar

Seventy-two people attended our Critical Literacy seminar in March. The seminar was organised by NALA as part of our role on the AONTAS Project Advisory Group (PAG) for European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) project. The seminar looked at how tutors can help learners develop their critical literacy skills. Keynote speaker Professor Uta Papen, from Lancaster University, discussed the challenges for practitioners in working on critical literacy in contemporary times. Other speakers included literacy tutor Pauline Hensey, Sister Bernadette MacMahon from the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice and Tony Daly from 80:20, an organisation that promotes education on human development and human rights.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) conference

In May, **126** tutors attended our ESOL conference. The conference explored strategies that tutors can use to challenge and motivate ESOL students. The conference was chaired by Noelle O'Dwyer, Assistant Manager of the Active Inclusion Unit at SOLAS.

There were presentations on many useful topics including how tutors can plan and deliver workplace ESOL classes. There were also workshops exploring the range of learner friendly digital resources available for ESOL tutors.

International Literacy Day conference

In September, **120** people attended our International Literacy Day (ILD) conference. The theme of the event was 'Literacy changes lives: Why we need to work together to close the nation's literacy gap'.

Joe Little, Religious and Social Affairs Correspondent at RTÉ News and Current Affairs, chaired the event. Guest speakers included Jason Vit, Head of Literacy Hubs at the National Literacy Trust in the UK; Professor Donal O'Shea, Consultant Endocrinologist and Dr Shana Cohen, Director of the Think-tank for Action on Social Change (TASC).

We were also delighted to have three students take part as guest speakers at the event. The students were Brian O'Donnell from Kilkenny and Carlow ETB; Galina Moraru from Kildare and Wicklow ETB; and Michael Duffy from Cavan and Monaghan ETB. Each of the students spoke passionately about how having literacy problems impacted on their lives and the benefits of going back to education.

Numeracy workshops

During Maths Week in October, **84** people took part in **seven** numeracy workshops that were organised by NALA. The events, which were run in conjunction with local ETBs, took place in Drogheda, Carlow, Clonmel, Longford, Tuam, Cork and Ennis. The themes of the workshops included tips for teaching algebra and statistics, using technology in the numeracy classroom and strategies for teaching maths. The topics of fractions, percentages and budgeting were also covered.

Family literacy conference

In November, **110** people attended our conference on creative approaches to family learning. The event was chaired by David Dineen, Regional Manager with Tusla.

Guest speakers included Róisín Doherty, Director at the Active Inclusion unit in SOLAS; Susan Nic Reamoinn, Education Officer at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment; and Joan Kiely, Dean of Education at Marino Institute of Education, Dublin.

Tutors were also able to take part in workshops on developing reading relationships with children and educating children about farm safety.

What is the impact of our events?

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of the participants who attended our events in 2019 learned something new. There was also a very large number of participants who said that our events had inspired them to make changes to the way they worked. This offers clear evidence that our professional development events improve the quality of teaching and learning in Ireland.

Table 1: Impact of NALA conferences in 2019

	Learned something new	Inspired changes to work
National Tutors' Forum	94%	97%
ESOL conference	85%	92%
Numeracy conference	92%	87%
ILD conference	100%	92%
Family Learning conference	100%	92%

Our surveys were done anonymously using the online survey tool Survey Monkey.

In their own words

Here's what some of the tutors who attended our conferences during 2019 had to say:

"I will definitely use some of the teaching techniques in my classroom."

"I work with people with special needs so I found this a novel and interactive way of teaching maths."

"I found the workshops on maths to be very useful."

"I found out about some very interesting ways to help students with algebra."

"The event made me question my approach and critically examine if I am heavily influencing my learners and the way they learn."

"I will try to include some tasks about critical literacy in all programmes I deliver."

"After today I will encourage my learners to examine the way they are learning and also encourage more critical thinking."

"I learned loads about how to use technology in the classroom."

"I gained a much stronger understanding of tips and techniques that can be used to teach ESOL."

"The resources shared by speakers and in the workshops, as well as the free NALA resources were brilliant."

Promotional videos

In 2019 we produced a series of promotional videos to encourage people to attend our events and to give them a taste of what to expect. We produced videos for our Tutors' Forum and our ESOL, numeracy, ILD and family learning conferences. These videos, which are all available on our YouTube channel, were watched over **1,500** times.

Webinars

We held three webinars in 2019. The webinars looked at how to deal with fake news, technology tips for literacy tutors and how to develop reading relationships with children. **Fifty-five** people tuned in live to the webinars and the content from each is available on NALA's YouTube channel.

Online CPD

We plan to extend our current CPD offering by delivering both online and blended models of CPD. In 2019, we finalised a scoping paper for an online CPD project. The paper was submitted for feedback to the National Advisory Committee (NAC) for the ETBI Literacy Numeracy and Basic Skills Network. The project will take place in 2020.

NALA Strategic Plan:

Objective 3

Seek further
investment in raising
adult literacy levels in
Ireland.



Why it matters

Literacy changes lives and benefits everyone. Unmet adult literacy and numeracy needs have devastating consequences for individuals, communities and the economy and are a factor in social exclusion and inequality. In Ireland, one in six, or 520,000 adults, struggle with reading and understanding everyday texts. One in four adults has difficulties using maths in everyday life. Many others find using technology a challenge. This is costing our society and economy money, time and lost potential.

Literacy is a barometer of equality. It is not neutral, it is bound up with power and powerlessness. Literacy is not about individual intelligence, it is about social, economic and cultural opportunity – and having equal access to opportunity is crucial. Literacy is part of the solution to creating a more equal society and changing lives for the better. Literacy, numeracy and digital skills enable people to reach their full potential, be active and critical participants in society and help address poverty and social exclusion.

Under Objective 3 we have four actions:

1. Deepen appreciation by politicians and policy-makers of how improving literacy and numeracy skills can impact positively on Irish society.
2. Make the case, to politicians and policy-makers, for increased long-term funding for literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
3. Collaborate with organisations which can help us achieve lifelong learning policy and practice in line with the targets set out in the National Skills Strategy 2025.
4. Define and support the measurement of the positive effect of literacy strategies and initiatives.

Policy work

We made the case to policy makers and politicians to improve literacy and numeracy skills to positively impact on Irish society.



Lee Mitchell, student and NALA Board member, with Mairead McGuinness, Vice-President of the European Parliament, at our AGM in April.

Objective 3

Action 1-4

Seek further investment in raising adult literacy levels in Ireland

Low literacy creates an obstacle to a fair, equal society and undermines our economic competitiveness. We work in partnership with government departments, organisations, tutors and learners to advance adult literacy policy. This work is supported by evidence-based research which examines international best practice, reviews Irish policy and produces recommendations to meet the needs of people with literacy difficulties.

NALA wants to create a vision for literacy where everyone has the opportunity to improve their literacy skills. Increased investment is needed along with a new vision that delivers a Whole-of-Government Strategy to support literacy, numeracy and digital skills in all areas of our life.

A new vision – invest in people, invest in literacy, invest in society

Every person has a right to literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Having these skills enables a person to have agency, to have a voice and participate fully in society, to continue learning and extend their education; and to access the same opportunities as everyone else. By investing in adult literacy, Ireland can be a better and more equal society.

NALA is creating a vision for improving adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills over the next decade. The new vision for literacy includes:

- An interdepartmental literacy and numeracy implementation group to develop, oversee and evaluate the new approach;

- A targeted paid learning leave programme for employees in work to develop skills for unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs and/or for people with less than a QQI Level 4 qualification; and
- Greater access to a high quality learning programme with a local education and training provider that meets a person's literacy needs.

The new vision would also offer tailored supports to help more vulnerable groups to access learning programmes and progress. The supports offer help for:

- income,
- transport,
- child and elder care,
- work placement, and
- progression opportunities.

Framework to address literacy, numeracy and digital skills

As part of our work to create a new vision, we commissioned research and worked with the Think-tank for Action on Social Change (TASC) to develop a framework to address literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs. This framework re-examines the policy approach to supporting adults with unmet literacy and numeracy issues in Ireland.

TASC gathered input from experts in education and the workplace as well as from academics and people from the community and voluntary sector. TASC and NALA also met with several other stakeholders, including the INOU and the Immigrant Council of Ireland, and the feedback we received helped shape the framework. This framework will be published in early 2020.

Literacy Now – the cost of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs

Literacy Now is a new report on the cost of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs in Ireland and why we need to act now. It provides evidence to show why we must support unmet adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs in Ireland.

Literacy Now incorporates national and international statistics and research from SOLAS, OECD and UNESCO. It also uses findings from two research reports we commissioned:

- 'Literacy Matters for health and wellbeing' by Dr Sarah Gibney; and
- 'Literacy Matters in social and community life' by Professor Seán Ó'Riain and Dr Delma Byrne.

We also drew from a recent study into family literacy practices that was carried out by Dr Ann Hegarty and Dr Maggie Feeley. Literacy Now will be published in 2020.

Framework for measuring the impact of improved literacy, numeracy and digital skills

In 2019 we commissioned Jackie Borge and Daniel Sellers to carry out a research project to identify indicators to measure the outcomes of adult literacy strategies and initiatives in Ireland. This report will be published in 2020.

NALA submissions

We made **seven** written submissions to the Government in 2019. We made submissions to the:

- Department of Rural and Community Development Customer Action Plan and Charter Survey
- Further Education and Training Strategy 2020
- Interdepartmental Group on Social Inclusion Work Scheme places
- Pathways to Work
- Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills
- Action Plan for Education 2020
- Special Oireachtas Committee on Key Issues affecting Travellers

In our submissions we recommended a **new vision for literacy** that includes:

- appointing a Junior Minister for lifelong learning and literacy;
- developing a creative, ambitious and aligned Whole-of-Government Strategy for literacy, numeracy and digital skills over the next 10 years;
- introducing a Plain Language Act to require government and public services to communicate in plain English that the public can understand and use;
- access for all adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs, or less than a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 4 qualification, to a high quality and relevant learning programme with a local education and training provider;
- developing new and innovative ways to support unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs such as:

- blended and distance learning options;
 - family literacy, financial literacy, health literacy and media literacy programmes;
 - bridging programmes to prepare people for other training; and
 - integrating literacy into vocational education and training programmes.
- developing tailored supports to help more vulnerable groups to access learning programmes and progress;
 - developing an Action Plan for Traveller Education in Further Education and Training (FET) in partnership with national Traveller organisations; and
 - introducing a targeted paid learning leave programme for employees who have unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs, or less than a QQI Level 4 qualification.

Progressing the Plain Language Bill

In January, Fine Gael TD Noel Rock introduced a Plain Language Bill in the Dáil. Labour Senator Aodhán Ó Ríordáin also introduced a Plain Language Bill in the Seanad. NALA worked with both parties to develop the Plain Language Bill. The Bill aims to ensure that all information for the public from government and state bodies is written and presented in plain language. Due to other legislative issues during the year, the Bill has not yet been passed by the Oireachtas. NALA has contacted all political parties to ask for a commitment to progress the Plain Language Bill in the 33rd Dáil.

Other highlights from 2019

Advocating for literacy

During 2019 we engaged with political representatives to lobby for increased priority and investment in adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills. We did this by contacting TDs, Senators and political parties to raise awareness of the issue and the need for greater priority and investment.

The political representatives that we lobbied are:

- Joe McHugh, TD, Fine Gael
- Simon Harris, TD, Fine Gael
- Richard Bruton, TD, Fine Gael
- Noel Rock, TD, Fine Gael
- Mairead McGuinness, MEP, Fine Gael
- Frances Fitzgerald, TD, Fine Gael
- Maria Walsh, MEP, Fine Gael
- Andrew Doyle, TD, Fine Gael
- Deirdre Clune, MEP, Fine Gael
- Sean Kelly, MEP, Fine Gael
- Paschal Donohoe, TD, Fine Gael
- Hildegard Naughton, TD, Fine Gael
- Noel Rock, TD, Fine Gael
- Micheál Martin, TD, Fianna Fáil
- Anne Rabbitte, TD, Fianna Fáil
- Brendan Smith, TD, Fianna Fáil
- Billy Kelleher, TD, Fianna Fáil

- Malcolm Byrne, TD, Fianna Fáil
- Fiona O'Loughlin, TD, Fianna Fáil
- Thomas Byrne, TD, Fianna Fáil
- James Lawless, TD, Fianna Fáil
- Brendan Howlin, TD, Labour
- Jan O'Sullivan, TD, Labour
- Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, Senator, Labour
- Ivana Bacik, Senator, Labour
- Eamon Ryan, TD, Green Party
- Catherine Martin, TD, Green Party
- Ciaran Cuffe, MEP, Green Party
- Grace O'Sullivan, MEP, Green Party
- Hazel Chu, Councillor, Green Party
- Catherine Murphy, TD, Social Democrats
- Roisin Shorthall, TD, Social Democrats
- Gary Gannon, Councillor, Social Democrats
- Gino Kenny, TD, Solidarity – People Before Profit
- Richard Boyd-Barrett, TD, Solidarity – People Before Profit
- Bríd Smith, TD, Solidarity – People Before Profit
- Mary Lou McDonald, TD, Sinn Féin
- Lynn Boylan, MEP, Sinn Féin
- Matt Carthy, MEP, Sinn Féin
- Liadh Ni Ríada, MEP, Sinn Féin
- Kathleen Funchion, TD, Sinn Féin

- Eoin Ó Broin, TD, Sinn Féin
- Paul Gavan, Senator, Sinn Féin
- Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire, TD, Sinn Féin
- Joan Collins, TD, Independents 4 Change
- Mick Wallace, MEP, Independents 4 Change
- Clare Daly, MEP, Independents 4 Change
- Luke Ming Flanagan, MEP, Independent
- Alice Mary Higgins, Senator, Independent
- John Dolan, Senator, Independent
- Katherine Zappone, TD, Independent
- Eilis Ryan, Councillor, Workers' Party

Budget submission

In July, we prepared a pre-budget submission for the Department of Finance and the Department of Education and Skills. In our submission we showed how literacy benefits everyone – individuals, society and the economy. We highlighted how the current literacy tuition provision (average 2 to 6 hours per week), the numbers participating (around 63,000) and the budget (€36.4 million) is insufficient to redress educational and wider inequalities and meet current government and international targets. Our budget submission is available on our website www.nala.ie

Supporting unemployed adults

We met with senior officials in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on supporting adults with unmet literacy and numeracy needs who are not currently in employment. After the meeting NALA prepared information for the Department on opportunities for supporting adults with unmet literacy and numeracy needs. The Department are gathering current responses and referrals and we will meet them again in 2020 to develop this.

NALA addresses two Oireachtas Committees

NALA's CEO Dr Inez Bailey addressed the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills on Tuesday 19 November.

"Ireland can do better to give everyone a fair chance to thrive in their literacy development. This requires investing in people who have not benefited from our education system during bust or boom. This requires greater prioritisation within the Department of Education and Skills of adult literacy and better alignment of policies and strategies across different government departments," Inez said.

Inez also addressed the Oireachtas Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community on Tuesday 3 December.

"NALA's goal is to ensure that all Travellers who want to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills can do so," Inez said.

Local and European elections

As part of our campaign during the local and European elections in May, NALA staff sent out 113 emails to local councillors asking them to support adult literacy. We got email replies from **36 local candidates** confirming support if they get elected. This is a **32%** response rate. We also got responses from **10 MEP candidates**.

Media Literacy Ireland

NALA participates in Media Literacy Ireland, an independent association of members committed to the promotion of media literacy across Ireland. In March, NALA took part in Be Media Smart, an awareness campaign ran by Media Literacy Ireland as part of European Media Literacy Week. The campaign aimed to help people recognise unreliable sources of information as well as identifying deliberately false or misleading information.

Critical thinking

NALA and 80:20, an organisation that promotes education on human development and human rights, applied to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for funding to develop a course for adult literacy tutors and practitioners on developing critical thinking and digital citizenship skills. This project began in 2019 and will finish in 2020.

Adult literacy in Europe

NALA sits on the AONTAS Project Advisory Group (PAG) for the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) project. As part of this, NALA organised a half-day seminar in March on the role of critical literacy in teaching and learning.

NALA also works closely with stakeholders involved in literacy policy at a European level including the European Basic Skills Network (EBSN). NALA's CEO Dr Inez Bailey was elected chairperson of the Board of EBSN in June 2019. Inez also participated in a UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning discussion to inform their adult literacy strategy.

Erasmus + Programme

NALA successfully applied for funding to Léargas to invest in professional development for NALA staff and student volunteers. We were allocated €9,580 to send staff to literacy conferences, events or training sessions. In 2019 we attended six conferences including the:

- European Basic Skills Network (EBSN) in Estonia;
- 5th Annual General Meeting of EURead: “Get Europe reading again – Campaigns and Programmes”; and
- Vocational Skills Week in Helsinki.

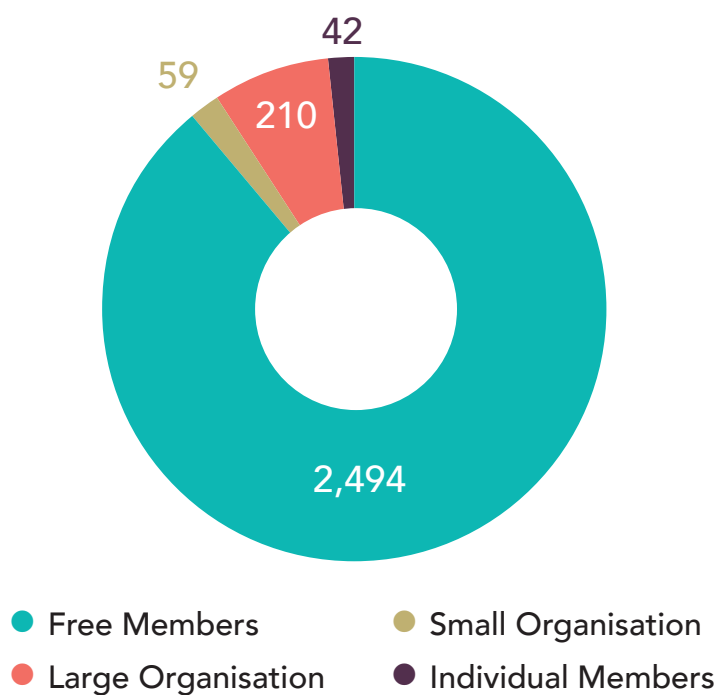
When they return from a conference, staff members give a presentation to all NALA staff and highlight any learnings that can be applied to our work.

Strengthening our effectiveness as an organisation

Membership

NALA had **2,800** members in 2019 which is a **40%** increase on 2018. The income from membership fees was **€24,451**.

NALA membership in 2019



Our individual and free members are:

- adult literacy students;
- tutors;
- people working in education; and
- members of the public who are interested in literacy and numeracy.

Our small organisations members are:

- adult literacy centres;
- youthreach centres;
- schools and community training centres;
- prison, probation or Garda projects;
- National Learning Networks;
- disability support organisations; and
- Traveller organisations.

Our large organisations are:

- ETBs;
- county libraries;
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs);
- education-related national organisations; and
- organisations that are engaged in work with NALA through the Plain English Service, Literacy Awareness Training and solidarity work in the community and voluntary sector.

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 2019, we continued to provide information through our social media platforms, our website www.nala.ie, our monthly e-zine and our Literacy Matters magazine which is sent to members in Summer and Winter.

	2019	2018	% increase
www.nala.ie unique visitors	157,000	174,000	10% decrease*
www.nala.ie page views	500,000	570,000	12% decrease*
E-zine – sent monthly to 2,000 members	In 2019 22% of members opened the ezine and 4.5% clicked to read articles	In 2018 26% of members opened the e-zine and 6.1% clicked to read articles	Slight decrease in open and click rate but both above industry average of 21% open rate and 2.5% click rate
Facebook followers	8,890	8,010	10.9% increase
Twitter followers	4,420	3,670	20% increase

*The decrease is linked to changing over to a new website and the time taken to index the new site and organic search on Google.

New www.nala.ie website

A redesigned version of our website www.nala.ie was launched for International Literacy Day in September. Before any development work was carried out, focus group research was done with students, tutors and staff to ascertain needs and user requirements for the nala.ie website. As a result, the new website is much easier to navigate and provides a much better user experience. The new website also makes it easier to sign up for NALA's range of training and professional development events.

Our interactions with people on Facebook and Twitter

In 2019 we continued to increase our engagement with our Facebook audience. Our posts on Facebook were clicked on, reacted to, commented on or shared **40,000** times by our fans. Our promotional videos of students sharing their stories received over **700,000** views during the year.

In 2019, NALA's tweets were seen **two million** times and engaged with, which means they were clicked on, liked, retweeted or replied to **17,000** times by our followers.

Impact of our media work

In 2019, NALA's public relations activity resulted in our activities receiving coverage:

- 56 times in national and regional newspapers; and
- 11 times in trade media publications.

Radio and TV

- During 2019, NALA spokespersons were interviewed on 11 national and regional radio shows and appeared on two TV shows.

For what it's worth

During 2019 the direct advertising value of our media coverage was €125,000. This is how much it would have cost to buy the equivalent amount of time in advertisements on radio and TV and in newspapers. This coverage was also worth the equivalent of €375,000 in public relations.

Administration

- Our administration team provided event support to over 1,025 delegates at 20 events in 2019.
- Our information helpline staff referred 985 callers to educational opportunities, including to ETB adult education centres, NALA's distance learning service and to WriteOn.ie, our e-learning website. On average, each caller was given information on two routes to learning.
- The administration team provided support with event organisation, QQI awards certificates, invoicing and membership renewal. The team also maintained the membership database as well as supporting the Board and subcommittees.
- The team sent out 630 information packs to individuals looking for details of learning and tutoring opportunities. They attended awareness raising events including International Literacy Day and the Ploughing Championships where they worked alongside students providing information to people.
- As part of our strategy to streamline our services and increase efficiencies, the administration team oversaw the upgrading of desktop computers, servers, network infrastructure and software and continuously sourced best value from our suppliers and providers.

Structure and funding

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 the private sector. In 2019, 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.

Governance and compliance

NALA has always sought to operate to the highest standards and complies with the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations. Even before the Governance Code was published in 2012, the organisation was engaged in benchmarking to best practice. NALA is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association and a Constitution which you can view at www.nala.ie

A new level of quality

In 2016, NALA was awarded the PQASSO quality mark at Level 1. This widely recognised award verifies the quality and credibility of an organisation. It enables us to improve the services we provide to adult literacy students, members, funders and staff. In 2019 we continued to work to achieve Level 2 of the PQASSO quality mark and we will have the results of this in 2020.

Our work on data protection

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) significantly changed data protection law in Europe. It gives people greater control over how their data is used and governs the way in which every business and organisation must handle consumer and employee data. We have taken a number of steps to help us comply with the new legislation. We have updated our policies and procedures on all areas of data management including data requests, retention and destruction. NALA staff have also been provided with training to ensure they are familiar with GDPR and understand its requirements.

Audited accounts

You can view or download a copy of our full audited accounts, details of our organisation's structure and Board members, staff and all our publications from www.nala.ie

Patron: Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland

Chairperson: Mary Bambrick

CEO: Dr Inez Bailey

Registered company number: 342807

Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20020965

Charity reference 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

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.

Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

CITO

Check In, Take Off – A NALA project that aims to identify and test a scalable approach to providing skills assessment for adults with low skills.

Continuous professional development (CPD)

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

DES

Department of Education and Skills

Distance learning

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

DEASP

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

EAAL

European Agenda for Adult Learning

EAPN

European Anti-Poverty Network

EBSN

European Basic Skills Network

EPALE

European Platform for Adult Learning in Europe

ESOL

English for Speakers of Other Languages

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.

FET

Further Education and Training

Fønix AS

Fønix AS are the largest organisation in Norway providing support to adults accessing and returning to employment and language training.

HSE

Health Service Executive

ICGP

Irish College of General Practitioners

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

Léargas

Léargas manage international and national exchange programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training.

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

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.

Outcome

Outcome 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.

PPN

Public Participation Network

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.

PQASSO

PQASSO, or Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations, is a performance evaluation system and quality mark for charitable organisations.

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 authority for further education and training

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.

STEM

STEM is a term used to group together Science, Math, Engineering and Technology.

WIT

Waterford Institute of Technology

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Literacy learning websites:

www.writeon.ie

www.helpmykidlearn.ie

Plain English website:

www.simplyput.ie

Freephone support line:

1800 20 20 65

Designed by: wonder works

Looking ahead to 2020

In 2020, we will work:

- in partnership to add value to the delivery of the FET Strategy 2020-2024 as it relates to adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills;
- to create and share supports to improve literacy, numeracy and digital skills in healthcare and community development; and
- to increase literacy, numeracy and digital skills through research, innovation, and effective communication.



National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

www.nala.ie



Ireland's European Structural and
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