

# Literacy Matters

Keeping you up to date  
with literacy news in Ireland  
and informing you of the  
work NALA is doing



## Rising to the challenge

A special issue looking at  
how NALA and ETBs are  
supporting learners during  
the coronavirus pandemic.

### Also:

- Learn with NALA without leaving the house
- Coronavirus explained in plain English
- Boredom busting ideas to keep the kids busy
- How to spot fake news





# Contents

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Welcome	3
Learning from a distance	4
The best thing I ever did - a learner's story	7
Continuous professional development goes online	8
Free teaching resources for tutors	9
Innovation in ETBs: Teaching during COVID-19	10
Keeping in touch with students - the social side of learning	12
SOLAS and eCollege - rising to the challenge	13
A-Z plain English guide to COVID-19	14
Get the facts about COVID-19	17
Keep the kids busy and learning	18
Closing Ireland's literacy gap – NALA's new strategic plan	20
Election 2020: Students get political	22

## On the cover:

Jennifer Dowling, NALA's Freephone Operator, has been busier than ever answering calls from the public and giving advice about all the distance learning services available in Ireland.

# Welcome

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to our latest edition of **Literacy Matters**.

In this special issue, we are delighted to highlight the many innovative ways that learners and tutors are working together during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

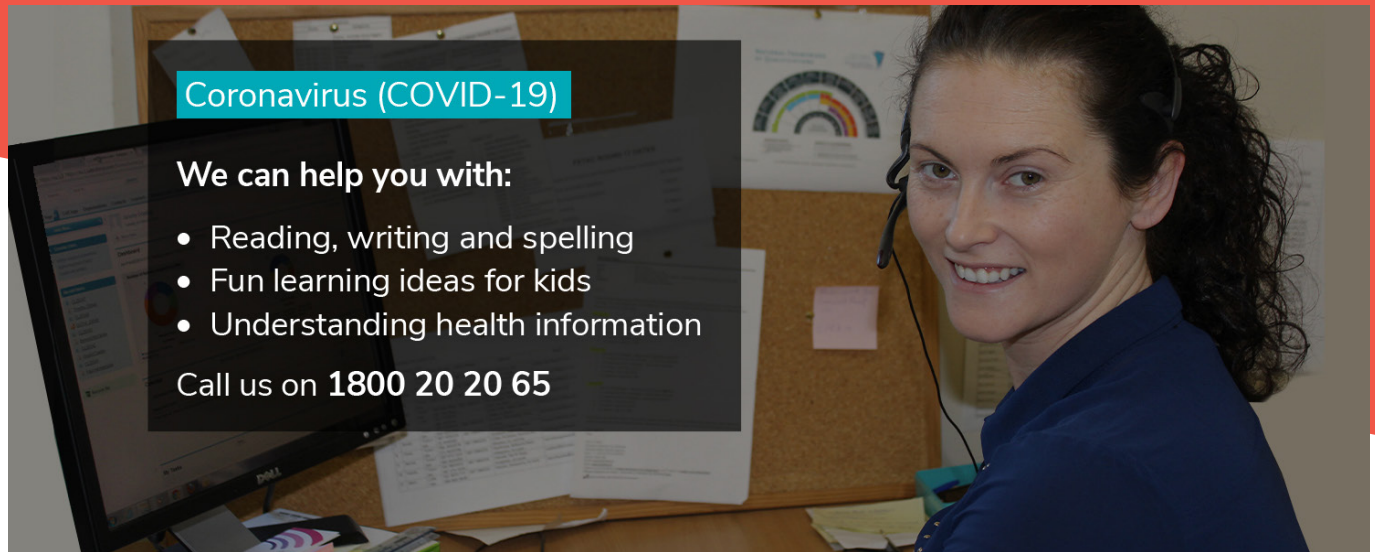
Staying in touch with students at a time like this can make all the difference in the world. Whether it's helping students to learn from home or just calling to say hello, the dedication shown by ETB tutors has been truly inspirational.

Also in this issue, you can find out about NALA's new elearning website **[courses.nala.ie](https://courses.nala.ie)** and how our Distance Learning Service and tutors are helping students and the general public with reading health information, filling in forms and providing fun learning ideas for kids and parents.

We also explain COVID-19 in plain English, show you how to spot fake news and give you lots of great ideas to keep kids entertained and learning while the schools are closed.

**Stay safe, from all the team at NALA.**





# Learning from a distance

**Adult education centres might be closed but NALA has lots of learning options that people can use without leaving the house.**

Over the last few weeks the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has changed the lives of millions of people around the world. We have all had to quickly get used to not being able to do some of the things we used to take for granted such as visiting family, meeting friends over coffee or even going to our local adult education centre.

## Learn over the phone

But even in these trying times, there is good news for adult learners. Through our distance learning service, NALA is offering free tuition to adults who want to keep learning while their education centre is temporarily closed because of COVID-19.

We have tutors available on the phone who will help learners with:

- › Reading, writing and spelling
- › Filling in forms, for example for social welfare benefit
- › Helping kids with homework
- › Understanding health information
- › Doing basic math
- › Using technology

Learners have the option of working with a tutor over the phone or studying online by themselves.

**"We can work with you over the telephone, through the post or online."**



Or they can do a little bit of phone and online learning. It's really all about finding what works for them.

"We know it's a very difficult time at the moment, especially for the many people in Ireland who struggle with reading, writing and using everyday technology. That's why we're making our distance learning service, with tutors on the phone, available for anyone who wants help with reading and writing, for example understanding health information, helping kids with school work or filling out forms for social welfare benefit," says Dr Inez Bailey, NALA CEO.

"We can also help with basic digital support like accessing the kids' homework online or your classes online, as we know it can be a little daunting. We can work with you over the telephone, through the post or online. All you have to do is ring us on our Freephone 1800 20 20 65 or Freetext LEARN to 50050 and we will ring you back with more information and set you up with one of our friendly distance learning tutors."

## **Learn with a tutor on the phone**

- › Everything is free
- › You decide what to learn. There is no set course
- › We call when it suits you – you just tell us when. There is no class schedule
- › Normally we make one call per week for up to 30 minutes

To find out more ring us on our Freephone 1800 20 20 65 or Freetext LEARN to 50050

## Learn online

As well as working with our tutors over the phone, adults can also learn online through our new website **courses.nala.ie**. It can help you improve your literacy, numeracy and digital skills. And if you need help, we have tutors on the phone ready to take your call.

We have four courses available:

- › Level 2 Reading
- › Level 2 Writing
- › Level 2 Pattern and Relationship
- › Level 2 Using Technology

"This website is a great way to learn from the comfort of your own home. And with all of the education centres currently closed because of COVID-19, our interactive website is an ideal way of developing new skills and improving the ones you already have," says Elaine Cohalan, NALA's Research and Innovation Manager.

"To create this website 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 eLearning platform is used in many educational settings around the world and Ireland including UCD and Technological University Dublin."

Courses.nala.ie replaces Writeon.ie which 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.

"We are very excited about this new chapter in our online learning offering to centres and students. It has lots of new and improved features that will help learners improve their skills and soon also get a qualification too. There are currently four courses available and many more will be added throughout the year," says Elaine.

## NALA online courses

There are currently Level 2 courses available in:

- › Writing
- › Reading
- › Pattern and Relationship
- › Using Technology

To start learning today go to **<https://courses.nala.ie/>**

## QQI certification

We are delighted that the QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee recently approved the NALA Quality Assurance Procedures for our for our phone and online programmes.

The next round of QQI certification takes place in June 2020. Certification will be available for all Level 2 courses that are live on **courses.nala.ie**. The submission deadline for learners is Sunday 17 May 2020.

## Find out more

If you have any questions about our free phone tuition or **courses.nala.ie**, please call our Freephone 1800 20 20 65 or text LEARN to 50050.



# The best thing I ever did.

**"I really look forward to getting the call from Bernie every Monday morning."**

## **Adult learner Margaret Kiely on how she improved her reading using NALA's free distance learning service.**

Seven years ago Margaret Kiely made a phone call on a whim that ended up changing her life. She couldn't really read at all but she was flicking through a book that she knew had something to do with learning. The only thing she understood was a phone number so she called it. Without knowing it, Margaret had rang NALA's Freephone.

"For some reason I just decided to give it a ring. The woman on the phone said that they helped people with reading and writing and she asked me if that was something that I would be interested in. I said I would and that's how I met Bernie."

Bernie is one of NALA's distance learning tutors.

"She called me to have a chat and see if I would be happy to work with her. She said we'd take it day by day and if ever a day came when I wasn't happy with her then I could just let her know. But she's been great right from the start. I wasn't able to read two words back then and all the progress I've made since then is down to the help I got from Bernie," says Margaret.

Bernie started by sending Margaret NALA's monthly worksheet. The worksheet is a round up of some current events and it also has some learning activities that people can try their hand at.

"It was slow going at the start but with Bernie's help I got better and better. My confidence grew and after a while my reading and my spelling improved."

"I really look forward to getting the call from Bernie every Monday morning. When I finish the call with her I plan out what I'm going to work on until the next call. I space it out over the week and I enjoy having something to aim towards. It keeps my brain occupied and helps me learn and remember things."

Margaret enjoys using the distance learning service so much that she is always recommending it to people.

"It's the best thing I ever did. When I tell some people about it they say they don't have the confidence for it but I always tell them that it will come over time. Or they tell me they're happy as they are but I say that I used to think that way too but since I improved my reading I am much happier. I used to depend on my husband for everything but now I can do things for myself and I'm a lot more independent."

# Our CPD goes online

**"Blended CPD is professional development that uses a mix of online and face-to-face courses."**

## **NALA's new continuous professional development (CPD) courses for tutors will combine online and face-to-face learning.**

The ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the importance of online learning options for adult learners. But tutors can also benefit from online learning, particularly when it comes to taking part in continuous professional development (CPD) to improve their skills.

NALA already offers a range of CPD opportunities to tutors through our events and workshops. We are now working to extend our current CPD offering by delivering both online and blended models of CPD.

Gillian Harris from NALA's distance learning service explains what this means for tutors.

### **What is online CPD?**

"Online CPD is professional development courses which are delivered online. Instead of going to a face-to-face workshop, tutors will be able to take part in online workshops where a facilitator will deliver the course in a virtual classroom or webinar."

### **What is blended CPD?**

"Blended CPD is professional development that uses a mix of online and face-to-face courses."

### **How will NALA's new CPD offering help tutors?**

"Tutors will have a greater choice over when, where and how they learn."

Online CPD means that tutors won't have to travel to a training centre to take part in a course. They will be able to access online courses at any time and do them at their own pace. NALA's blended CPD courses will enable tutors to take part in online learning before a face-to-face session which will enable them to explore subjects in greater detail."

### **How will tutors access NALA's online CPD courses?**

"The courses will be available through NALA's new elearning website **[courses.nala.ie](https://courses.nala.ie)**."

### **What online CPD courses will NALA offer?**

"The first online CPD courses will focus on integrating literacy. More CPD courses will be delivered during the year."

### **When will the new CPD courses be available?**

"The first online CPD courses will be available this summer."

### **Who can tutors contact for more information?**

"Tutors can contact me to find out more about our new CPD courses. My phone number is 01 412 7929 and my email is [gharris@nala.ie](mailto:gharris@nala.ie)"





# Tutors

## Keep calm and keep on teaching.

We have hundreds of free resources online that you can download or share with your students. See [www.nala.ie/tutors](http://www.nala.ie/tutors)

You can search by subjects, QQI awards and levels or by keywords like spelling or gardening.

We also have over 300 short videos that you can share with your students with learning content in each one. So, you could ask your student to watch a video and then get them to do one of the worksheets.

A screenshot of the NALA Tutors Information Hub website. The page has a purple header with the NALA logo and navigation links: Free courses, Tutors, Services, Research &amp; policy, and Support us. Below the header is a green banner with the text 'Tutors Information Hub'. Underneath is a search bar with the text 'Explore our tutor resources' and a green 'Advanced search' button. The search bar contains the text 'Enter a keyword (for example, spelling, 24 hour clock or adding)' and a green 'Search' button. Below the search bar is a link 'View all resources'. On the left side, there is a 'Narrow your results' section with filters for Subjects (Maths (102)), Awards (Mathematics (17)), Levels (Level 3 (148)), and Resource Types (Worksheet (913), Video (381)). On the right side, there is a 'Resources' section with a list of resources, each with a document icon, a title, a level, and a 'View' button. The resources listed are: 'Weight - kilograms, grams' (Level 3), 'Reading and interpreting graphs' (Level 3), 'Number sense and estimating' (Level 3), 'Developing mathematical eye, shapes, quantity, pattern' (Level 3), 'Using a Calculator + exercises' (Level 3), 'Working out percentages Part 2, calculate savings' (Level 3), 'Working out percentages Part 1, relating to fractions' (Level 3), 'Economics, explanation of terms??' (Level 3), 'Numeracy: percentages' (Level 3), 'Numeracy: borrowing money, calculating interest, rates' (Level 3), and 'Numeracy: rounding off, most numbers greater than 100' (Level 3).

**"This certainly has been an opportunity for us all to upskill very fast!"**

**Gwen Redmond**



# Teaching during COVID-19

**ETB adult education centres around the country are finding innovative ways to help students keep learning during the coronavirus pandemic.**

There's no doubt that the last few weeks have been a very tough time for the whole country. But amidst all the uncertainty caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the dedication shown by ETB staff across the further education and training sector (FET) has been truly exceptional.

Speaking about the efforts being made, Andrew Brownlee, SOLAS CEO, said that it is "inspiring to hear how ETBs and other FET providers are adapting to this challenging environment by supporting learners and making learning available online".

Here are just some of the innovative and creative ways that ETBs have been helping students to stay learning without leaving the house. There is so much good work going on across the FET sector that this is by no means an exhaustive list but it will give you a good idea of what's been going on!

The adult literacy service in **Tipperary ETB** is providing several remote learning options for students. Learners can check out the ETB's Facebook for learning activities. They can also stay in touch with their tutors and classmates through Whatsapp groups, email and online video classes. Students who don't have access to the internet receive learning packs from their tutors in post.



Tutors in Crumlin College, **City of Dublin ETB**, are keeping in touch with learners over the phone, through email or by using Google classroom. "This certainly has been an opportunity for us all to upskill very fast!," says Gwen Redmond, adult literacy organiser.

In **Waterford and Wexford ETB**, community education has gone virtual with tutors providing online lessons, resources and activities. Check out their Facebook page to see a selection of fantastic videos on painting by their art tutors Sheila Burton and Miriam Devereux. They also have great instructional videos covering diverse topics from gardening to business.

Tutors in **Kerry ETB** are posting links on Facebook to video tutorials showing learners how to use OneNote class notebook on Microsoft's Office 365. Tutors at **Cork ETB** are also using Microsoft Office's Teams platform to keep in touch with learners and each other. Denis Leamy, CEO of Cork ETB, tweeted that the platform is a "great aid to teachers and learners across our schools and colleges".

Several ETBs including **Kilkenny and Carlow ETB**, **Mayo Sligo and Leitrim ETB** and **Cavan and Monaghan ETB** have made their free FET guidance service available online or by telephone. Learners can get in touch with their local guidance service to discuss potential education and career options.

Some ETBs are also helping learners who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19 to put together a CV. **Laois and Offaly ETB** are providing email support to any learners who need help while their education centre is closed.

Learners can watch **Donegal ETB's** Little Lessons video series on their YouTube channel. The video series, which was created by adult literacy organisers Adele McElhinney and Dolores Mhic Geidigh, helps learners improve their spelling, grammar and IT skills.

Many ETBs, including **Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB** and **Galway and Roscommon ETB**, have been posting very important mental health information and tips on Facebook.

**Kildare and Wicklow ETB** tutors at Bray Adult Learning Centre have created a new website to keep in touch with students while the centre is closed. The website features lots of learning activities that the students can take part in.

Michelle Benson, a tutor at **Limerick and Clare ETB**, has been using the video conferencing app Zoom to teach her ESOL students. Michelle has even created a tutorial video about using Zoom and shared it on her Facebook page.

# The social side



Every adult learner will tell you that their education centre is more than where they just go to learn. It is also a vital social outlet, particularly for students who are already vulnerable and isolated.

Christine Carroll, adult literacy organiser at Ballymun Adult Read and Write Service (BARWS), told us that staying in touch at a time like this can make all the difference in the world to some students.

"We are staying in contact with learners because we have genuine concern for them. Lots of them are vulnerable and isolation is not good for them so we want them to know that we haven't forgotten them," she says.

Deirdre Keating is a tutor at BAWRS and she highlights some of the ways that they are staying connected to their students while the centre is closed.

"Facebook is a great way for us to keep in touch with students. It's also a great light hearted way for students to let us know what they're up to while the centre is closed and they can share photos with us," says Deirdre.

"We are also using Google docs to share work with students and Whatsapp has been useful for keeping in touch with students who are studying smart phone technology. One student even managed to set up a Netflix account at home after first going through the steps with me on Whatsapp. I also teach a horticulture class and before we closed I gave students some seeds to plant at home. Some of the students are now sending me pictures to show how they are getting on with this."

Of course, there are many adult learners who won't have internet access or the digital skills needed to take part in remote learning activities.

"We have many students who do not have internet access, so we made up packs and posted them to the students," says Deirdre.

Christine says that it's very important not to forget the students who don't have the skills to participate in remote learning.

"While online learning is relevant for people, for many learners the digital divide is very real and online learning is not an option. Even some learners who would have the skills might have been relying on their local library for internet access but they can't even do that now because libraries are closed," she says.

All the work that the tutors are doing to stay in touch hasn't gone unnoticed by their students.

"We have gotten some very encouraging messages from learners who appreciate what we are doing," says Christine.

She hopes that it will motivate them to return to their centres when they reopen.

"There is a fear that we will lose people who won't come back to the centre after all this is over. We will do all we can to make sure that doesn't happen because the real value in our service comes from face-to-face tuition and interaction in a welcoming adult learning environment. There is no substitute for this hands-on engagement when it comes to the development of confidence, self-esteem and personal skills," she says.



# Rising to the challenge



**"We hope that by making eCollege available we will help to support those whose livelihoods have been impacted by Covid-19."**

**Andrew Brownlee,  
CEO, SOLAS**

## **SOLAS shows how the FET sector can help people whose livelihoods have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.**

The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on Irish society means that there are challenging times ahead for the further education and training (FET) sector.

SOLAS, the further education and training authority, is already meeting that challenge head on by making its eCollege online learning service available free of charge to support learners.

eCollege is the national online learning service for the FET sector. It provides online courses including computer programming, data science, office productivity, and web and graphic design.

"As we navigate our way through this national and global crisis, we have decided to open up our eCollege offering to the public, free of charge. This measure is designed to benefit those already doing a further education and training course who would like to augment their learning and those who have recently become unemployed or had their hours reduced and who wish to upskill and reskill," said Andrew Brownlee, SOLAS CEO.

"eCollege is online 24/7, so people can study at a time that suits them. While these are extremely difficult times we are living in, we hope that by making eCollege available we will help to support those whose livelihoods have been impacted by Covid-19 to re-enter or upskill in the labour market."

The announcement was welcomed by John Halligan TD, Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation, Research and Development.

"This is a most welcome development. The Covid-19 outbreak is a rapidly evolving situation that has resulted in many people losing their jobs or working reduced hours. The opening up of eCollege provides a great learning opportunity for individuals to upskill or reskill and be ready for the time when the current restrictions come to an end and businesses are operating normally," he said.

eCollege courses are tutor-supported but independent study is required to reach certification standards.

**To find out more about eCollege please visit [www.ecollege.ie](http://www.ecollege.ie)**

# Asymptomatic, herd immunity and super spreader

**just some of the terms explained in new A-Z guide**

Many people find health information difficult to understand at the best of times, but over the last month we have been presented with a whole new set of medical words and terms. This is especially difficult for the one in six adults in Ireland who have literacy issues.

That's why the National Adult Literacy Agency has produced a plain English guide to many of the new words that we are hearing every day.

From asymptomatic to clusters, herd immunity to mitigation phases, and super spreaders to virologists, there are over 70 words and terms explained.

NALA is also making its tutors available on the phone to anyone who needs additional help understanding this information.

"The HSE is doing an amazing job at explaining everything to do with the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Their communications has been very clear and easy to understand. In Ireland there are over 500,000 people with low literacy and numeracy levels, and who will have greater difficulty understanding health information. That is why we produced this plain English guide to words and terms being used.



Also, if anyone needs help reading or understanding health information please call us on our **Freephone 1800 20 20 65** and we will try to help," said Claire O'Riordan, NALA's Plain English Coordinator.

## Have you heard of a Covidiot?

Apparently this refers to a stupid person who stubbornly ignores social distancing or who hoards things like toilet roll.

"Are you seriously going to visit granny? Don't be such Covidiot!"

"See that guy with the 200 toilet rolls? What a Covidiot."



## Here's our plain English explanation of some of the most commonly used coronavirus (COVID-19) words and terms.

For a more detailed A-Z list, please visit [www.nala.ie/covid-19-words-explained](http://www.nala.ie/covid-19-words-explained)

### Asymptomatic

This is where you are not showing any symptoms that you have COVID-19. However, you can still pass the virus on to others.

### Body temperature

The normal adult body temperature is 36.5 to 37 degrees Celsius. A high temperature or fever is 38 degrees Celsius or above.

### Cluster

This refers to a small group of people in a particular space who all have the same disease. For example, a cluster of people in nursing homes or hospitals.

### Cocooning

This is where certain groups of people (such as over 70s and people with health issues) will stay in their homes to avoid contact with any person who may have COVID-19.

### Community transmission

This occurs where a person who gets COVID-19:

- › has not travelled to an affected area, and
- › has no connection to a known case.

### Contact tracing

When the health authorities try to find who has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 to see who else may be at risk of catching it.

### 'Flatten the curve'

This means reducing the rate at which people become infected with COVID-19. If that rate is pictured as a curve, they would rather it look low and long than high and narrow.

### Gov.ie website

This is a central website for government services and information.

### Hand hygiene and handwashing

Hand hygiene is a way of cleaning your hands that reduces harmful bacteria on them and stops the spread of harmful germs. The HSE and the Government have recommended that we wash our hands regularly for 20 seconds using soap and water.

### Incubation period

The time between when you are exposed to the virus and when symptoms and signs become obvious.

### Lockdown

A state of isolation or restricted access put in place by the State to keep people safe against the spread of COVID-19.

### Mask

A covering to fit over the nose and mouth to protect against infection from others. The World Health Organisation say that if you are healthy you only need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with suspected COVID-19 infection.

### Pandemic

This is when an epidemic spreads between countries affecting a large number of people. In 2020, we are in a pandemic with the worldwide spread of COVID-19.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

This is equipment that will protect the user against health or safety risks at work. It includes for example masks, gloves, gowns and eye protection.

## Pre-existing condition

This means any condition for which the patient has already received medical advice or treatment. For example, diabetes, cancer, lung disease and heart disease. It can also be called an underlying condition.

## Respiratory

This means breathing. Lungs help us to breathe.

## Self-isolating

This means staying indoors and avoiding contact with other people. The HSE says anyone with symptoms should self-isolate for 14 days, as this will help slow the spread of coronavirus.

## Supply chain

This is a system of organisations, people, activities, information, and resources involved in moving a product or service from supplier to customer.

In relation to COVID-19, a supply chain is about how food and other products get from a farm or factory into our supermarkets and shops.

## Surge

A sudden increase in cases of people infected with COVID-19.

## Testing

This is where people with symptoms that could be COVID-19 are checked for the virus by taking a swab from their mouth and nose. Read more information on testing on the HSE website.

## Triage

This is the process of sorting people based on their need for immediate medical treatment and sometimes has to be used in hospitals.

## Underlying condition

This means any condition for which the patient has already received medical advice or treatment. For example, diabetes, cancer, lung disease and heart disease. It can also be called a pre-existing condition. People with underlying conditions are more at risk of serious illness if they catch COVID-19.

## Vaccine

This is a product that helps the body's immune system to fight against infections. There is currently no vaccine for COVID-19.

## Ventilator

This is a machine to support breathing. It helps to get oxygen into the lungs, removes carbon dioxide from the body and helps people breathe easier. It can also breathe for people who cannot breathe on their own.

## Vulnerable person or people

A vulnerable person is someone in need of special care, support, or protection. During the COVID-19 outbreak vulnerable people are older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer.

# Get the facts about COVID-19

## The World Health Organisation has published a list of facts to combat fake news about coronavirus.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has sparked what the World Health Organisation (WHO) is calling an “infodemic”. This is when there is too much information – some accurate and some not. An infodemic can make it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it.

“Fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus, and is just as dangerous. And if we don’t tackle this we are headed down a dark path that leads nowhere but division and disharmony,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the WHO.

The WHO don’t have a vaccine against misinformation but they have published a list of COVID-19 facts to clear up some of the fake news that has been doing the rounds.

### Some COVID-19 facts

#### 1. COVID-19 can be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates

From the evidence so far, the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted in all areas, including areas with hot and humid weather. Regardless of climate, adopt protective measures if you live in, or travel to an area reporting COVID-19.

#### 2. Young people and older people can get COVID-19

People of all ages can be infected by COVID-19.

Older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

WHO advises people of all ages to take steps to protect themselves from the virus, for example by following good hand hygiene and good respiratory hygiene.

#### 3. Antibiotics do not prevent or treat COVID-19

Antibiotics do not work against viruses, only bacteria. COVID-19 is a virus so antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment.

**To read more of the WHO’s facts about COVID-19 please visit [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)**

### Trusted sources for news about Coronavirus (COVID-19):

- › Health Service Executive (HSE)  
[www2.hse.ie/coronavirus](http://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus)
- › Government of Ireland  
[www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)
- › WHO  
[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- › RTE News  
[www.rte.ie/news](http://www.rte.ie/news)



# Keep the kids busy and learning

**Schools are out but our free website [helpmykidlearn.ie](https://helpmykidlearn.ie) has hundreds of fun learning activities for kids of all ages.**

Not sure what to do with the kids? Well for starters, don't worry.

As a parent, you are your child's first teacher. Your home is a place where lots of learning is happening every day. Your most important job when it comes to your child's learning is to show an interest and get involved. You make a difference every day when you talk to and listen to your child. This is what helps your child the most.

And for some extra help, all you need to do is check out NALA's website for parents called [helpmykidlearn.ie](https://helpmykidlearn.ie)

It includes hundreds of fun activities that can be done in the home or outside. And best of all, the activities will help children to learn without them even realising it.

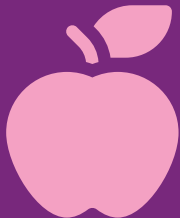
All you have to do is enter your child's age into the website and you will find lots of suitable fun activities to do with them.

"Many parents will find it challenging to come up with things to do with their children over the next few weeks. But just because they are not in school at the moment doesn't mean they will stop learning – it just means parents have to be a little creative and we designed [helpmykidlearn.ie](https://helpmykidlearn.ie) to do most of the work for you, says Dr Inez Bailey, NALA CEO."

## 5 Boredom Busting ideas for kids

Next time you hear the dreaded "I'm bored" or if you're just desperate to drag them away from the TV or iPad, try some of these fun activities:

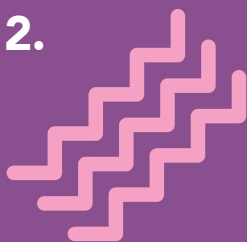
1.



### Eat an Alphabet

Get your kids to describe how hungry they are – starting with the letter A take turns. The trick is to remember what everyone said before you. I'm so hungry I could eat an Apple. I'm so hungry I could eat an Apple and a Banana. I'm so hungry I could eat an Apple, Banana and a Cat!

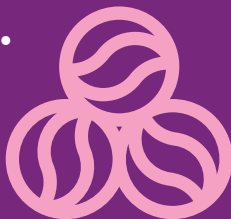
2.



### Fuzz Buzz

Count to 100, every time you get to a number that's divisible by seven (7, 14, 21) or has a seven in it (17), say "Buzz" instead of the number. For older kids, to make it even harder say Fuzz for every number with a three or that's divisible by three. If you make a mistake it's the next person's turn. The first to get to 100 wins.

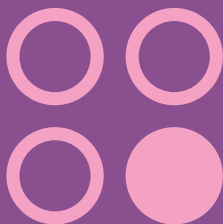
3.



### Marbles

Draw a circle on the ground. Each player puts 4 marbles inside the circle – it's best if everyone picks a colour. Take turns trying to knock each other's marbles out of the circle with one large marble. If you knock your own marble out it goes back into the centre!

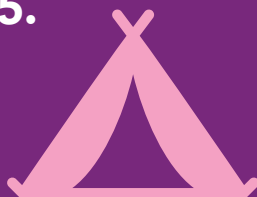
4.



### Spud

One person counts to 10 while the rest of the players scatter. When 10 is reached everyone freezes in their spot. The person counting takes 4 giant steps towards the closest person and tries to hit them with the ball. If they hit, that person gets a letter 'S' but if they miss then they get the letter. Now it's the other person's time to count. Players get knocked out whenever they reach SPUD - hit or missed 4 times – ouch!

5.



### Fortress fun

Everyone's made a fortress right? The next rainy day that comes around, help your kids make their own supersized fortress in the sitting room. All you need is a couple of chairs or a table covered with a blanket – they'll stay busy all day long playing make-believe inside.

Check out [helpmykidlearn.ie](http://helpmykidlearn.ie) for hundreds more fun learning activities





**"Improving literacy, numeracy and digital skills is part of the solution to creating a more equal society and changing lives for the better."**

# Closing Ireland's literacy gap

## **The National Adult Literacy Agency's new strategic plan sets out its vision for Ireland where adult literacy is a human right**

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) has come a long way since we were first set up by volunteers 40 years ago, in 1980. During this time, we have worked to ensure that people with literacy and numeracy needs can access the learning supports they want; and to advance adult literacy and numeracy policy through advocacy and engagement with government departments and relevant organisations.

In 2020, our ambitions remain as high. Our new strategic plan firmly places adult literacy, numeracy and basic digital skills as a human right. The strategic plan sets NALA's course over the next three years to help close the nation's literacy, numeracy and digital skills gap. Making sure that no adult with literacy or numeracy needs is left behind will be more important than ever as Irish society rebuilds itself after the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



## Four takeaways from NALA's Strategic Plan

### 1. Literacy, numeracy and digital skills are a human right

One in six Irish adults has difficulty reading and understanding information. One in four struggle with maths, and even more find technology difficult to use.

People with low literacy, numeracy and digital skills have low educational attainment, earn less income and are more likely to be unemployed. They are also more likely to report poor health and to believe that they have little impact on political processes. This has a devastating impact on individuals, communities, the economy and our society.

NALA's vision is an Ireland where adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills are a human right, where everyone can develop these skills, and where individuals can fully take part in society.

### 2. The focus is on learners, ETBs and the FET strategy

Learners, ETBs, SOLAS and the new Further Education and Training Strategy are at the forefront of NALA's new strategic plan, with a focus on improving opportunities for participation in FET by creating pathways for inclusion and skills development.

In collaboration with them, and in consultation with learners and employers, NALA will plan and develop innovative, adaptable and effective solutions to support adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills development.

### 3. Literacy isn't just a matter for the 'education' sector

NALA has recognised that the point at which literacy, numeracy, and digital skills supports are first sought is often when someone is experiencing difficulties. For example a person may struggle to understand health information from a doctor, or financial information from a bank.

If tailored assistance can be provided at the point where they need help, it can support the person to address an immediate and important issue. It can also provide a pathway to seek further literacy, numeracy and digital skills supports.

For these reasons, NALA has committed to create and share supports to improve literacy, numeracy and digital skills in healthcare and other settings.

### 4. Investing in literacy, numeracy and digital skills helps the economy

Recent data from the CSO shows us that currently there are 445,000 people who have less than a Junior Certificate or QQI Level 4 qualification. Many of these individuals are in work, in low paid jobs and are ill equipped to deal with technological changes in the labour market. This is costing the exchequer millions in lost revenue as well as putting unnecessary strains on public services.

A cost benefit analysis of adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills in Ireland concluded that by investing in these skills there is a positive and rapid return on investment for participants, the companies they work for and for the exchequer.

### Creating an equal society

"In 2019, we met and consulted with adult learners, tutors, stakeholders in education, as well as the public and private sector.

"Our aim is to build on our work to date to close the nation's literacy, numeracy and digital skills gap and to create a more equal society. We want to work with our partners to support people to gain the skills they need to achieve their personal, social and employment aspirations. We believe improving literacy, numeracy and digital skills is part of the solution to creating an equal society and changing lives for the better. After all, equal societies are happier, healthier and wealthier," said Dr Bailey.

**To read NALA's Strategic Plan 2020-2022 see [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)**



# Students get political

## NALA's pre-election campaign called on all political parties to prioritise adults with literacy needs.

There is strength in numbers and in February, students from five ETBs came together to make their voices heard in the run up to the general election. The students joined NALA in calling on political parties to make the following commitments in their manifestos:

- › Develop and implement a 10 year Whole-of-Government Strategy for adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills to provide opportunities for those with the least education; and
- › Enact a Plain Language Bill to require that all information for the public from government and State bodies is written and presented in plain language.

Thomas Campbell, a student at Laois and Offaly ETB, took part in NALA's pre-election campaign because he wanted the Government to know how literacy changes lives.

"I never got the chance to go to primary school because I had epilepsy and was put into an institution. I was there until I was 16 years old and when I left it I wasn't able to read, write or spell. I went to England when I was 32 and when I was over there I got a call from my aunt who told me about a book that helped people to improve their reading and writing. It had 100 words in it and it said that if you could learn those you would be nearly halfway there. I did that and when I returned to Ireland I went back to education.



**“Following NALA’s pre-election campaign, five political parties committed to support adult literacy and plain English.”**

It’s the best thing that ever happened me. It has given me more confidence and I feel like I’m part of society,” says Thomas.

Catherine Devlin, a student from Donegal ETB, wanted to help other people benefit the way she has from improving her literacy.

“I really wanted to give something back and play a part in someone else getting the opportunity that I had. A few years ago I sat in with Junior Cert students for an exam on civic, social and political education and when I came out of it I was so happy. It was such a huge achievement for me,” says Catherine.

Helen Ryan, NALA Policy Officer, says that if political parties are serious about creating a more equal, fairer society then they must have a strategy in place to prioritise people with low basic skills levels.

“As political parties talk of ‘building an Ireland for all’ we need to ensure that no one is left behind – this requires investing in people who have not benefited from our education system during bust or boom. Literacy is a human right. People with low literacy skills have low educational attainment, earn less income and are more likely to be unemployed. They are also more likely to report poor health and to believe that they have little impact on political processes,” says Helen.

## **What we achieved**

Following NALA’s pre-election campaign, five political parties committed to support adult literacy and plain English. The parties are Fine Gael, Green Party, Labour, Sinn Féin and Social Democrats. At the time of writing, talks are still ongoing about the formation of the next government but NALA looks forward to working with all parties to prioritise adults with literacy difficulties.

# Need help?

**Freephone 1800 20 20 65**  
**or Text LEARN to 50050**

## Free tuition over the phone for adults

The National Adult Literacy Agency has tutors on the phone that can help adults with:

- › Reading, writing and spelling
- › Filling in forms, for example for social welfare benefit
- › Helping kids with homework
- › Understanding health information
- › Doing basic math
- › Using technology

See [www.nala.ie/free-courses/learn-with-nala/](https://www.nala.ie/free-courses/learn-with-nala/)

## Fun learning activities for kids

[www.helpmykidlearn.ie](https://www.helpmykidlearn.ie)

## Learn online

As well as working with our tutors over the phone, adults can also learn online through our new website.

There are currently four Level 2 courses available in:

- › Writing
- › Reading
- › Pattern and Relationship
- › Using Technology

To start learning today go to <https://courses.nala.ie/>

## A-Z plain English guide to COVID-19 words

[www.nala.ie/covid-19-words-explained/](https://www.nala.ie/covid-19-words-explained/)

For more information see [www.nala.ie/covid-19-supports/](https://www.nala.ie/covid-19-supports/)



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**National Adult Literacy Agency**  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh