NALA Student Development Fund Report 2022

The fund benefitted **1,781 adults** improving their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, from **76 different centres**.

This report provides valuable student feedback about using online and other services and gives ideas for improvements.

NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms we use:

AONTAS – National Adult Learning Organisation

CTC – Community Training Centres[1]

ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages

ETB - Education and Training Board

FET - Further Education and Training

ITABE - Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education[2]

NALA - National Adult Literacy Agency

NLN – National Learning Network[3]

QQI - Quality and Qualifications Ireland

SOLAS - State agency that manages further education and training

SUSI - Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), student grant

VTOS - Voluntary Training Opportunities Scheme[4]

Please note we use the terms "student" and "learner" interchangeably in this report.

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[1] CTCs provide training and supports that help young people, primarily aged between 16 and 21 years, to find the job of their choice.

[2] ITABE is a six hour per week programme (in two or three sessions per week) run over ten weeks. It is designed as an intensive literacy, numeracy and everyday technology programme using themed learning.

[3] NLNs provide specialised education options for people who for various reasons may find it challenging to gain employment. This includes people aged 16 to 65 years who may have an illness, a disability or additional support needs.

[4] VTOS is a programme for unemployed people aged 21 or over. Courses are usually 30 hours a week and can last two years.

Executive Summary

In this report, we provide an overview of the NALA Student Development Fund in 2022. This report has four sections. The first covers the activity done by centres with the fund. In addition to doing an activity, as part of the fund, successful centres agree to gather student feedback on a topic set by NALA. The second section details the invaluable student feedback NALA was able to collate - from 1,282 students in 76 centres in 2022 - on the following topics:

1. Using online, face-to-face and phone services and how they can be improved
2. What keeps students going back to their centre to learn and additional supports that could help students with their learning

The third section of this report outlines the impact of the fund as seen by staff in the centres. The fourth section outlines next steps for NALA and for you.

Who should read this report?

This report will be of interest to those involved in adult literacy provision and those involved in adult education more generally. It will also be of keen interest to service providers in public and private sector bodies such as government departments as part of their Public Sector Duty and banks and other providers as part of their commitment to customers including people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs.

What is the Student Development Fund?

The fund supports local adult education centres to carry out a non-tuition group activity for adult literacy students. It also enables centres to buy Information Technology (IT) equipment to support learning. The fund encourages student empowerment and the enjoyment of learning in the community. Centres gather student feedback as part of the fund.

Who provides the fund – and who administers it?

SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority of Ireland provides a fund of €40,000 to NALA each year. NALA administers the fund. Three people review and rate applications using set criteria. Centres send the student feedback with the rest of their report online to NALA. NALA collates all the information and writes this report.

What students benefitted from the fund in 2022?

The fund is to benefit adults and young people who are improving their literacy, numeracy and digital skills in a centre or on a programme including ESOL learners (learning English). Centres applying for the fund must be small organisation members of NALA or, be one of two centres that apply under a large organisation member (such as an Education and Training Board). The fund is to be used for students on courses that are up to and including Level 4 (not beyond Level 4) on the QQI Framework of Qualifications. Students can be in one-to-one or group tuition or improving their literacy as part of another programme, for example a Youthreach programme, VTOS or family learning.

Numbers of centres and students involved

Table 1 below shows that in 2022, 76 adult education centres, from 14 different ETBs, benefited from the fund. 1,781 students took part in activities and 1,282 students (72%) gave feedback to NALA.

Table 1. Information on the number and type of centres that applied and the number of students involved in 2022

Applied for the fund	91 centres
Successful applications	86 centres[5]
Used the fund in 2022	**76 centres**[6]
ETBs involved	14 ETBs
Bought technology items	18 centres[7]
Students who benefitted from the fund	**1,781 students**
Students who gave feedback	**1,282 students**

How much did successful fund applicants get?

Like in 2021, NALA did not put an upper limit on the amount of funding a centre could apply for. The range of funding given out to centres was €246 to €6,146. The average amount was €526. The total spend in 2022 was €40,064.

What did centres do with the fund?

Most centres used the fund for cultural trips to places of local interest. For example: a tour of Hook Lighthouse or Spike Island. Smaller numbers did workshops. For example: on mindfulness or bee keeping. Other centres did outdoor and indoor activities. Examples are: rope climbing in Zipit and gaming in Zero Latency. 18 centres bought technology items. See from page 10 the full list of what centres did.

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[5] From experience, NALA expected seven centres would not use the fund and we allocated €46,000 in total. We expected some centres would underspend the amount allocated, which happened. The main reasons centres did not use the fund were: staff changing jobs and staff retiring.

[6] 45 of the 76 centres were ETB adult literacy centres. 12 were local NLNs. Five were CTCs, five were Youthreach centres and Table 2 on page 15 lists nine other centres.

[7] From page 10, the name of the centres that bought technology items are highlighted in yellow.

Key findings from the student feedback

Students said most frequently that what they found difficult in terms of using online services was:

- Websites being hard to navigate; and
- Online banking.

In terms of face to face or phone services, students most frequently said the following was difficult:

- Feeling shy, they find face-to-face difficult. They prefer online;
- Banking and being sent to machines and not have people there to explain;
- Doctors and medical appointments; and
- Automated phone services.

Students said the following would help:

- Being able to talk to a real person;
- If websites and people used plain English;
- If offline options were provided; and
- If there were more translation services on websites and apps.

The top reason why students keep coming back to their centre:

- Staff and tutors in the centres are so helpful.

What students said most frequently would help their learning?

- More technology, smart devices and apps; and
- More one to one and extra tuition.

The biggest impact of the fund in 2022: The fund contributes to teambuilding in the centres by breaking barriers between students and tutors and giving an opportunity for students to talk to each other in a relaxed environment.

We now invite you to read further about the activity undertaken, the detail of the feedback from students, the impact of the fund and your next steps. We hope that you will make use of the student feedback and that you will get a little inspiration to support further student activities.

Section 1: Activity undertaken in 2022

Selection of photos

Almost 70 students from Tuam, Headford and Dunmore visit the Aran Islands and tour below the Cliffs of Moher.

Students from the Kilkenny NLN in Tramore relax after visiting the Waterford Suir Valley Railway.

Students from VTOS in Nenagh cycle in the Bora Bora bog.

Students from Kylemore CTC visit Zipit in Tibradden forest.

Selection of photos

Students from Caherciveen visit Kells Bay Gardens.

Student from Cavan learn about bee keeping at the Bee Barn.

Students from Charleville visit Spike Island and Cobh.

A student from Nenagh CTC handles a reptile that visited the centre.

Activities undertaken in 2022

Thanks to SOLAS funding, 1,781 students took part in activities in 2022. Below in Table 2 is the full list of activity undertaken.

Table 2. List of activities undertaken in 2022 by ETB or other name, centre name and detail of activity.

Education and Training Board (ETB)	Name of centre - unless otherwise stated centres are ETB adult literacy centres:	2022 activity with the NALA Student Development Fund - Where centres bought technology items, their **name** is highlighted in orange:
Cavan and Monaghan ETB	Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan	Visited a **local bee keeper** called Bee Barn. Learned about bee keeping and how they help the environment and did a lake walk.
	Cavan	Brought learners (ITABE and Level 2 and 3 literacy) on **a trip to the Ulster Folk Park** in Omagh. Did a boat trip on Lough Erne and had lunch on the day.
City of Dublin ETB	Cabra and Finglas (2 centres)	Visited **Farmleigh House**, estate and gardens in the Phoenix park. Held an outdoor mindfulness class and had tea and coffee in the boat house restaurant.
	CTC Cherry Orchard	Did **virtual reality gaming** in Zero Latency and **horse trekking** in Corballis Farm therapueutic riding centre.

	CTC Kylemore	Outdoor trip to **Zipit Tibradden forest** adventure in Dublin (ropes and zip lines).
	Coolock and Darndale	Bought **two C-pens** (a pen you place over typed text and it reads out the text to you) for students.
	KLEAR	Bought **a bookcase and** multiple copies of **books** ("The Commitments" by Roddy Doyle, "The Choice" by Philly McMahon and "Rachel's Holiday" by Marian Keyes) for a student book club.
	Youthreach Ballymun	Students chose **books** from the Eason's website and bought a **bookshelf** from IKEA for students to use in the centre.
Cork ETB	Charleville and Fermoy (2 centres)	Students from two centres visited **Spike Island** together and did a guided tour of the Island taking in its history as a prison and a nature walk.
	Millstreet	Visited **Fota Wildlife Park and Arboretum**. Did a guided tour of Fota House and had lunch together before returning home.
	Mallow (Q centre)	Visited **Spike Island** and did a tour of the island. Then had a picnic on the island and visited Cobh town for coffee.
	Youthreach Deanstreet	Students attended the **Circus Factory** in Cork City for **two workshops** where they were to a range of circus and acrobatic and aerial activities.

Donegal ETB	Gortahork	Joint ESOL and adult literacy group visited **Oakfield Park** in Raphoe and took a guided tour of the gardens and had a light lunch.
	Inishowen	Bought **mobile projectors** which helped run classes for Ukrainian adults doing ESOL classes in remote areas.
	Letterkenny	Bought **15 wireless headsets** for the language lab for ESOL students so they can work at their own pace and not disturb one another accessing podcasts and listening exercises.
	South Donegal	Bought two portable **data projectors** to help facilitate the set-up of new venues in remote areas to meet the demand for ESOL classes from new arrivals from Ukraine.
	Stranorlar	45 students visited the **Organic Centre** in Co. Leitrim.
	Milford	Visited **Glenveigh National Park**, walked to the castle, around the grounds and gardens, had lunch and walked back to the bus for home.
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB	Youthreach Blanchardstown	In-house **team building event** with a Halloween theme, a competition and games for maths week.
Galway and Roscommon ETB	Ionad Foghlama, Gaillimhe	Bought a **Samsung Galaxy Tablet** and a **Sonos speaker**.

	Loughrea	Bought a **bridge camera, a tripod and a Selphy photo printer**. The class learned how to use the manual camera (controls, zoom and focus), took pictures outdoors using the tripod and printed pictures.
	Moycullen	Brought students including ESOL students, to **Bridget's Garden**, for a wellness day. Also **bought a wellness resource** called "Creativity for Wellbeing Workbook".
	Tuam, Headford and Dunmore (3 centres)	69 students visited the **Aran Islands** and took a scenic trip along the **Cliffs of Moher**.
	Youthreach Roscommon Town	Bought a **Barista machine** for the school so that students could be trained with these skills, which will help them find work experience and employment.
Kerry ETB	Caherciveen	Visited **Kells Bay Gardens** in Kells, Co. Kerry and did a tour of Valentia Island.
	Castleisland	Bought two Connect Pen **(C-pens) Readers**.
	Killorglin	Nine students visited the **Bloom gardening exhibition** in Dublin.
	Listowel	A **local historian brought students on a tour of their home town** and they had lunch in the hotel afterwards.
	Tralee	**Bought 4 Apple pencils** for iPads they already have, for learners who have mobility issues with navigating an iPad.

Kildare and Wicklow ETB	Baltinglass and Blessington (2 centres)	Students from the two centres went on a trip to **Kilmacurragh Botanic Garden** in Wicklow. They had breakfast and lunch and a guided tour of the gardens.
	Bray	Bought four **Samsung Galaxy tablets, SD cards and covers** for student learning, demonstration and use.
	Kildare	Brought a Ukrainian group to visit the **Japanese Gardens and National Stud** with tea and scones. Brought an ITABE group to visit **Shackeleton Museum** (Heritage Centre, Athy) and had lunch afterwards.
	Naas	Visited **Killruddery gardens and Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens** in Co. Wicklow. Had lunch and the group did a tour of the gardens.
	Wicklow	Bought four **Galaxy Samsung Tablets, SD cards and covers** for student learning, demonstration for loan to disadvantaged students and those who do not have access to a device.
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	Kilkenny	Had breakfast together in a local hotel followed by a **guided tour of Rothe House**, a medieval town house and garden in Kilkenny city.
Laois and Offaly ETB	Tullamore (Edenderry centre)	ESOL learners visited **Clonmacnoise** monastic settlement and had a guided tour and lunch afterwards.

Louth and Meath ETB	CTC Dundalk	Outdoor trip to **Carlingford Adventure Centre** taking part in team activities with young people from different ethnic backgrounds.
Mayo Sligo and Leitrim ETB	Carrick-on-Shannon	Visited the Irish Raptor Research Centre in Sligo, a **sanctuary for birds of prey and owls**.
	Sligo	Had a **party for Ukrainian students** (who had taken part in three weeks of language and craft classes).
Tipperary ETB	CTC Clonmel	Visited **Cloughjordan Eco Village** in Tipperary and had a day workshop, cooking, farm work and a look at how the village functions.
	CTC Nenagh	Workshop with the **National Reptile Zoo who visited the centre**.
	Nenagh, Clonmel and Thurles (3 centres)	150 students from three groups in county Tipperary visited **Fota Wildlife Park**.
	VTOS Tipperary (Nenagh)	Visited **Birr Castle** and **Lough Boora environmental park** in Co Offaly.
Waterford and Wexford ETB	Cappoquin	Held an **open day for learners and the general public** in the Cappoquin community centre where they hold classes. Advertised the open day in the local paper.
	Dungarvan	Held a **BBQ** and open day **for learners, friends, family and community** groups.

	North Wexford	Did a tour of **Hook Lighthouse** and took part in a **slate painting art class**.
	South Wexford	Tour of **Johnstown Castle and the Agriculture Museum**. Visited the gardens in Johnstown Castle and had tea, coffee and scones together.
	Tramore	**Printed a booklet of stories and poems** created by two Creative Writing groups that was then launched with family and friends in the centre.
	Youthreach Dungarvan	Bought a **Waterproof Olympus Tough T-9 Camera** and an extended selfie stick. This outdoor camera is suitable for young students and will help them map their learning and take part in photography projects.
Other NALA members	Colaiste Eamonn Ris Wexford (secondary school with Autism Unit)	Bought **two iPads with protective cases and keyboards** to help autistic students with typing, spelling and dictation. Also bought **a C-Pen** to help spell and sound out words.
	Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Service	Trip to **Incognito Escape Rooms** in Dublin city centre and had lunch after.
	Knockanrawley Ability Project Tipperary[8]	Trip to **Dublin Zoo**.

[8] Project of Knockanrawley Resource Centre bringing people with disabilities aged 15-29 years closer to the labour market.

	Limerick Youth Service (ESOL department)	Visit to **Bunratty Castle** and Folk Park.
	Love and Care for People	Bought **two desktop Lenovo PCs and an Espon ET2850 printer** for students to use in the centre.
	NLN Bantry	Bought **two 32GB Samsung Galaxy Tablets and two covers** for the tablets.
	NLN Carlow	Visited the **Wexford Heritage Park**, did a tour and had lunch.
	NLN Castlebar	Contributed to **buying a Plug and Play GT1 Drift Race And Rally Rig**. This is to help students prepare for the driving theory and driving test.
	NLN Kilkenny	Visited the **Waterford Suir Valley Railway.** Went for a walk on the Greenway and walked in Tramore by the sea.
	NLN Longford	Bought a **Cricut Explore 3 machine** (cutting machine for crafts) and accessories for students to make educational and creative projects.
	NLN Maynooth	Bought a **Microsoft Surface Go 2 tablet and a keyboard and cover** for it.
	NLN Naas	Gaisce Award trip for students to **Glendalough**, Co. Wicklow.

	NLN Portlaoise	Brought students to the **Transport Museum** in Malahide. Also bought a **C-Reader Pen** to support dyslexic students and a **bubble tube** for the sensory room (for Autism or sensory processing disorder students).
	NLN Rathasker	Bought a **Microsoft Go Surface Pro Tablet** for students who have challenges with motor skills and find it easier to type. It can be used in different locations in the building.
	NLN Sligo	Team building at the **Boda Borg in Lough Key** - a space with different challenges and students worked as a team.
	NLN Wexford	Visited and did a tour of **Hook Lighthouse** and had lunch.
	NLN Tullamore	Took **sound production and instrument tuition sessions** with specialised facilitators from Music Generation in Offaly and Westmeath.
	Rehabilitative Training Unit, National Rehabilitation Hospital	Enjoy Tennis (Tennis Ireland) delivered a **ten week beginner's tennis coaching** to trainees.
	Spirasi	Visited **Dublin Zoo** followed by a picnic in the Phoenix Park.
	Together Academy	**Bought plants, bulbs and pots** so students could gain gardening experience and use this activity as a break from classroom-based learning.

Section 2: Student feedback

In this section, we outline how student feedback was gathered, the number of students involved, the questions students were asked and the feedback itself.

How feedback was gathered

NALA informs centres of key information with a guide for facilitators and the questions to ask students. We estimated it would take one hour to gather the student feedback. In 2022, in half of the centres, staff from the centre facilitated the feedback session. In the other half, it was mostly tutors with students (in one centre the students facilitated, was four centres in 2021). Mostly tutors or staff from the centres took notes but in 19 centres students themselves took notes (ten more centres than in 2021). Staff in centres summarised the feedback.

1,282 students gave feedback

1,282 students (almost double the number of students, 658, who gave feedback in 2021) took part in feedback sessions in the 76 centres. More women than men gave feedback with a ratio of 60:40. Two in five students (40%) were ESOL students (a slight increase from 2021, when just over a third 33% were ESOL students).

The questions students were asked

Students were asked about their experiences of using services and their experiences of learning and what might help. Below are the questions students were asked:

- Are there any online services (such as booking appointments, applying for tests or licences or for social welfare benefits) that you found difficult to use? Please describe.
- Are there face-to-face or phone services you found difficult to use? Please describe.
- What do you suggest to make services easier for you to use?
- What are the top five reasons that keep you coming back in to your centre to learn? (NALA gave a list of examples)
- Can you suggest any additional supports or resources that would help you with your learning? Please tell us more.

The student feedback

In **65, of the 76 centres (85% of centres**), students said they had **difficulties with using online services.**[9]

In 17 of those 67 centres, there were also **students who said they had limited experiences of using online services.** They said this was due to:

- Having no device to access the Internet;
- Lack of literacy skills; or
- Instead getting help from family, friends or staff in the centre.

See below a summary of feedback from students in a CTC in Dundalk:
"Students do use social media and texting. They said on social media platforms, you don't have to worry about spelling your words as you can put in a few letters for searching music and the same for chatting and everyone knows what it means anyway. Some learners buy clothes online but get help from their older brothers and sisters to help create an account and log-in to make payment."

The areas where students **most frequently said they had difficulties online was finding websites hard to navigate and online banking.**

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[9] Of the eleven centres where students had no difficulties, four were ETB adult literacy centres – three with ESOL students - two were Youthreach centres, two were NLNs, one was a secondary school with Autism students and one was a CTC and one was a national Traveller organisation.

Where students had difficulty online

Table 3 below shows the areas where students from different centres said they had difficulties. Websites being hard to navigate and online banking were the biggest issues.

Table 3. The online services students found difficult to use

Online services	The number of centres where students raised this point
Websites hard to navigate	23 centres
Online banking (and ATMs)	22 centres
Transport websites	13 centres
Applying for driver theory test and applying for and renewing driver licences	12 centres
Paying bills	10 centres
Applying for and renewing passports	9 centres
Social welfare	9 centres
Online shopping	9 centres
Medical cards (students from 6 centres said getting a medical card) and booking appointments	8 centres
Automation generally	8 centres
Remembering passwords	8 centres
Needing help with form filling	7 centres

1. **Issues with website navigation and other challenges**

Students gave the following further information:

- **Language choices** – language used is difficult and unclear (booking appointments, applying for Garda identity cards). For non-English speakers the language was not straight forward enough.

- **Too much content and content was cluttered** – students also found that websites have too much information, are too busy and contact numbers are hard to find. Students from four centres said the mygovid.ie website was too busy, somewhat overwhelming and difficult to register on.

- **Font size** - Users should be able to increase the font size.

- **Fetch course registration is a challenge for some** - Students from three centres said registering for a course on fetchcourses.ie was difficult.

- **Forms** – Online forms are too complicated. Students can often read the questions but not understand what is asked. Some forms do not have the option of editing (SUSI grant application).

- **Online shopping** - Buying GAA tickets online but not knowing where to find them on your phone.

2. **Specific issues with online banking**

For students who have difficulty using online banking, further information given included the following:

- Having a fear of online security due to being scammed.

- Having to verify your identity multiple times.

- Banking apps were confusing with wording difficult to understand.

3. **Transport related websites**

Further detail on why transport websites were difficult included:

- Booking train tickets on irishrail.ie was difficult (students in six centres mentioned this).

- Buying flights online was difficult (students in three centres).

- Applying for travel passes (students in two centres said this was difficult).

- Applying for car tax online and student cards (students in one centre said these were difficult).

4.   Booking driver theory test

See summary given by a CTC in Dundalk about booking a driver theory test online. "Two male learners explained to their groups how they used the internet to book a driver theory test online and said it was so confusing with so much information on the pages and they kept getting lost and they didn't have identification to complete the form and that it took ages to do and that you have to have money in your bank account to pay by card."

Face-to-face or phone services that students found difficult to use

Table 4 below outlines the main areas where students found face-to-face or phone services difficult to use. **Students from 18 centres said they are shy or find face to face interactions difficult, have difficulties with banking services and found accessing doctors and appointments difficult.**

Table 4. Where students have difficulties with face-to-face or phones and the number of centres where students said this

Face-to-face or phone services	The number of centres where students raised this point
Shy or find face-to-face difficult or prefer online	18 centres
Banking	18 centres
Doctors and medical appointments	18 centres
Automated phone services	16 centres
Social welfare	13 centres
TV, phone services and broadband	11 centres
Challenges because of English language	11 centres

Seven of the 18 centres where people said that they were shy or found face-to-face uncomfortable were NLNs. See below a summary of students' experiences from the NLN in Carlow:

"As a whole, the students stated that they do not like making calls to make appointments etc. and prefer to use an online booking service or purchase goods online. Face-to-face services are difficult for some also as they lack the confidence in approaching people to seek information etc. Building this self-confidence is a big part of our training programmes at NLN."

Three of the 18 centres where people said that they were shy or found face-to-face uncomfortable were Youthreach centres. See below summary from Youthreach Ballymun:

"All students found this problematic to the extent that they completely avoided using these services. They reported nervousness at the thought of having to speak to someone. One student said that when she is nervous she gets very quiet. She lacks confidence in a phone or face to face situation. She felt that the person she was dealing with then started to doubt the information she was giving. Students felt they were being judged. Students felt that they were not treated in a professional manner, that the person they were dealing with let personal issues – mood- affect their work."

The experience above was echoed by other centres, students in the NLN, in a national Traveller service and in adult literacy services.

Students in 18 centres also said they had difficulties with banking. 12 of these centres were adult literacy centres and six were NLNs. Students had the following difficulties about banking:

- Being guided or told to go online instead of dealing with a cashier and having nobody in the bank to talk to or help if you can't follow instructions;
- Bank staff being too busy, not understanding what you want, being unfriendly and there not being someone there in the branch to help;
- Bank services over the phone having too many automated options; and
- Some students had difficulty using AGMs and bank cards.

Students in 18 centres had difficulties with doctors and medical appointments. The main difficulties were:

- Appointments: being kept a long time waiting for an appointment. Young people often getting parents to make the appointment;

- Discussing health issues with the GP, especially over the phone;

- Receiving bad news over the phone from the doctors;

- ESOL students needing an interpreter with the doctors;

- Doctors using big words and you as a patient not fully understanding what was being said. Face to face was more difficult, online you have time to decipher the information; and

- Applying for the medical card there is a lot of information required.

Suggestions students have to make services easier to use

Table 5 below shows students' suggestions about how to make services easier to use. Being able to talk to a real person and using clear language were the suggestions that came up most frequently from students.

Table 5. Students' suggestions about how to make services easier to use

How to make services easier to use	The number of centres where students raised this point
Be able to talk to a real person	37 centres
Use clear language	29 centres
Provide an offline option	13 centres
Have translation on websites, interpreters and apps	12 centres
Technology should work better	9 centres
Training for staff so they have more patience	9 centres
Have one access point for services	7 centres
What banks can do	5 centres
What transport can do	4 centres
Use texting more	4 centres
Know what you have to have before making the call	4 centres

The top two suggestions from students are:

1. Being able to talk to a person

See the summary below from students in an adult literacy centre in Cavan of the importance of being able to talk to a real person:

"All agencies should be made to have workers on the ground to deal with enquiries and questions and that the practice to have everything online and automated is not fair to people who struggle with online. The group of learners that gave feedback range in age from 23 to late 60s but all referred to the fact that the older generation do not want online services, they want in person services and it is unfair to deny people that."

Students in another adult literacy services in Stranorlar suggested:
"One to one supports with local banks providing information sessions to those engaging in the service for the first time."

Another suggestion from students in Klear was:
"Shorter lists of options on phone lines; only one or two options. People to answer phones faster."

Students in Youthreach Dungarvan suggested:
"Staff in the centre help a lot when they demonstrate what to do. Having a helpful adult was the agreed way that helped the most - pointing, showing, explaining, giving time."

2. Using clear language

Students said the following would help:
- Service providers to speak clearly and use simple English. For people to speak more slowly and use plain English and be more patient.
- Plan English training for service providers.
- Clearer instructions keeping them as short as possible and easy to manage.
- Increase visual content and supports, be careful of colour schemes especially for people with dyslexia.
- Simplify the website make it easier to read for people. Explain difficult words.

The top five reasons that keep students coming to their centre to learn

Table 6 below shows the top five reasons students gave that keep them coming back to their centre to learn. The most frequently cited reason from all the centres was the staff and tutors in the centre being helpful. Next was to get skills for work and to gain a qualification. Thirdly was the atmosphere where the group are helpful and welcoming.

Table 6. The top five reasons why students keep coming back to their centre to learn

Why students keep coming back to learn in their centre	The number of centres where students raised this point
Staff and tutors in the centre are helpful	51 centres
Want to gain skills for work or a qualification	36 centres
Atmosphere, the group is welcoming and helpful	34 centres
Making progress and improving my basic skills	30 centres
Widening my social circle	29 centres

In addition to the top five reasons, students from 27 centres said it was good for their **personal development** and courses are of interest and they have a **thirst for learning and new experiences**.

Additional supports or resources that students said would help them learn

Table 7 below shows what students said about additional supports and resources that would help them learn. Students from 34 centres said more access to technology, smart devices and apps would help them learn. Students from 23 centres said more one to one or extra tuition would help them learn.

Table 7. Supports and resources that would help students learn

Why further supports and resources would help students learn	The number of centres where students raised this point
Technology, smart devices and apps	31 centres
One to one and extra tuition	28 centres
Resources and handouts including NALA resources	11 centres
Practical skills as part of courses	9 centres
Trips	8 centres

In terms of technology students said the following would help them learn:

- Extra classes on using technology including phones, Learn with NALA and filling in online forms
- Continue the loan of laptops scheme and make more laptops available. Be able to take devices home so students could do more online in their own time

Other ideas were to make more varied devices available so students could try virtual reality for example. White boards to make learning more interactive and translating apps should also be made available. Centres could create a pod type space in the centre with IT equipment and Wi-Fi.

Students from **nine centres** said that they would like **more one to one tuition**. Students from **six centres** said **more tuition** for developing language, **ESOL**, including two saying that conversational classes would help them learn.

Section three: The impact of the fund from staff in centres point of view

We asked staff filling in the online report to tell us two or three points about the most important impact of the fund. Table 8 below summarises the impact of the fund.

Table 8. The main impact of the fund as identified by staff in the centres

The fund:	The number of centres where students raised this point
Contributes to teambuilding and being able to talk to people	29 centres
Gives opportunities to people who would not otherwise have the opportunity	22 centres
Empowers students	20 centres
Enables centres to buy technology and what that means to students	16 centres
Enables students to do new activities	9 centres

Staff in Cavan adult learning centre said: (camaraderie and holiday)
"It brings a great comradery between the groups tutors and staff. This fund is very important to me also as an ALO as it supports social inclusion in the centre and creates a sense of unity, as everyone in the centre is involved in the application, arranging the trip and the feedback, plus for most people there are great memories. The learners who go on the trips may live on their own or have an elderly relative to care for and have very little social interaction other than the centre. One learner who I met during the summer, came to me and said 'It was great Holiday'."

Staff in Youthreach Dungarvan said: (money)
"Many learners wouldn't have the spare money to pay to visit places and the fund gives this opportunity."

Staff in Tramore, where students were in a Creative Writing Group, said: (confidence)

"The fund contributed towards a project that had a huge influence on the confidence of the group. They spent the year working towards a goal of publishing their work, which they achieved and surpassed. The launch gave learners an opportunity to involve their families in their learning. The organisation of the launch helped to build the skills of the group. The end product, Monday Musings, is a very nicely designed and printed booklet."

Staff in Donegal Town, where the student group were Ukranians, said: (impact of technology)

"The impact of this fund has been hugely successful. We are offering English classes in very remote areas where we don't have access to internet or laptops etc. A data projector means everyone is looking at the same things and facilitates group discussion more easily. The purchase of data projectors has enabled us to bring a parish hall to life and turn it into a successful classroom."

Staff in the NLN, Tullamore said: (encouraged students try new things)

"The students learned how to play a number of songs together across various genres. The teacher also took suggestions from the class on songs they wanted to learn. Students engaged extremely well with the learning. The instruments were provided by Music Generation, however, over the course of the sessions, 3 students bought their own instruments so they could practice in between sessions and at home. They have asked to continue on the group sessions."

Staff in North Wexford said: (on the doorstep but had never visited)

"Due to the limitations caused by unmet literacy needs, a lot of the learners had never been to Hook lighthouse, despite it being a popular tourist spot in their own county. The questions and interest that arose on the tour were inspiring. Immediately after the tour, a lot of classes began with a discussion on where to go next year which I think says it all."

Additional feedback centres wished to give NALA

We asked was there any additional feedback the centres wished to give NALA.

Table 9 below shows the most common issues centres raised.

Table 9. Additional feedback from centres

Additional feedback	The number of centres where students raised this point
Thanked NALA for the fund	19 centres
Technology and Learn with NALA	5 centres
Call for more resources	3 centres

Section 4: Next steps for NALA and you!

Sharing the relevant findings and make suggestions

We will share this report or pertinent findings with our stakeholders, for example:

- NALA's – Staff, Board, Subcommittees and Members;
- SOLAS;
- Education and Training boards Ireland (ETBI);
- Adult Literacy Organisers' Association;
- AONTAS;
- Learner representatives on Education and Training Boards;
- NLNs, VTOS, YR;
- Adult literacy students in all services;
- Banks;
- Social Welfare; and
- Others including the Road Safety Authority, health services and clients of the plain English service.

We will do this to highlight that unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs are still issues and they can help. For example, we will meet with banking bodies and tell them that online banking is difficult for people. We will continue to promote plain English for financial literacy, health literacy and all organisations that meet the public.

We will share findings with students by:

- Discussing it at the Student Subcommittee of the NALA Board;
- Bringing copies of the report to our two annual student days in 2023;
- Sending a copy of this report to all centres who took part in the fund in 2022 so they can share it with students;
- Mentioning and having this report available at any other student specific events NALA organises that focus on empowerment.

Use its findings in key documents:

- We will use this report as a recent and compelling reference about the continuing needs of adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs' experiences in key documents such as our 2022 Annual Report, policy submissions and NALA's next strategic plan.

Use the ideas in this for future events and meetings

- This report will inform the content of workshops NALA organises for the student days in March and April 2023. Staff in NALA organising webinars and events for tutors will also be able to use the content and ideas to inform their work.
- Staff in centres can read this report and pick up ideas of places to go for student events as well as technology items to buy, and for applications for the NALA 2023 Student Development Fund. [10]

Get in touch if you have any questions?

- NALA's Literacy Student and Development Officer is available to respond to any queries you might have. This could be about what came up in this report[11] or any suggestions you have about how best to use its findings.
- You may also have a topic you'd like to get student feedback on. If so talk to us and we can see if students would be interested in providing feedback on this area.

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[10] NALA plans to continue to provide this fund in 2023 once it has been approved by SOLAS. NALA will advertise the Fund on our website and in our e-zine to members.

[11] If you would like any further information about anything raised in this report please contact Margaret Murray, Literacy Student and Development Officer, NALA by mmurray@nala.ie or telephone 01 412 7928.

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice, providing online learning courses, providing a tutoring service and by lobbying for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.