



National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Electing local councillors who will make literacy matter

Who we are

We are the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), a registered charity in Ireland with 1,700 members.

We believe literacy is a human right.

We are committed to making sure people with literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs:

- have access to quality learning opportunities that meet their needs; and
- can fully take part in society.

We want to ensure that we elect local councillors who will make adult literacy matter in Ireland.

This document sets out:

- Our understanding of literacy in Ireland
- What we want local councillors to do
- Where you can get further information

Our understanding of literacy in Ireland

In the past literacy was defined as the ability to read and write. These skills were thought to remain the same no matter when and why they were used. Now, literacy has a wider meaning. It includes literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Literacy involves listening, speaking, reading, writing, using numbers and everyday technology to communicate, build relationships, understand information and make informed choices. Literacy enables us to:

- reach our full potential;
- be active and critical participants in our families, work and society;
- help address poverty and social exclusion; and
- participate in, and make sense of, the world.

Literacy is always changing. It must be constantly developed throughout our lives and is different for each person and in different settings. For example, you may be good at writing but not reading, or good at maths but not computers. Also, the literacy you need in a bank is different to the literacy you need to visit a doctor.

We are waiting for the results of the latest adult literacy survey¹, but we know from previous research that in Ireland:

- One in six (18%) adults (aged 16 to 65) struggles with reading and understanding everyday text, and one in four adults (25%) has difficulties using maths in everyday life - for example, working out a bill or calculating percentages ([Central Statistics Office 2013](#)).
- About 2 in 5 (38%) adults struggle with basic digital tasks - for example, looking up a website or sending an email ([Cedefop 2020](#)). Most people who have digital literacy needs also have other literacy needs.

¹ The latest Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) started in September 2022 and results are expected at the end of 2024 or early in 2025.

What we want local councillors to do

On Friday 7 June 2024, we vote for our local councillors for the next five years. We want to elect councillors who will fight for adult literacy in our communities.

We want to elect councillors who will:

1. Communicate in plain language

Communicating in plain English (Gaeilge shoiléir) helps everyone. It is especially important for adults with literacy needs.

You can find some tips on how to do that on [our website nala.ie](https://www.nala.ie).

2. Protect literacy and Level 1 – 4 programmes in ETBs and the community education sector

We are hearing from our members that in some Education and Training Boards (ETBs) dedicated literacy services and staff are being reduced or used in other programmes or for other roles. Given the literacy needs and skills shortages in Ireland, we are calling for the retention and increased provision of adult literacy and [Level 1 – 4](#) programmes in ETBs and the community education sector to address these gaps.

3. Protect in-person services

More and more services are going digital. It can be difficult to find someone to talk to in person or over the phone. This can be a serious barrier for adults with literacy needs who want to access public and other services such as banking.

4. Collaborate on the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy

In 2021, the Government published Ireland's first ever adult literacy strategy, called Adult Literacy for Life (ALL). Under the ALL strategy, [Regional Literacy Co-ordinators](#) have been appointed in each Education and Training Board area. In addition, Regional Literacy Coalitions and action plans have been established across Ireland.

Councillors should engage with these regional stakeholders to make sure the ALL strategy is implemented in their communities.

Where you can get further information

Please contact:

Aoife Crawford

Research and Policy Officer

Email: acrawford@nala.ie

Phone: +353 1 412 7900

Websites: nala.ie

learnwithnala.ie