National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

Minutes of the NALA Board

Meeting details:

Date:	12 March 2025
Time:	2pm
Venue:	Online via Zoom

Attendee details:

Chairperson:	Margaret Kelly (MK) - Online
Present (Charity Trustees)	Ciaran Casey (CC), Aoife Foley (AF), Maria O'Gorman (MOG), Paula Tiller (PT), Elma Teahan (ET), Michelle O'Driscoll (MOD), Catherine Devlin (CD)(joined 2.30pm)
Quorum:	◉ Yes ○ No
In attendance (Others):	Colleen Dube, CEO (CEO), Jonah Mudehwe, Finance and Corporate Services Manager (JM), Michelle Reade, Governance and Compliance Officer (MR)
Apologies:	Trish Nolan (TN), Eleanor Neff (EN), Tom O'Mara (TOM)

Please see Glossary of Terms at the end of this document for guidance.

Items discussed:

1. Welcome
• MK opened the meeting and established if we had quorum. Quorum was reached. MK summarised the agenda and the decision items.

2. Conflicts of Interest

- No conflicts of interest were noted.

3. Minutes of the 11 December 2025 Meeting

- MK summarised some items from the minutes. She reminded the Board of the asks that NALA put into our submissions on the Program for Government: to refocus investment towards those with lower skills, to ringfence increased level 1 to 4 funding, to provide €350,000 towards funding for Learn with NALA, to put targeted resources into the ALL Strategy and to create a Minister for Lifelong Learning. She noted that none of the asks were included in the Program for Government.

4. CEO report including 2025 Draft work plan and Implementation Framework

Noted:

- CEO referred to the paper provided which summarises the actions taken to get to the current position and gave an overview of the activities.
- CEO referred to the work plan itself and noted it is largely similar to last year but noted:
    - one key change is that we are not doing the same level of paid advertising in 2025 on Learn with NALA due to us not being able to onboard a large number of new learners or learner centres. We may do more targeted PR or media relations.
    - the new Membership and Funding Development Officer has started and will initially be working on recruiting some additional members and reviewing the NALA membership website.
    - In relation to Advocacy we will be focussing on the PIAAC results. We liaise with the Wheel on a national level and they have a seat on the National Skills Council and there was a lot of interest shown in the most recent meeting. NALA has a meeting with a subgroup of that council on 21 March which is a positive development.
- MK enquired if any activities have been dropped from previous years. CEO advised that we have scaled back the ambitions in many areas rather than dropping specific

activities. She noted we are dropping helpmykidlearn.ie. Funding stopped in 2021 and despite engagement with Department of Education and the Department of Children, there was no agreement to continue it by our deadline of 7 March. We are in the process of deactivating it now. There will be less frequent e-zines also. The Membership Officer will be reviewing appropriate member communications.

- MK enquired if all ETBs had signed up to the referral protocol, CEO advised GRETB remains outstanding.

Agreed:

- The Board approved the Work Plan

5. Governance

5.1 Update on Membership

- MR gave a short presentation on the latest membership status. There are 285 members as of today with approximately 30 still in the process of renewing. MK enquired about ETB coverage. MR outlined the representation of organisations across the different ETBs. 4 ETBs have signed up as Large Organisations. 6 ETBs are represented through one or more Local Organisation.
- MK and CEO discussed the evolving role of the ALOs.
- PT advised that she doesn't seem to get membership emails from NALA. MR informed the Board that during this renewal process consents are being refreshed and whatever they agree to now will be what is implemented. Once the first email goes out following renewal, MR will check to see if it was received by PT. She reminded all Board members who had not renewed to do so.

5.1 Update on Board Skills Survey

- The Board noted the update on the skills survey. MR informed the Board that there was one survey outstanding and she will contact that member after the Board Meeting.

5.2 Annual General Meeting and Annual Report

- MR informed the Board that the Companies Act has been changed on a permanent basis to allow for AGMs to be held remotely or in a hybrid manner. NALA are recommending an online meeting based on the experience last year and that there will not be an Annual Report to launch. The provisional date is 21 May 2025. The Board discussed the merits of online and in person and the date. CEO reminded the Board of the difficulties in achieving a quorum last year resulting in NALA needing to do a hybrid event at the last minute. She also added that the President of Ireland has been invited and we await a response.
- MK and PT were of the opinion that having it in person is important for visibility and bringing people together. ET was ok with either. CEO asked CD for her opinion. CD outlined that while online suits her better she would recommend an in-person meeting.
- CEO asked if the afternoon suited all Board Members. There was a unanimous agreement from all in attendance that the afternoon suited.
- In relation to the Annual Report CEO advised the Board that in order to improve our Annual Report and ensure time to produce a new report in line with the feedback from the Good Governance awards, a revised approach and timeline is being proposed as outlined in the papers.
- **Agreed:**
- The Board agreed:
  - to proceed with an afternoon hybrid AGM on 21 May 2025.
  - the revised approach to the Annual Report.

5.3 Update on Charities Act

- MR referred to the paper and summarised that the Board can now appoint a Company Secretary who is an employee of NALA under the changes to the Charities Act. Following discussions at the ARF it is recommended that NALA takes this approach. If agreed by the Board a formal proposal will be brought to a further Board meeting outlining who is being proposed and how they can satisfy the role.

- MK enquired if NALA's Constitution allow for this also. MR advised that is does since the last changes made by NALA last year.
- MK advised that there are no further changes to the Charities Act and that the further changes are likely to be slow and phased but we are monitoring it.
- MK enquired about the Organisational Development Working Group. CEO advised that there are a few ongoing actions to be complete before that group will resume, specifically the LWN Strategic Review and some items potentially impacting NALA's Pay Policy such as auto-enrolment and the pay deal done with the Section 39 agency workers.

6. Subcommittees – minutes, documentation and items for decision

6.1 Literacy and Staff Policies and Governance Subcommittee

6.1.1 Draft Minutes of the 19 February 2025 Meeting

Noted:

- MK noted that 2 members of the LSPG have left recently. The LSPG now needs more members and looked for volunteers or suggestions, literacy expertise is needed. CEO added that she is hoping to revert with some suggestions.
- MK summarised some key points from the minutes.
- The Board noted the minutes.

6.1.2 Values Framework

Noted:

- MK noted that the LSPG recommended to approve the Framework on the basis that staff had also reviewed it. MR added that the Board should note the Framework applies to staff, Board and Subcommittees. CEO added that actions are underway to bring the values to life within the organisation.

Agreed:

- The Board approved the Values Framework

6.1.3 NALA Child Safeguarding Statement

Noted:

- AF had some recommendations for improving the Child Safeguarding Statement as she is familiar with it and its implementation from another organisation. She recommended:
    - appointing a Deputy Designated Liaison Person
    - including guidance for any Mandated Persons
    - including guidance of harm and threshold of harm.
- The Board had no issues with the Risk Assessment or other appendices to the statement.

Agreed:

- JM will be appointed as Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- AF will send on suggested additional content.
- The Child Safeguarding Statement will be updated and come back to LSPG and Board.

6.2 Education, Training and Assessment Subcommittee

6.2.1 Draft Minutes of the 20 February 2025 Meeting

6.2.2 Matters Arising for Noting

Noted:

- CEO highlighted a couple of key points from the minutes:
    - ETA have signed off on our application for Level 1 Validation. A lot of work has gone into this. It has been submitted to QQI.
    - We are in the process of organising an awards ceremony on 28 March in Galway for the recent award recipients.
- MK noted there was a request for Irish Language support. CEO clarified it was a question raised whether we are required to provide. She clarified we are not and we are not in a position to provide it. MK enquired if LWN could host Irish Language courses if Breacadh developed them. CEO advised that at the moment we would not

be able to facilitate this and demand appears to have dropped since the launch of the ALL strategy.

6.3 Student Subcommittee - Draft Minutes of 20 February 2025 meeting

Noted:

- CD mentioned a question that arose whether the Student Days should be open to the wider public rather than those who had gone back to education. The Board and CEO discussed this and noted that students may not be comfortable with it, interested people who see the advertisements can register but it may diverge from NALA's core purpose outlined in the Constitution. They further discussed groups that the event may be relevant and appropriate to. PT added that while she understands the point, other methods of outreach may be more appropriate. CEO noted the next event is in April in Athlone. She recommended we discuss with the Student Subcommittee the potential of having some guidance available at the next event but we would still rely on our existing network to refer people to that. CD added that getting an opportunity to return to education is so valuable.
- CD also mentioned another member of the SSC saw a national ALL poster which contained no phone number but only a QR code and an email. CEO mentioned that these were postcards and NALA raised this previously with the ALL Office.
- MK noted a reference to a Central Bank retail payment survey and enquired it we have made a submission. CEO confirmed we did in conjunction with the Student Subcommittee.

6.4 Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee

6.4.1 Draft Minutes of 25 February 2025 meeting

Noted:

- MK asked a point about in the minutes relating to €73,000 in restricted funds that Management believes may have been spent. JM confirmed this was funds for an EU project in 2022-2023 and reflected in the 2023 audited accounts where the question arose whether we could not transfer it from restricted funds to unrestricted funds as the project is complete. In 2024 there was no expenditure to set it off against.

However, the work has been completed, and existing staff were used to complete the work in 2022-2023. The funds will remain restricted until any obligations expire.

- MK noted the other actions arising and congratulated everyone for a clean audit.
- ET noted the audit findings and noted that none of them were significant.
- JM explained the adjusted and unadjusted differences for the Board.
- CEO informed the Board that some of the Directors' confirmations were outstanding. ET advised to check with Mazars for their approach. They are required by company law, and the Audit partner will advise on what is acceptable to them. CEO just wanted the Board to be aware as it may impact the timing for the Board to sign them.

6.4.2 Draft 2024 Financial Statements

Noted:

- JM highlighted the small amendment to page 10 of the Financial Statements to the one circulated. MR shared the relevant page on screen.

Agreed:

- The Board approved the Financial Statements.

6.4.3 2024 Audit Results Report

Noted:

- The Board noted the Audit Results Report.

6.4.4 2024 Draft Letter of Representation

Noted:

- ET noted that the Auditor was asked if there were any non-standard reps or changes year on year and they confirmed there wasn't.

Agreed:

- The Board approved the Letter of Representation.

Noted:

- CEO wanted to note before we moved on to the agenda item on the budget, that the ARF also agreed to recommend that we ask Mazars to quote for another term as our auditor and include in that quote a fee for the preparation of the statements as it is a hugely time consuming to complete them internally.
- MK enquired if it is appropriate to appoint Mazars again. ET confirmed that certain companies must rotate every 10 years however NALA is not required to do that and we are not yet near 10 years with Mazars. Therefore, independence is not yet an issue.

Agreed:

- The Board agreed to proceed with a quote from Mazars.

6.4.5 2025 Draft Budget

Agreed:

- The 2025 budget was approved

7 AOB

- MR noted that at the AGM all current Board Members will remain in place unless there are any resignations. There are 2 vacancies for the Board members who resigned in 2024.

Next meeting details:

Date:	14 May 2025
Time:	2.00pm
Venue:	Zoom

Actions arising from this meeting:

Item	Action	Person Applicable	Timeframe

Approval of minutes:

Chairperson’s signature:	Secretary’s signature:
Margaret Kelly	Aoife Foley
Date: 25 March 2025	**Date:** 25 March 2025
Margaret Kelly	Aoife Foley

Glossary of terms

Acronym	Full description
ALL	Adult Literacy for Life
ABEDiLi	Adult Basic Education Digital Literacy project
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AEO	Adult Education Officer
AEOA	Adult Education Officers' Association
ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser
ALOA	Adult Literacy Organisers' Association
ARF	Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee
BAU	Business as Usual
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITO	Check In, Take Off
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRA	Charities Regulatory Authority
CRO	Companies Registration Office
DLS	Distance Learning Service
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
ERS	ERS IT solutions
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETA	Education, Training & Assessment Subcommittee
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FBF	Furthest Behind First

FET	Further Education and Training
IBCB	Irish Banking Culture Board
ICT	Information Communications Technology
LAT	Literacy Awareness Training
LSPG	Literacy and Staff Policies and Governance Subcommittee
LWN	Learn with NALA
PMDS	Performance Management Development System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Q1, 2, 3, 4	Financial Quarter 1 (January – March), 2 (April - June) 3 (July – September) 4 (October – December)
RLC	Regional Literacy Coordinator
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SIPTU	Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union
SOFA	Statement of Financial Affairs
SORP	Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) on Accounting and Reporting for Charities
TUI	Teacher’s Union of Ireland

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. We also provide online learning courses and a tutoring service to adults. We lobby for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

SOLAS
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ALL Adult Literacy for Life