

NALA Student Development Fund

Annual report 2018

An overview of how the fund was used and responses from adult literacy students on a number of topics

SOLAS

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
Further Education and Training Authority



National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh



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About this report

This report provides an overview of the NALA Student Development Fund in 2018. It includes information on:

1. how the fund was used;
2. responses from adult literacy and numeracy learners on topics such as libraries and how to improve literacy and numeracy levels; and
3. the impact of the fund.

The aim of this report is to share feedback from adult literacy and numeracy learners so that we and other organisations can respond appropriately to the needs of learners and continually improve the quality of our work.

This report is for anyone interested or involved in the provision of adult literacy and numeracy services, library services and adult education in general.

The NALA Student Fund is financed by SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority of Ireland.

Adult Literacy is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

Background and context

Since 1980, NALA has ensured the views and experiences of adults with literacy and numeracy difficulties guide and inform the quality of our work, and are heard and taken into account by stakeholders¹.

We do this work through:

- student members on our Board;
- a Student Subcommittee;
- a **Student Development Fund**;
- annual Student Days, and
- by ensuring student advocacy is a key element in our strategic plans².

NALA uses its **annual Student Development Fund** to support extra-curricular activity that encourages greater engagement in and enjoyment of lifelong learning, and to gather and share learner's views.

More recently, Ireland's **Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014 – 2019**³ commits to listen to, and consult with learners in further education and training. Specifically, 'Strategic Objective 3.1 'Respond to the needs of learners,' states:

Systematically benchmark learner's views and satisfaction with their FET programme on an on-going basis through the establishment of a Learner Forum and appropriate Learner Surveys.

NALA uses its **annual Student Development Fund** to contribute to this strategic objective.

¹ Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work, National Adult Literacy Agency, Dublin, 2015

² NALA Strategic Plan 2017-2019. Objective one, action one: Involve 'champions of learning' to encourage greater engagement in and enjoyment of lifelong learning.

³ Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS, Dublin, 2013

Overview of the 2018 Student Development Fund

NALA's Student Development Fund provides a small grant, of up to €650, to adult education centres where literacy or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tuition takes place.

The fund is a subsidy towards a non-tuition group activity outside the classroom for adults and young people improving their literacy and numeracy skills. These activities provide an opportunity for students to do and learn something new, and share experiences with fellow learners.

Centres who receive the fund agree to gather student feedback for NALA.

How many centres and students benefited from the fund?

In 2018, 88 adult education centres received grants from NALA's Student Development Fund. This is a 25% increase from 2017.

The fund supported 1,850 students to take part in fun and interesting learning activities outside the classroom. 85% of these students gave feedback on topics such as how they use the library and how to improve literacy and numeracy levels.

See table one next page.

Types of activity funded

The fund was spent on student trips to places of interest, museums and also on workshops. For example, many visited history places of interest. Others went on walks and theatre visits or to see a comedy show. One group went to the Bloom show in the Phoenix Park. Most centres carried out the activity in May and June 2018. See appendix one on page 16 for list of events and trips funded.

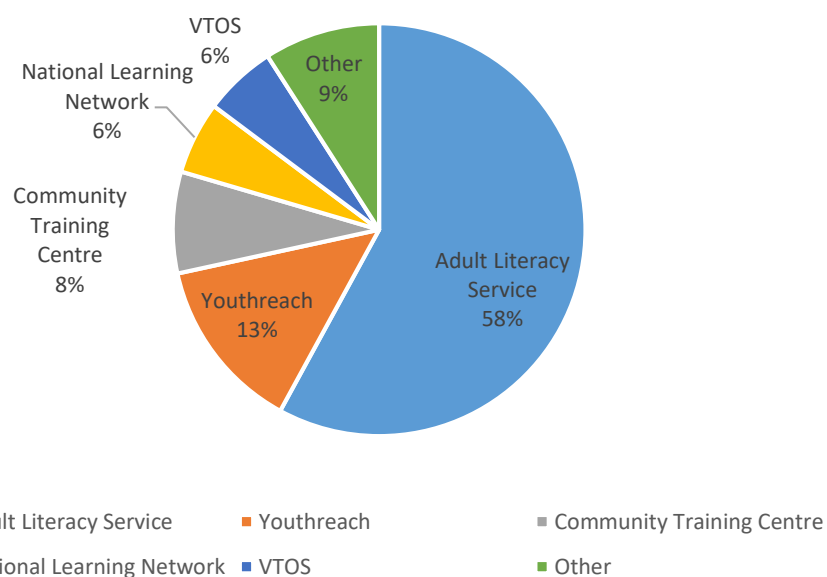
Funding allocated

The range of funding that centres received was from €265 to €650. Most centres received €600. The total cost of funding allocated to centres in 2018 was €46,330.

Table 1. Number of centres and students who benefit from the fund

Successful centres by type	Number of centres	Number of students involved
Adult Literacy Service (ETB)	51	1170
Youthreach (ETB)	12	268
Community Training Centre (ETB)	7	99
National Learning Network	5	97
VTOS (ETB)	5	63
Other	8	153
Total	88	1850

Types of centres that used the Student Development Fund in 2018



Feedback from learners

Centres that receive the fund agree to provide feedback from learners on a number of topics and questions. In 2018, we asked for student feedback on:

1. their use of libraries in the past year, and
2. how to improve literacy, numeracy and digital skills over the next 10 years.

1. Use of libraries

Students were asked whether they had used the library in the past year. 46% of students had used the library in the past year. 54% had not used the library.

Reasons why students used the library in the past year

Students gave approximately six different reasons why they used the library:

1. Borrow books
2. Use computers (very popular with Youthreach and CTCs)
3. Use the free social space to meet people and bring family
4. Go to events such as talks and exhibitions
5. Use the quiet place where you can sit down and have time away from family
6. Use noticeboards and read newspapers and magazines

What would encourage you to use the library?

Students, who had not used the library in the past year, said the following things would encourage them to use the library:

1. If they could do a tour and find out how to get a library card.
2. If they knew they could just go in and have a look around, without knowing exactly what they are looking for.
3. If they knew that they don't have to take a book out.
4. If they felt more confident reading themselves. Also, if reading and writing classes were held in the library.
5. Students who had not used the library in the past year knew the library had large print books, quick reads, books for people learning English and new books just out. They also knew they can use the computers and knew about events going on in the library.

2. Improving literacy levels

Students were asked to provide feedback on how we could improve literacy, numeracy and digital skills over the next 10 years. We have summarised this feedback in the following pages under the broad headings: **policy, teaching and learning, communication, and new ideas**. We have also included the number of centres that mentioned each of these topics.

Policy

Invest more in literacy – mentioned by students in 36 centres

The adult literacy services already in place need to be continued. There needs to be further investment in those services and in technology for learning. Schools need more funding to tackle literacy for children and to utilise schools for parents' learning. There needs to be a greater campaign for literacy awareness as there is still a stigma and not enough public awareness of the issue so people still feel isolated when they have difficulties.

Continue one to one tuition - mentioned by students in 18 centres

One to one tuition was described as a foundation for students joining classes and building classes. Also the fact it can provide the exact help the person requires. Sometimes one to one was still needed when students had joined a group.

Continue schools focus but more needs to be done - mentioned by students from 11 centres

Students from 11 centres mentioned that the extra resources now in primary schools should continue. Positive developments in recent years were acknowledged: lower teacher / pupil ratios, the Special Needs Assistants, having annual reading tests and teachers responding more quickly to children who have a difficulty. More needs to be done in schools including learning life skills - form filling and practical maths, using schools during the day for learning for parents and more

effort to ensure students do not leave primary and secondary school with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Teaching and learning

Use technology more - mentioned by students from 35 centres

Students want to be able to use the technology around them, from their phones, smart TVs, machines for transport and computers for shopping. They also see great technology as having huge potential as a tool for improving their literacy and numeracy skills. They mentioned the need for more apps for learning and the use of technology more in the classroom across lots of topics to enhance learning.

Include more budgeting and everyday maths across tuition – mentioned by students from 24 centres

Students from 9 centres mentioned that what is there in terms of numeracy should be continued but students from 24 centres said they wanted more on managing money and everyday maths. Students want to develop their budgeting skills and financial literacy to be able to deal with banks but also shopping and everyday maths such as geometry. They felt that maths could be included more as part of other classes with practical maths as a preference.

Learn literacy through different courses - mentioned by students in 24 centres

There was interest in learning through the topic of health (students from 12 centres mentioned this) and family (students from 10 centres mentioned this). A variety of other topics for classes were mentioned such as digital literacy, yoga, woodwork and driver theory.

Continue small classes for learning - mentioned by students from 14 centres

Small classes work well for students, particularly helping those who struggle. Small classes were seen as being less daunting for asking questions and there is a good atmosphere in the smaller classes.

Keep the learner at the centre - mentioned by students from 12 centres

Tutors were seen as working to help students learn what was important to them, what they wanted to learn and what they identified themselves as what they needed. Confidence building is part of the adult learning.

Communication

More literacy awareness is needed - mentioned by students in 19 centres

Many students were not aware of the services before they came in and felt they were the only person who had not got literacy skills. There is still a huge stigma to having difficulties and more needs to be done to raise awareness. Students as champions was mentioned where they share their personal stories.

More plain English needed – mentioned by students in 11 centres

Students valued the work going on but felt more needed to be done on making clear information in health and managing money.

New ideas

1. Technology enhanced learning for the classroom and so students can learn from home or on the move with apps. Further investment in IT with teachers' skills enhanced, equipment in the centres improved and apps developed that focus on literacy and numeracy – this was mentioned by students in 36 centres.
2. Short taster courses on different topics - this was mentioned by students in 18 centres (all adult literacy centres).
3. Literacy awareness in future to including speakers in schools, with specific groups and workplaces, collaboration with sports partners, radio competitions and new TV programmes and adverts – this was mentioned by students in 9 centres.

The impact and benefits of the Student Development Fund

– feedback from centres

There are four outcomes of the fund outlined below:

1. NALA now has student feedback on their use of the library and their views on improving literacy and numeracy levels

This gives us a valuable snapshot of students' experiences and will be passed on to stakeholders and used to influence our future strategic plans.

2. The fund broadens some students' experience

The fund has broadened some students' experiences of what is available to them in their communities, often highlighting free cultural venues like galleries and tourist sites that can be visited again with family and friends.

“For students to meet and integrate with students from other class groups and centres; to share learning experiences with fellow students of different levels of learning; this enhances integration and connection within the adult education centre; a unique opportunity for some students to travel out of their home town; the educational tour helps students to be more aware of NALA and its support to our service.” – North Cork Adult Education Service

3. The fund contributes to student empowerment and a sense of teamwork

The fund has contributed to student empowerment particularly because students are involved directly in deciding where to go and organising the trip. Local organisers have said the fund gave students more of a sense of involvement in their centres and builds teamwork, with a positive impact on staff as well.

“Overall experience of Staff and Students being together outside of the centre. Relationship Building Experience between Staff and Students. Experience of eating in a Restaurant.” – Youthreach Sherrard Street

4. The type of events encourage interaction among students that can encourage progression in learning

For some students involved, meeting other students has encouraged them to stay on in a course, and to hear about other courses. In these instances, the fund has contributed to some students having their own educational experiences expanded.

“The fund brings all the learners together for a one day event and this is invaluable for all in the service. The NALA day out is the best advertisement for the service as learners share stories and talk about courses and encourage others to try a course.”

– Dungarvan Adult Literacy Service

Next steps – proposed actions arising from feedback

In order to meet the FET Strategic Objective 3.1 ‘Respond to the needs of learners,’ it is important that all stakeholders act on the feedback received from learners.

For the purpose of this report stakeholders will include:

- NALA;
- SOLAS;
- Education and Training boards Ireland (ETBI);
- Adult Literacy Organisers’ Association;
- Local Government Management Agency;
- Our library members;
- Learner Representatives in Education and Training Boards; and
- AONTAS.

Once we receive a response from all stakeholders, NALA will let students know the actions and outcomes through our e-zine to members and on our website by June 2019.

Feedback	NALA action	Stakeholder action
Use of libraries	NALA will share these findings with the Local Government Management Agency (links with libraries at a national level), and our library members. We will ask them to respond to the issues raised.	
Invest more in literacy	NALA will continue to raise awareness of local ETB services through its Take the first step	

	campaign. We will continue to make the case for further investment in literacy and campaign for public support for this.	
Continue one-to-one tuition	NALA will continue to advocate for one-to-one tuition with our partners and promote one-to-one learning using the Distance Learning Service.	
Schools focus, do more	NALA will continue to promote the www.helpmykidlearn.ie website as a resource to parents. We will also continue to raise awareness with Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) and continue to call for investment in family learning.	
Use technology more	NALA will continue to develop WriteOn.ie and encourage tutors to use technology as a tool in practice. We will build the	

	resources available online to practitioners.	
More on budgeting and everyday maths	NALA will continue to support continuous professional development in this area as well as numeracy teaching and learning, and highlight these findings across our work.	
Learn literacy through different courses	NALA will continue to link with providers as they integrate literacy across other courses.	
Continue smaller classes	NALA will give feedback to providers on this.	
Keep the learner at the centre of learning	NALA will continue to promote the “Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work” with all involved in adult literacy provision.	
More literacy awareness	NALA will continue to work with partners to seek further investment to awareness.	
More plain English	NALA will continue to lobby for more plain English use.	

Appendix 1:

List of Centres⁴ that received the fund and how they used it

Adult Literacy Centres	
Successful applicant	Activity undertaken with funding from NALA in 2018
Arklow and Carnew	Trip to Collins Barracks & Garden of Remembrance with former volunteer tutor (historian and published author) as guide throughout
Athy and Kildare	Students from Kildare/Athy FET Centres took a guided tour of Kilkenny Castle and the Kilkenny Design Centre
Ballymun	Tour of Dublinia and Christchurch Cathedral with stop for coffee at Jurys Inn
Blanchardstown	Trip to Glasnevin Cemetery
Blessington and Baltinglass	Students from Blessington and Baltinglass met for the discussion on literacy and on the library. Then went by bus to the Civic Theatre, Tallaght for dinner and to film "From under the Bed"
Bray and Wicklow	Students from Bray and Wicklow met at Well's House in Gorey. Discussion there and launched a collection of student writings. Guided tour of Well's House and lunch
Cappoquin	Tour to visit Cork City Gaol and Cork City
Castlereagh	Visit to the National Museum of Ireland - Country Life, Mayo. Explored the Michael Davitt Museum and Straide Abbey followed by a visit to Foxford Woollen Mills and McWilliam Hotel for dinner
Clare	Learners from the Direct Provision Centre in Knockalisheen visited Killarney. Followed a trail to Torc Waterfall and Torc Mountain and did a short tour through Killarney
Coolock / Darndale	Students went to "Son of a Preacher Man" in Bord Gás Energy Theatre
Cork South West	Students from Ballincollig, Macroom and Carrigaline met the Lord Mayor of Cork City. Tour of St. Fin Barre's Cathedral, presentation from the Cork County Library Service and lunch
Crumlin	Trip to Ardgillan Castle, Co. Dublin
Dingle	Tour of the Dingle Peninsula coastline on two ribs. Then we went for lunch in Benner's Hotel
Dublin 8 Community Education Centre	Trip to the Bloom Festival in the Phoenix Park

⁴ Small and large organisation **members** of NALA can apply for the fund. Small organisation members can make one application to the fund. Large organisation members can make two applications to the fund.

Loughlinstown	Trip to Glendalough and had a video presentation, a tour of the visitor centre and the monastic city, had a walk and lunch
Dungarvan	Trip to Killarney, visited historical site and went on a boat trip around the lakes
Dunmanway	Guided tour to Allihies Copper Mines Museum including machinery used and show of iron ore extracted from the mine. Lunch in Castletownbere town
Kenmare	Visit to the theatre to look at Irish literature and the Kerry Writers Museum
Killarney	Students from Killarney and Waterville met. They had been interacting with each other during the year through email and facetime chats
Killorglin	Trip to Valentia for Glanleam Gardens, Valentia Quarry and Skellig Chocolate Factory and second group went to Dingles Louis Mulcahy's and did a piece of pottery each
KLEAR, Kilbarrack	Trip to Wicklow Gaol and lunch. Tour of jail, starting with 'Jailer' detaining us at His Majesty's pleasure! Included information on 1798, the famine, reform of prison service, Easter Rising and War of independence
Letterkenny and Milford	Learners from a combined literacy and horticulture course visited the Organic Garden Centre in Rossinver, Co. Leitrim
Listowel and Castleisland	Two centres met and went to dog trials. Also visit to Skellig Experience visitors centre in Caherciveen for lunch and tour of the exhibition on the Skellig Islands
Mahon and Ballyphehane	Mahon and Ballyphehane schemes joined together for visit to St Finn barr's Cathedral and Nano Nagle Place
Maynooth	Trip to a comedy show in the Riverbank Theatre in Newbridge and had light refreshments
Millstreet	Visit to Killarney House and did a historical tour of the house and grounds
Mitchelstown	Trip to Spike Island, Cobh, Co. Cork
Monaghan	Event held called "Flavour of Intercultural Monaghan" that showcased the diverse nationalities in the adult literacy community in Co. Monaghan. Food tastings, dance, music and song, poetry recitals and traditional games included
Naas	Visit to the Botanic Gardens for a guided tour of the grounds
New Ross/Bunclody	Guided tour of Russborough House and visit to Newbridge Exhibition
Newbridge	Trip to Kilkenny Castle and the Smithwick's Brewery
North Cork	Guided tour of Waterford including the Viking Triangle and the Bishop's Palace
Roscrea	Trip to the Shannon in Banagher, County Galway and did a Kayaking training course
South Cork East	Students from three centres visited Clonakilty Model Village and the Michael Collins History Museum

South Donegal	Groups from the Gaeltacht and south Donegal came together for an outing to the horticultural department in Letterkenny Training Centre and Oakfield Park, Raphoe
Tipperary (South)	Students from all South Tipperary Centres brought together on a trip to Cobh and Spike Island
Tipperary (North)	Trip to Kilkenny Castle
Tramore Education Centre	Trip to Wexford and did tour of Wexford Heritage Park and had lunch there and went on to Wexford town in the afternoon
Tuam and Headford	Visited Cong village and Inchagoill Island
Westport	Intercultural event in Westport Town Hall Theatre included a sharing of culture/traditions/local foods/traditional dress of a few different countries plus music and a talk on local history
Word Aid, Kilkenny	40 ESOL language and literacy learners did tour of Shankill Castle in Paulstown, Co. Kilkenny including house and gardens, viewed the art work and had refreshments
Youthreach centres	
Successful applicant	Activity undertaken with funding from NALA in 2018
Ballymun	Trip to Causey Farm, Navan for activities - baked soda bread, fed animals and milked the cows. Also team building activities including the bog challenge. Tour of Glasnevin Cemetery and played Pitch and Putt
Bandon	Treasure hunt in Cork City with Adventure.ie
Blanchardstown	Visit to GoQuest and took part in teamwork games
Bray and North Wicklow	Trip to the Mermaid Theatre in Bray for screening of a film with Arklow and Leixlip Youthreach
Clondalkin	Trip to Tayto Park
Gortahork	Camping trip to Inis Owey, learned about the history, flora and fauna
Listowel	Visit to Dublin to the 1916 Rebellion walking tour and visited the Guinness Storehouse
Mahon	Visit to Munster Driving Campus including look at road safety, engines and road safety signs
Sherrard Street	Bay Sports for fun afternoon including teamwork and a Chinese buffet meal
Tralee	Paintballing
Transition Centre	Trip to the Titanic Exhibition in Belfast
Wicklow	Visit to Causey Farm, Co. Meath for team building and fun activities - milking cows, visiting a bog, baking soda bread, traditional music session, using the bodhran and céili dancing
Community Training Centres	
Successful applicant	Activity undertaken with funding from NALA in 2018
Blackpool, Cork	Visit to Spike Island including tour of the prison and an orienteering exercise

Limerick Youth Service	Visit to Dublin city centre by train and Luas from Limerick and went to EPIC exhibition in the docklands
Newbridge	Visit to Collins Barracks Military museum and Decorative Arts museum in Dublin
Finglas	Rap music workshop including how to write, perform and record a rap song
Galway	Trip to Dublin to visit historical places connected with the women's vote
Newbridge	Visit to Collins Barracks Military museum and Decorative Arts museum in Dublin.
Tuam	Trip to Great Escape Rooms in Galway and visited Castlerea.
WYTEC (Waterford)	Trip to see a show in the Bord Gais theatre, Dublin
National Learning Networks	
Successful applicant	Activity undertaken with funding from NALA in 2018
Kilkenny	Visit to Fota Wildlife Park, Cork
Mallow	Trip to Kinsale for a historical tour and a group meal
Sligo	Tour to Lough Key Forest Park and some students did teambuilding exercise called Boda Borg while others went on a guided walk around the park
West Cork	Students from two centres visited the Titanic Exhibition, Cobh
Wexford	Visit to Wicklow Jail(Gaol) and Mount Usher Gardens, Ashford, Co. Wicklow
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)	
Successful applicant	Activity undertaken with funding from NALA in 2018
Gortahork	Visit to maritime exhibition in Greencastle and Tropical World in Letterkenny including mini zoo and garden centre
Kilkenny	Trip to the Viking experience in Dublin and Ormond Castle in Carrick on Suir with dinner in Dunmore East
Shanagolden, Limerick	Trip to the Irish National Stud and Japanese Gardens and tour of Newbridge Silverware Style Museum
Tipperary	Trip to Connemara including tour guide in An Spidéal and Indreabhan
Tullamore	Visit to Glasnevin Cemetery Dublin
Other	
Successful applicant	Activity undertaken with funding from NALA in 2018
Camphill Community, Dingle	Trip to Bunratty Castle and Folk Park with lunch
Carrowbrowne Traveller Women's group	Two workshops on hair and beauty with discussion on importance of healthy eating on both hair and skin. Trip to the cinema and had a meal together
Fáilte Isteach Dundalk	Visit to the National Museum and the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin

RehabCare Bray	Visit to Glasnevin Cemetery as a mystery tour
RehabCare Castlebar	Trip to the Guinness storehouse in Dublin
Rehabilitative Training Unit, Dun Laoghaire	Drama workshop within the unit
Spirasi	Two trips on different dates for students, one to a museum and another to the zoo
Western Care - Ridgepool Training Centre	Attended a conference called 'Unlocking Freedom' on adult education, further education, community and disability services

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