



An Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
City of Dublin Education and Training Board

Submission from the City of Dublin Education and Training Board for the consultation process on the 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy & Digital Strategy

City of Dublin Education and Training Board

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Glossary

AEO	Adult Education Officer
AES	Adult Education Service
ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser
ALS	Adult Literacy Service
BARWS	Ballymun Adult Read & Write Scheme
BJC	Ballymun Job Centre
CDETB	City of Dublin Education and Training Board
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEASP	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
DNWAP	Dublin North West Area Partnership
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FET	Further Education and Training Programme
HSE	Health Service Executive
ITABE	Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education
LES	Local Employment Service
MABS	Money Advice Budgeting Service
NALA	National Adult Literacy Association
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

The City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB)

The CDETB provides education and training opportunities to learners across seventeen Further Education and Training Colleges, eleven second level schools, two Training Centres, nine Youthreach centres, the Prison Service, five Adult Education regions and a number of other specialised projects. The Adult Education Service operates across Dublin City with a team of five Adult Education Officers, nine Adult Literacy Organisers, three Community Education Facilitators, six Guidance counsellors and a team of information officers and administrators. Courses are delivered by highly-skilled, qualified tutors with expertise in areas such as community education, literacy, numeracy, digital skills and ESOL. CDETB tutors have a wide range of competencies to deliver on a broad range of non-accredited and accredited programmes, including QQI modules from levels 1-6.

In 2019, the CDETB AES worked with over 18,000 beneficiaries in 148 venues offering a range of both non-accredited and accredited programmes. The AES ran 1,716 courses and on Adult Literacy funded programmes, accreditation options were offered on 45% of courses. On the ITABE programme in particular, 82% of courses offered accreditation. A recent review of the Strategic Plan between the CDETB and SOLAS (2018-2020) shows the CDETB has:

- Increased rates of certification (+15% in 2018/19)
- Recorded progression on FE and HE (+24% in 2018/19)
- Increase courses for trainees/apprentices (+15% in 2018/19)
- Increased awareness of mental health (increased courses such as mindfulness and self-advocacy)
- Provided Continuous Professional Development opportunities in UDL
- Increased family learning provision
- Extended access to digital learning (accelerated by Covid-19)

The Adult Education Service is best placed within communities to meet the challenges set out in the new 10-year strategy for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills.

Welcoming the consultation process

The CDETB AES welcomes this opportunity to enter a submission to the consultation process. It offers us the chance to reflect on what we currently do and ask what more we can do to meet the needs of learners with literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs in the decade ahead. As experts in our field, we have been providing programmes in response to learner needs for over forty years and, with a recent intensive CPD roll-out in upskilling staff in TEL and UDL, we are ready to embrace the next decade and the challenges it presents to our learners.

This submission initially documents a sample of initiatives already underway in the CDETB, and presents them as best practice models for development and expansion nationally. It presents the current challenges for our service and offers solutions, via the questionnaire, to be actioned in the new strategy. We note the importance of critical literacies and approaching literacy as an equality issue.

Throughout this submission, where we refer to 'literacy' we are referring to all literacies falling under that umbrella term, to include reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills, as well as listening and speaking competencies. We are also referring to, and will explicitly discuss further, the critical literacies needed to fully participate in employment, family and social life and as an informed citizen.

What works well

The CDETB Adult Literacy Organisers meet monthly in both a policy group and on a community of practice forum. This leads to a highly collaborative and cohesive service across the city. The following section documents a sample of programmes and approaches, highlighting some of the work undertaken by the ALOs in responding to local learner needs.

Types of Provision: 'Meet the Learner where they're at'

The CDETB has an agreed literacy assessment method, the *Progress Framework*, which supports the informal 'chat' the learner has with the ALO on first contact with service. The *Progress Framework* has materials for use during assessment, if

appropriate, and also for teaching and learning purposes. The framework therefore is also used as a means of formative assessment. In all cases, a first meeting between an ALO and learner pinpoints 'where the learner is at' and a range of classes are offered to suit individuals' availability, interests and preferred tuition options.

Learners can attend from two to ten hours weekly on a literacy programme, depending on their own personal circumstances. An average literacy learner will attend, on average, somewhere between four and six hours per week. Although intensive tuition of six hours per week is the model we advocate for enhanced progression, we remain learner-led, and for those who cannot commit to six hours per week, we ensure they are not excluded from the service by offering two to four hours per week. Classes are available mornings, afternoon and evenings throughout the academic year. We are committed to allowing the time for lateral learning.

Specialised programmes for dyslexia: *Decoding Dyslexia*

All literacy, numeracy and digital literacy classes provide support for students with dyslexia as part of their remit. However, there is a benefit (and a need) for students with dyslexia to have a course specifically for them and tailored to their needs.

Decoding Dyslexia is an innovative programme for adults with the Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) Dyslexia. The impact of dyslexia is very individual, and *Decoding Dyslexia* is tailored to the needs of the learner in response to the voice of the learner. This programme facilitates learners to improve self-awareness, confidence and their ability to describe and ask for supports. Using literacy, numeracy and digital literacy tuition, *Decoding Dyslexia* promotes social inclusion by facilitating learning of skills and developing coping strategies that can be used in everyday life. Coursework is varied in order to help students to identify their learning strengths and difficulties, to understand their learning pace, improve concentration and emotional skills. Most importantly learners are encouraged to learn how to self-advocate for their needs and to become more

independent/autonomous learners. A core element of the classes focuses on everyday common tasks, such as filling in forms, using smart phones, the internet and social media interaction. Engaging and becoming more familiar with these tasks also has the benefit of removing some of the anxiety associated with the unknown. In a practical sense, these tasks allow learners to participate in work or education with the confidence that they can meet the challenges they encounter there. All of the coursework is designed to facilitate a participant's independence and confidence, whether they are pursuing further training, opportunities in their own workplace or for their own personal goals.

Before *Decoding Dyslexia* started two years ago, the CDETb ALOs were aware of only one other programme nationally¹ designated solely to adults with dyslexia. That course has since ceased and as far as we are aware, there are no other courses exclusively for adults with dyslexia in Ireland. As part of the 10-year strategy every literacy service requires investment to resource, fund and train tutors to facilitate a designated Adult Dyslexia Programme.

Numeracy programmes

The CDETb Adult Literacy Service integrates functional and financial literacy into a range of QQI Levels 1, 2 and 3 programmes as part of key skills development. Numeracy is often taught as part of an integrated programme and, through the medium of cookery, woodwork, art or drama, this encourages learners to develop key skills and confidence concurrently.

Research by Adult Literacy Organisers in the CDETb identified a need for specific mathematics programmes at pre-apprenticeship level to address the skills gap for early school leavers who did not meet the entry requirements for apprenticeship programmes. The CDETb Adult Education Service worked with the Employer Engagement Unit, the Training Centres and a number of employers to adapt QQI level four Mathematics module to make it relevant for learners applying for a range of apprenticeships. Successful learners met the entry requirements for their

¹ Career Paths, Celbridge

chosen apprenticeship and learning from the QQI level four Mathematics prepared them for phase two of the apprenticeship programme.

QQI level five Mathematics is currently being piloted for delivery by the CDETB Adult Education Service. This is to address the growing need for higher level mathematics ability for access to, and success on, university level courses. The importance of maths as a standalone module, delivered by the Adult Education service, is becoming increasingly evident with demand for these courses.

Supporting the PLC and Training Centres

In 2018, SOLAS commissioned an evaluation² of models of literacy and numeracy supports across ETBs. One area looked at was the ALS in Crumlin and its work with three local FET colleges. The ALO and a liaison contact in each college collaborate to provide language, maths and assignment supports to full time students. In the evaluation, this model was recognised as successful. Liaison contacts reported increased learner retention on courses when able to access extra supports.

Development of Resources and Materials for Apprentices

A Study Skills Handbook for carpenters and joiners was developed by CDETB Finglas Adult Education Service tutor, Nicola Callaghan, who coordinates a study skills programme for apprentices. The handbook was produced in collaboration with Finglas Training Centre. Nicola also contributed to a study skills handbook for apprentice plumbers. The content of these handbooks could also be of value to teachers and instructors in secondary and further education, particularly those who teach Materials Technology or Construction Studies. There is huge potential for the development of creative, relevant and trade-specific resources for apprentices across other professions, in collaboration with the AES. See below for an outline of the content and approach to devising the materials.

² *Integrating Literacy and Numeracy in Further Education and Training, SOLAS (2018)*

Content: The content is designed to help apprentice carpenters and joiners learn useful carpentry terminology and to assist them in applying mathematical formulas, for example area and trigonometry, to real life and work situations.

Independent Learning: It is in workbook format which means the apprentice can track their progress and can decide what aspects they want to complete and when they want to complete them, giving them control and ownership over their own learning. Apprentices are provided with textbooks and/or course notes however these provide limited areas for active input from learners, hence the development of the Study Skills Handbook.

Interactive Learning: The tool includes games, exercises, worksheets and instructions for apps like Kahoot and Quizlet that make learning fun yet informative. A range of learning tools have been used so that the resource appeals to all learners and their various learning styles

Maths for Trades Book Series: A series of Maths for Trades books are also available through local ETBs. These books are part of a collaborative project between ETBs nationwide. The following trades are currently included in the series; Plumbing, Motor Mechanics, Electrical, Metal Fabrication and Carpentry and Joinery, see CDETb example³ here: [Apprentice Handbook](#)

Recognition of Prior Learning: Working with The Defence Forces

The CDETb Adult Literacy Service recognises that unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs can exist beyond NFQ Levels 1-3. Through *Skills for Work* and mainstream literacy programmes, the ETB Adult Literacy Service has a long-established history of supporting and upskilling adults in employment.

When the TOBAR project was established in 2017, the Adult Literacy Service was best placed to develop and deliver the Recognition of Prior Learning project between the ETB and the Defence Forces. The ability to recognise an individual's skills and competence and respond to students' needs has always been central to

³ <https://cdetbadulteducationfinglas.ie/study-skills-for-carpentry-and-joinery-apprentices-handbook/>

the service offered to adult literacy students. Recognition of Prior Learning facilitates applicants to achieve formal qualifications for skills and knowledge that they have gained through their experiences and achievements in their work, social and personal life. As part of the plan to roll out RPL to learners outside the Defence Forces, the CDETБ Adult Education Service are currently working with the Dublin Simon Community to include RPL in the education programme delivered to homeless service clients in conjunction with their community employment scheme.

The ETБ Adult Literacy Service recognises that "literacy" means more than basic literacy and that improving literacy, numeracy and digital numeracy skills for adults can have wider benefits for individuals, their community and society. Equally under the guidance and development of the ETБ Adult Literacy Services, RPL has the potential to have a positive impact on disadvantaged adults who are not in the workplace by recognising the skills and knowledge that they already have, offering them progression options on their lifelong learning journey and creating a more equal and inclusive society.

Meeting the literacy needs of ESOL learners

The CDETБ has addressed the growing need for literacy for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) participants with expanded programmes and increased numbers of classes. Some have a direct focus on employment in response to learner demand. Levels are catered for from absolute beginners to intermediate, and learners are also facilitated in progressing onto FET programmes. Since a review in 2012⁴, ESOL provision has been consistent throughout CDETБ in responding to the needs of learners, which has included the provision of classes for those who have no literacy in their own language and those who are total beginners in acquiring English as a second language. ESOL coordinators have been appointed to directly assess learners and timetable appropriate classes in response to changing needs. CDETБ has always had a flexible response to the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. In recent

⁴ <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Review-of-ALCES-funded-Adult-Literacy-Provision.pdf>

years, CDETB has provided English language classes in Direct Provision centres and supported Spirasi, who assist and support asylum seekers and refugees who have experienced various forms of trauma in their lives. Throughout 2020, in response to the global pandemic of COVID-19 and the government lockdowns, ESOL tutors have successfully moved a large proportion of classes online via zoom and Whatsapp depending on the devices and services (for example, smartphones, laptops and access to internet) available to learners, demonstrating the flexible, experienced, and innovative approaches of our tutors who understand the needs of their ESOL learners.

Family Literacy

Family Literacy programmes throughout Dublin City are run by CDETB Adult Literacy Services in collaboration with primary and secondary school Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) coordinators, local libraries, local childcare facilities, family resource centres and homeless services. In 2019, the CDETB ran a minimum of 44 family literacy courses with 344 participants.

The Adult Literacy Service supports parents, grandparents and guardians in a variety of areas through functional literacy projects to encourage the development of key skills for parents in literacy, English language, Irish and maths, to ensure they have the confidence to support their children and to develop interactive literacy skills through storytelling, craft, science, history and more.

Family Literacy programmes have been key to linking parents to other agencies and services by including guest speakers as part of the programme. The public health nurse, libraries services, Children's Books Ireland and CDETB guidance services have all met with parents' groups under the umbrella of family literacy learning.

The Adult Literacy Service has played an instrumental role in developing the digital literacy skills for parents as part of Family Literacy programmes. Family Literacy programmes are developed both as accessible and student friendly opportunities for learning but also to respond to the immediate needs of participants. Programmes have been adapted throughout 2020 to respond to the need for parents to engage in new digital platforms to communicate with their children's

school and to support their children's learning during school closures. The CDETB Adult Literacy Service continues to engage with HSCL staff and schools to offer suitable and safe learning options for parents while they have limited access to school buildings.

Adult Literacy Organisers from both urban and rural ETBs are serving as members on the national Family Digital Literacy Steering group. The goal of this steering group is to use technology to improve the literacy skills of parents with literacy needs through a family digital literacy programme. Parents who have literacy difficulties can lack the skills to support their children's literacy at home from their child's early years and through their school years. Through broad consultation with ETB Family Literacy Programmes and the HSCL network, this digital family learning project will identify key structures and digital resources needed to ensure that young children do not miss out on early learning opportunities, all of which support a child's literacy. Strong literacy skills help mitigate against early school leaving.

In recognition of the literacy needs in disadvantaged communities, Family Literacy programmes funded by ETB Adult Literacy Service provide an environment where parents and children can work together to support their family's literacy. Family Literacy is not limited to parents of school going children, but offers a wide range of preschool learning with parents and toddler groups to encourage oral language development through parents and toddlers' groups and story stacks courses.

Some of the challenges facing Family Literacy programmes at present are:

- Loss of parents' rooms as schools need more space to accommodate students due to COVID- 19
- Opportunities to engage with parents at coffee mornings - information sessions in the school are not currently available
- Lack of understanding and valuing of family literacy programmes at interagency level as a gateway for parents with low-level skills, which provide pathways to further education opportunities
- Personal information required for PLSS can make parents uncomfortable and discourage them from engaging further with learning

Family Literacy sample programme: Mini Museum Project

The CDETБ Adult Literacy Service encourages intergenerational learning through Family Literacy projects. One example of this is the Mini Museum project that took place in an inner-city school last year. Parents and grandparents were invited to share memories, stories and artefacts from their youth, and they created a 'mini museum' at the end of the course. Primary school students came to the Mini Museum to develop their knowledge and understanding of local and cultural history, through interactive exhibitions and games created and presented by adults from the local community. This Mini Museum project has been developed to include the histories of new communities as a reflection of the diverse cultural heritage that influences modern local communities.

Interagency work - New Horizons programme

Targeting and outreach, via local inter-agency networking and collaboration, facilitates the promotion of services to specific hard-to-reach groups. The *New Horizons* programme in Ballymun, Dublin is an example of this type of approach.

New Horizons is a DEASP led initiative to engage with people who are in receipt of a social welfare payment and not engaging with any of the local support services. The initial programme targeted jobless households i.e. those households where no adults were in employment, so the household was reliant on social welfare payments.

City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETБ), Ballymun Adult Read and Write Scheme (BARWS), Ballymun Job Centre (BJC) and Dublin North West Area Partnership (DNWAP) collaborated with DEASP Ballymun to plan and deliver the *New Horizons* programme over a four-week period in May 2019. The programme was designed to support the development of both soft skills and transferable skills as well as to provide information on local services.

DEASP clients from the target group were invited to drop in to an 'Open Day' situated in the CDETБ Adult Education Centre, Ballymun. There were a number of information and activity stands set up by the different agencies for people to

access, explore, ask questions and take away materials such as leaflets and flyers, without any pressure to sign up or commit to anything.

Attendees who expressed an interest were registered to join the four-week *New Horizons* programme which included workshops and presentations on topics such as mindfulness, crafts, nutrition and gardening, followed by a trip to a local community garden. Also included, were presentations from the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and from the Health Services Executive (HSE) public health nurse on mental health, with particular reference to the importance of engagement in the community. Participants took an assessment of existing competence and aptitude levels using an on-line assessment tool; E-Guide.

Such was the success of the pilot programme, that participants requested that it continue. The second month of workshops included meetings with the CDETБ Adult Education Guidance Officer to discuss options for further education or job seeking opportunities. While the number of participants on the pilot was small, the impact on those who did choose to participate was hugely positive;

- *“The course has improved my motivation and social skills”*
- *“I feel more positive and confident especially talking within a group”*
- *“Really enjoyed how it gave you so many options”*
- *“Very eye-opening on training courses”*

Four participants from the programme progressed on to literacy and technology courses with BARWS and one completed a QQI L4 pre-college course with CDETБ Ballymun.

CDETБ Literacy courses: Volunteer Training and Literacy Awareness

In recent years, the CDETБ carried out a review of all volunteer tutor training being delivered within the service and developed a 37.5-hour standard training programme to be followed in CDETБ ALS centres throughout the city. This

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guarantees city-wide consistency and reliability in the delivery of a high quality, professional programme.

The initial training programme for volunteer tutors is robust and competently equips those volunteering with the ethos and skills to work with adults who present with low basic competences for everyday living. It demonstrates best practice by acknowledging andragogical approaches such as multiple intelligences and different learning styles, using a variety of teaching and learning strategies and materials to suit these differences. Delivery of one-to-one adult literacy tuition by trained volunteer tutors enhances ALS provision across the CDETB.

The aim of one-to-one tutoring, either via voluntary or paid tutors, is to ensure that fear of joining a group is not a barrier to returning to education. Learners can have negative memories of school, or shame attached to their literacy skills, and a short course of one-to-one tuition helps to build confidence in themselves, and the service, to allow the learner to engage in group work.

In 2020, the CDETB drew on the volunteer training programme to create a professional development literacy awareness course for adult education staff who may have no direct experience with literacy learners. The course focusses on awareness over the practical aspects of becoming a tutor, and helps the participant think about the impact the lack of literacy, numeracy and digital skills might have on an individual. It also aims to give staff the confidence to approach conversations about literacy difficulties with individuals and find the right referral paths, either through the guidance service, or directly to the Adult Literacy Organiser. The longer term aim is to advertise this awareness course with partners in the statutory and community sectors we work with.

Provision during the Covid-19 pandemic

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, all CDETB Adult Literacy Services have continued to deliver learning opportunities to both existing and new students. There have been considerable challenges in this regard, but also numerous successes and innovative developments arising from this situation.

The main platforms now routinely used in the provision of remote teaching and learning within CDETB Adult Literacy Services include:

Phone: Many tutors were provided with mobile phones during lockdown, and this has proven invaluable in maintaining good professional boundaries alongside enhancing communications and the provision of ongoing learning and support to students.

Post: Where students cannot attend physical classroom settings, and do not have access to digital devices/internet, Adult Literacy Services have delivered materials by post, which can then be followed up with a telephone call. Some services prepared learning packs that were posted to existing students and shared across the city for general use. A good example of this is the Ballyfermot Magazine⁵ prepared in March 2020, see link here: [Student Magazine](http://www.coolockals.ie/wp-content/uploads/CDETB-AES-Ballyfermot-Magazine-March-2020-4-1.pdf)

WhatsApp: WhatsApp has proved a particularly useful tool since lockdown. In many cases, students who struggle to produce text for messaging services can easily communicate using WhatsApp Voice Messaging, or Voice-to-Text with a small amount of learning. It is also relatively easy to become competent in WhatsApp Video Calling. This not only increases the student's ability to engage with remote learning opportunities but has proven utterly transformational for people isolated from family and friends while Covid-19 restrictions are in place. As WhatsApp's service can operate over broadband networks, it is often a very cost-effective way for students to communicate where they already have broadband at home.

In many instances, tutors have delivered and continue to deliver classes via WhatsApp, splitting the content into bite-sized portions focused on particular learning aims and mixed media, following up with either a face-to-face class or telephone/video call.

Email: Where students are competent in using email, communication and learning can be delivered via this medium, generally followed by a synchronistic learning session via phone or video call. Delivery of some QQI courses continued via email where students were competent. A number of students groups are also using google classroom with learners, and the wider application of Office 365 is becoming apparent as tutors themselves continue to explore more platforms for delivery.

⁵<http://www.coolockals.ie/wp-content/uploads/CDETB-AES-Ballyfermot-Magazine-March-2020-4-1.pdf>

Web Content: Sample CDETb Website – Coolock Darndale ALS

The www.CoolockALS.ie website was developed in 2018 to showcase students' writing and visual work. The majority of students have smart phones and the website is, first and foremost, smartphone responsive. During and since lockdown, the site has been made more accessible by including audio and interactive exercises on all written pieces, where students can test their skills with immediate response and results. Some students working on a variety of digital literacy skills have also created their own audio to go with the individual pieces of writing they have authored, see (for example) Ciaran's piece [here](#) .

When centres closed in March 2020, a '**Learn Here**' section was developed where tutors could share resources and classes. One excellent example of a learning resource created for students during lockdown is the [History Hub](#) which continues to be used and developed. The mixture of text, audio, and visual content in the design of lessons means that students from a broad variety of abilities can engage with asynchronistic learning, in their own time, at their own pace. A simple link is messaged to the students by WhatsApp, email, or text message, and with no login required for access, materials can be easily engaged with, provided internet and a device is available.

Another lesson developed during lockdown is [A day out in Dublin](#) for entry level English language students, and primarily designed to be viewed on mobile phone. Tutors have continued to deliver this type of lesson at this level via WhatsApp in advance of the physical class. The unforeseen benefits of this for students include a reduction in anxiety on encountering material in the classroom, increased access to personal phones for students who would not traditionally have had this, and increased autonomy and confidence in directing own learning.

The development of www.CoolockALS.ie has proven invaluable in providing space for students to explore how they engage with learning outside of the classroom setting. Students have control over how and when they access and respond to material. This encourages greater self-direction in learning and empowers the student. In many cases, students are engaging with content that is student-generated and all materials are contextual to the students' experience.

There is a real sense of play and collaboration in the engagement that takes place. Opinion and expression are encouraged. Skills are built without pressure for

certification, learning is embedded and takes place in real life. Students with widely mixed literacy and digital literacy levels can all participate fully. Materials can be easily shared via social media channels, providing safe and familiar content for students to explore when learning about these platforms. Resources are freely available for use by any learners or tutors anywhere.

In other areas of CDETB's Adult Literacy Service, tutors have found similar ways to create and share materials, for example, Crumlin AES has established a YouTube channel from which links can be shared with students and to social media channels, see sample here on [Crumlin You Tube](#)

Zoom: As with the rest of the world, the CDETB Adult Literacy Services have been running some classes over Zoom and have been providing remote access to the classroom to isolating students via Zoom. It has been both fun and enlightening to see a student attend and fully participate in class from the screen of a laptop, with other classmates attending in person. Where there are too many students in a group to fit with Covid-19 social distancing guidelines, students have been taking turns to attend in person or remotely so that class remains accessible to everyone. Zoom has given the AES the opportunity to continue to deliver literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes to learners, who have the devices and wifi access, during closures.

Google Classroom: For tutors and students who had familiarised themselves with google classroom, some QQI IT courses were facilitated via this platform, and continued and were successfully completed during the closure.

Critical Literacy

In the current era of social media, misinformation and 'fake news', the ability to analyse and critique the world around us and make informed choices is hugely important. In addition to discerning the veracity of the material we read, we are also producers of news. Critical Literacy considers both of those perspectives in the context of social media. In the current pandemic, it is more important than ever to understand science in the media in order to counter misinformation and disinformation. However, critical literacy is about more than the news; being able to critically examine the stories we read, the art we look at, the films we watch,

to notice who speaks and who is spoken about, can help us to understand how narratives are created, and to recognise unconscious bias. It can show how people are marginalised and stimulate discussion about marginalisation.

In the current climate, we in CDETB recognise the important role of embedding critical thinking in the learning process; therefore, CDETB Adult Literacy Organisers are in the process of designing comprehensive professional development training in critical literacy. The course aims to equip tutors both to embed critical thinking in their teaching and to work on stand-alone critical literacy lessons with their students. It will include sessions on critical literacy in the digital sphere, understanding science in the media and understanding unconscious bias and how it affects minority groups.

Literacy as an Equality Issue

The CDETB ALS strives to promote equality in numerous ways, in particular adhering to policy and legislation. Our aim is to foster a diverse environment and ensure the inclusion of all people on an equal basis. The CDETB ALS provides flexible education programmes at levels 1-5 (with majority of delivery being in the 2-3 level range) to ensure the inclusion of all adult learners and the diverse learning opportunities they require.

ETBI published guidelines (2018)⁶ on the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in Adult Literacy Services. CDETB Adult Literacy Services are committed to inclusive provision and practice based on those principles and on values of equality and respect for human diversity. Our recent uptake on UDL CPD reflects commitment to inclusion.

New Directions Policy (2012)⁷, outlines 12 key supports for people with disabilities. It envisages that all the supports available in communities will be mobilised so that people have the widest possible choices and options about how they live their

⁶ https://www.etbi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/guidelines_on_the_inclusion_of_people_with_intellectual_disabilities_in_adult_literacy_services.pdf

⁷ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/disability/newdirections2012.pdf>

lives and how they spend their time. This policy outlines that there should be a move away from “special” services for people with disabilities and that individuals should be included in mainstream services in the heart of the community. The CDETB AES offers education options to bridge this gap, by ensuring that people with disabilities are included, valued and active participants amongst our diverse population of students. We are engaging with people in line with this policy across the 12 key supports in many ways, but in particular in line with support number 4: Accessing education and formal learning.⁸

Sample project: *The Oireachtas Work and Learn Programme*

The CDETB Adult Literacy Service is proud to be the education partner for the Work and Learn Programme for adults with intellectual disabilities in the houses of the Oireachtas. This is the first programme of its kind in the world. Ten trainees are chosen to join a ten-month work experience programme in government buildings. The trainees work in three different government departments during the programme. The CDETB Adult Literacy Service works with all relevant stakeholders to develop and deliver an education programme to respond to the learning needs of the trainees, and ensure that they have the relevant literacy and numeracy skills to successfully participate in their work experience programme. This programme is an example of how the CDETB has developed a model of best practice for workplace learning for people with disabilities.

Physical access to buildings remains an issue in Ireland. The CDETB is committed to make improvements to our physical environments that will enhance accessibility and independence for people with disabilities. We are utilising our community links and online resources to promote access to courses but as of yet, they still do not give equal access to full learner experience for people with disabilities. Infrastructure that would improve physical accessibility in our services would be:

- The widening of doors
- Electronic doors

⁸ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/newdirections/alignment-of-the-new-directions-12-supports-with-the-interim-standards.pdf>

- Accessible toilets
- Changing places
- Accessible pathways
- Safe alternative to steps e.g., ramps/lifts etc.

The CDETБ strives to promote equality across the board and the AES caters for learners who are faced by disadvantages, as outlined by the Aontas discussion paper on mitigating educational disadvantage (2020)⁹, including but not limited to:

- Learners with disabilities
- Learners from the Traveller and Roma communities
- Home carers
- Women
- Learners in Direct Provision and homeless shelters
- Learners with literacy, numeracy and basic digital literacy needs
- Adults with lower-level qualifications
- Individuals in receipt of social welfare
- First-time mature students

Promotion of equality is evident in the community partnerships that we have built and maintain: Home School Liaisons, Intreo, Community Employment Schemes, Drug Services, Tusla, Disability Services, HSE, Job Centres, Family Resource Centres, Community Education Centres, Homeless Services, Parish Centres, Traveller Resource Centres, Special CE Schemes, Training Centres, Pavee Point, Exchange House, Direct Provision Centres, Spirasi, Grant-Aided Centres, Women's Refuges, Ruhama, Ex-offender projects, Mental Health Services, Drug Courts, After-Care Services, SIPTU, YESS Project, Women's Projects, Men's Sheds, Active Age Groups, Family Support Services, Libraries, Third-Level Colleges, Further Education Colleges and Services for Survivors of Institutional Abuse.

⁹ <https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/AONTAS-Research/MED%20Educational%20Equity%20and%20Learner%20Cohorts.pdf>

Challenges

The CDETБ is ideally placed to deliver on the literacy, numeracy and digital skills strategy as it is embedded in local community facilities and schools and also have long-standing working relationships with local statutory agencies. As can be seen from the above examples, we are currently delivering on a vast array of programmes, meeting targeted learners' needs. Our staff are highly qualified and professional and the new 10-year strategy should recognise this professional status and fund it accordingly. Highly-qualified, dedicated staff expect particular working terms and conditions, and staff retention can be challenging without this. In order to enhance delivery, we would need an improved staffing structure. We are currently over-reliant on part-time teacher hours for delivery of our programme and would benefit immensely from dedicated resource and outreach workers. Our buildings, in some cases, need to be upgraded to give students a proper 'college' experience (use of a library/student study room, canteen etc.) and could also, in some cases, be more disability-friendly. The recent laptop loan scheme has been of huge benefit to learners, and broadening such schemes will go a long way to bridging the digital divide experienced by some of our learners. The Adult Literacy Services are a key provider of digital literacy skills, but increased resourcing is required to ensure that appropriate platforms, materials and content are available to tutors and students. The CDETБ has recently rolled out a comprehensive CPD programme and adult education tutor uptake on these offerings reflects the dedication and commitment adult education staff have to the service we provide.

Response to questionnaire

Theme 1: Different meanings of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

Question 1.1

Which aspects of **literacy** should the Adult Literacy Numeracy and Digital Strategy emphasise most?

- Promote ETB literacy services, making them visible as an adult friendly place to learn
- Create confidence to approach literacy services to address literacy difficulties by a national information campaign destigmatising literacy difficulties
- Promote critical literacy to enhance citizenship and enable informed choices
- Promote learning for everyday life
- Advertise existing opportunities to learn at the level the individual wishes to engage at
- Recognise that literacy difficulties are broad ranging and not limited to early school leavers
- Emphasise the range of needs encompassed under the term 'literacy' so that both beginner literacy learners and highly qualified learners who lack digital skills (for example), both realise that the AES is a service to meet their needs
- Invest in expanding the work of literacy services integrating supports from levels 4-6 in FET Colleges

Question 1.2

Which aspects of **numeracy** should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy emphasise most?

- Promote ETB literacy services as an adult friendly place to learn numeracy skills
- Promote 'Everyday Maths' classes available in ETB literacy services, focussing on the critical numeracy skills individuals need:

- Financial literacy – managing money, shopping, budgeting, saving, understanding credit agreements
- Understanding Measurements – time, distance, metric measures, weights and measures related to health literacy
- Using fractions & percentages for everyday life, or as a foundation to access certified maths programmes
- Support and expand the 'Access Maths' programmes run by the CDETБ, preparing individuals to succeed in apprenticeships, college and the workplace
- Promote numeracy awareness - there is a general lack of awareness that people struggle at foundation maths which affects everyday activities
- There is less stigma attached to saying "I'm no good at maths", use this is an opportunity to promote maths and numeracy skills as useful for everyday adult lives
- Promote the availability of support for maths skills, within the Adult Literacy Services, for learners in tertiary education programmes
- Promote maths classes for enjoyment for those who have an inclination towards, and interest in, maths

Question 1.3

Which aspects of **digital literacy** should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy emphasise most?

- Promote the idea that Digital Literacy is a necessary skill for communications, for informed social engagement and citizenship and a necessary skill to access public services and information
- It is important that courses offered promote critical skills, to reflect on bias and misinformation online

- Promote awareness that ETB Adult Literacy Services are currently delivering digital literacy courses, and are ideally placed to address the digital needs of adult learners
- Promote ETB Adult Literacy Services as having vast experience in delivering digital literacy programmes addressing the needs of learners, including accredited and unaccredited learning on a range of devices; smartphones, desktops, laptops and tablets

Question 1.4

Which aspects of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, as a whole, should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy emphasise most?

- Unmet literacy needs exclude us socially, educationally and economically, this has been more visible during the pandemic
- Taking steps to improve literacy/numeracy/digitals skills will have an immediate impact on confidence
- Improved confidence will encourage increased engagement and learning
- Promote improving these skills as part of Lifelong Learning
- Advertise clear progression routes and benefits of same - Progression routes from literacy courses into higher level certified courses and/or progression routes into employment

Theme 2: Improving awareness and access to information and supports

Description:

It can be daunting for a person to decide to take that first step to seek assistance with reading, writing, maths or technology. In some cases, this can be due to perceived stigma, or embarrassment, which can prevent some people from seeking information, help and support.

We would like to know your views on how we can make it easier for people to take the first step and to seek information, help and support.

Question 2.1

In your view, what are the main obstacles that prevent or delay adults from seeking help, information or support for literacy, numeracy or digital literacy?

- Past negative learning experiences
- Lack of confidence, embarrassment, fear, often intimidated by entering buildings to seek help
- Not knowing where or how to get help – statutory bodies have an obligation to be informed and engage with the ETB AES
- Time, work commitments, family commitments (carers, childcare barriers)
- Afraid they may be cut off from social protection payments
- Publicity means/materials are not reaching all people who could benefit from the support
- National campaigns are not translating in to local referrals, ring-fenced funding for targeted local campaigns - Word of mouth and local interagency work directly transfers into referrals
- Lack of public awareness of literacy, numeracy or digital literacy needs
- The negative associations attached to the term literacy needs to be addressed to destigmatise talking about and addressing needs
- Within government and public organisations there is a lack of knowledge, and sometimes sensitivity, to the literacy, numeracy or digital literacy needs of clients/patients/participants
- Awareness training for frontline public service staff is required

Question 2.2

In your view what works best to encourage adults to take the first step to build their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy?

- Good relationships between local Adult Literacy Services and referral agencies such as DEASP, LES and partnerships
- Building up relationships with people and being known to people in the community
- Incorporating literacy into other classes, such as cookery or art, and integrating literacy/numeracy/digital skills
- Hearing other local learners' stories, word of mouth is often quoted
- Ease of access, reaching out and meeting the people in their own environment, for example in community centres, their children's schools and their workplace
- A safe space to learn, acknowledging they are not alone and that they are with others in the same situation
- Meeting the student where they are at - meeting their real-life needs at a time and environment that works for them, with equipment and tools that are practical to them, working at their level and pace, in a 1:1 or group setting that best suits the individual
- Handing control and direction for their learning over to the adult is key to respect, autonomy and engagement
- Adults return to learning with a lifetime of experience, that should be used as the platform from which to launch their learning journey
- Make learning attainable and in line with the motivation and needs of the student
- Sufficient staffing and resourcing of Adult Literacy Services

Question 2.3

In your view, how should adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy be encouraged, developed and promoted during the 10-year strategy?

- Promote ETB spaces as a safe place to learn, acknowledging individuals are not alone and that they are with others in the same situation
- Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Literacy Awareness Training should be delivered by local ETB Adult Literacy Services to community and statutory partners
- Fund and resource local ETB Adult Literacy Services to promote and outreach in the community
- Provide financial support to local agencies and businesses to provide learning opportunities for employees
- Incorporate skills into other classes, e.g., cookery or art and integrating literacy/numeracy/digital skills
- Continue building up relationships between key people in the local community and the local ETB, this is an essential referral pathway
- Broader national and local campaigning: TV ads, radio, visual posters and leaflets, information events, community networking, testimonials, word of mouth, targeting specific groups to ensure they are aware of the services
Inclusion of 'literacy' storylines in soap operas, media success stories, a celebrity ambassador
- The current national helpline number with NALA does not transfer into referrals¹⁰, this method needs to be reviewed to ascertain how many calls are made to the helpline and how many transfer into referrals to ETBs in order to improve the referral pathway
- Increased non-teaching staffing required for Adult Literacy Services, administration and resource workers
- Targeted programmes in collaboration with community partners

¹⁰ Two learners were identified as referred from NALA to the CDETB in the Sep-Dec 2020 term

Question 2.4

What practical steps need to be taken to ensure more adults are aware of the available supports and services for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy?

- The publication of a formalised strategy with a prominent associated advertising campaign acknowledging how common the problem is, and efforts to destigmatise
- Redefining “literacy” as an inherently positive term
- ETBs need funding to access to skilled multimedia professionals to make professional videos and well designed, accessible publications alongside training in publicity/marketing for services
- Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy **Awareness Training** provided locally by ETB Adult Literacy Services for community & statutory bodies
- Making public and frontline services aware of referral routes and giving them information on learning options available

Question 2.5

What practical steps could be taken to ensure more adults avail of services and supports for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy?

- Establish protocols for interagency work
- Replicate successful existing protocols such as the Libraries & ETB protocol
- Sustained outreach work throughout the year needs resourcing
- Create joint projects with community groups or organisations (such as the GAA)
- Ensure that classes are available at weekends and in the evening time
- Prioritise family learning for parents and grandparents in primary and secondary schools, encourage a protocol between schools and Adult Literacy Services
- Provision of adequate resources to include spaces for provision
- Promote ETB Guidance staff as a point of contact and voice in the community, increase staffing to support extra workload

Question 2.6

Let us know any other views you may have about improving awareness of services and supports for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

- There is a very strong professional 'national advertising/PR' campaign, but this needs to be replicated at local level to elicit referrals
- Adult Literacy Organisers manage the provision of digital literacy, numeracy and literacy at a local level and need access to marketing and PR services in order to improve awareness of local services.
- Managing websites, social media presences, designing posters, developing contact with local media is time consuming and the Adult Literacy Organisers role is exceptionally stretched
- Funding and resourcing from the national literacy promotion budget should be made available at a local level to ease the burden on the ALO and concurrently drive up local referrals

Theme 3: Bridging the digital divide

Description

The digital divide is the gap between 'the haves and the have-nots' in an increasingly technology-dependent society. As more aspects of society become dependent on digital resources (digital resources are digital devices and services such as internet connectivity), there is pressure on individuals to have these resources and be able to use them.

Many people in Ireland have excellent digital skills but nearly half of the Irish population score at or below the most basic level of Digital Literacy. The Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy needs to promote and support adult literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and 'digital inclusion' to close this gap.

Question 3.1

In your view, how does the digital divide impact on individuals and communities, particularly those with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs?

- Digital literacy has become the norm in everyday life and this impacts by excluding those individuals without these skills from participating in everyday activities - Using automatic checkouts in shops, purchasing anything online, banking, paying bills
- During the pandemic, digital literacy/literacy and numeracy are relied on even more for communicating with others, filling out forms, buying everyday items, click and collect, social media - further compounding exclusion and isolation
- It creates a two-tier system for the interactions of the public with both state and commercial services and gives an advantage to those individuals and groups who are comfortable with automated services, e.g., banking, welfare, delivery of shopping for older members of the public, and general digital communication
- The pandemic of Covid-19 has added isolation to the already negative impact of low literacy, many community members feel overwhelmed by technology and may also not have Wi-Fi or home computers or tablets

- The expense of Wi-Fi in a home is not always viable for disadvantaged communities
- For older people a lack of digital skills can negatively impact independence as so much of modern life is accessed online. Health appointments, holidays and even shopping discounts are often more easily available to the online customer

Question 3.2

What steps should be taken to help bridge the digital divide in Ireland?

- Roll out reliable, affordable national broadband
- Access to affordable internet (consider an internet pass, akin to a bus pass and associated criteria)
- Widespread promotion around easy to access services, e.g., video calling, smart phones, safety on the internet (to promote trust in services)
- Promotion of the provision of these classes and services within ETBs
- Promoting a gentle introduction to technology that offers support and commits to practical help in a familiar setting with small numbers is one that can then be used as the first step towards building digital literacy
- Short courses designed to meet specific needs in the following:
 - Getting online with an email address
 - Using online forms or accessing information online (gov.ie websites/intreo/vacancies/hse.ie etc)
 - Using online learning and communication platforms – zoom
 - Using social media safely/Internet etiquette/bias and misinformation
 - Using MS Office suite
 - Smart phone, using apps in particular
- Bespoke learning opportunities
- Reassure learners that the feeling of being overwhelmed and alienated when they are confronted with something new and complex can always be overcome with support
- This support needs to be consistent and appropriate to the individual or community

- Basic technology programmes which offer support for daily practical digital skills are the foundation to encourage adults to make the leap into the digital world
- When an individual feels they can do something practical that they could not do yesterday they feel more confident and able to take risks, encourage that first step

Question 3.3

Please provide details of any innovative projects you are aware of, that aim to bridge the digital divide.

- ETB Classes specifically for using your own smartphone or laptop are available at all CDETb Adult Literacy Services
- Decoding Dyslexia – a programme specifically for adults with dyslexia working with technology
- The CDETb has just rolled out a comprehensive CPD initiative with explicit focus on technology
- Staff are undergoing UDL badge qualifications, enhancing the already Themed Learning Approach the services offer
- Age action responded to the needs of the elderly during Covid 19 and launched their Get Started Kit. This can be posted out to elderly people to guide them in a step-to-step way to basic digital connection. They also collaborated with ChangeX and invited community members with digital skills to register with them to act as Digital Champions who would then support elderly people to use the Get Started Kits. The ETBs could collaborate with community partners to replicate.

Theme 4 - Priorities and actions

Description

When complete, the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy will set out the priorities for Ireland over the next 10 years and the actions we need to take to achieve these.

We need to ensure that we create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society.

We want to hear about your ideas on what priorities the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Strategy should focus on and the types of actions you think should be taken during the strategy.

Question 4.1

In your view, what specific actions should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy contain to encourage, develop and promote adult literacy?

- Encourage interagency protocols that ensures people are encouraged to address unmet literacy needs and are not disadvantaged while they are participating in literacy learning programmes
- Compensate small businesses who provide time/space for learners to gain qualifications and improve literacy/numeracy/digital skills
- Encourage employees to see these skills as transferable to the workplace
- Strong campaign to destigmatise asking for help, show that the Adult Education Service is also open to all who would like to improve their maths and ICT skills, even if they do not have reading and writing difficulties
- Promote RPL, recognising all the skills an adult already has on returning to education

Question 4.2

In your view, what specific actions should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy contain to encourage, develop and promote **numeracy** for adults?

- Highlight and promote numeracy separately including need for numeracy skills in everyday activities, education and work
- Strong campaign to destigmatise asking for help, show that the Adult Education Service is open to all who would like to improve their maths skills even if they do not have reading and writing difficulties
- Promote that the Adult Literacy Services have a vast array of maths programmes, from everyday basic numeracy to QQI qualifications for personal interest and progression to apprenticeships and further and higher education

Question 4.3

In your view, what specific actions should the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy contain to encourage, develop and promote **digital literacy** for adults?

- Strongly promote digital skills for workplace and for life
- Strong campaign to destigmatise asking for help, show that the Adult Education Service is open to all who would like to improve their ICT skills even if they do not have reading and writing difficulties
- Promotion of all digital support services/classes available in local area
- Promotion of smartphone support classes to encourage engagement
- 'One click wonder' – all public service online applications should be easily accessible and not have a complex download processes

Question 4.4

How can we create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society?

- By creating positive dialogue around all literacies, one that is not just highlighted during one week in September, but throughout the year
- By actively working to destigmatise literacy difficulties, taking the weight of 'blame' off the individual
- By funding research and development in the area
- By funding a staffing structure to support the expertise the ETB AES has to offer
- By advertising short "step up" interventions such as access programmes
- By ensuring employers see a benefit to workplace learning
- By ensuring learners are not financially disadvantaged by taking up a course

Question 4.5

In your view, what specific approaches should be put in place to meet the needs of certain groups?

These groups could include:

- Adults who face additional barriers related to disability and the lack of accessible content or assistive technology
 - Adults who are digitally excluded
 - Adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs
-
- UDL approach to including assistive technology in teaching and learning at all levels
 - Working with local library services
 - High visibility of support services available across all agencies, every public service should have details of local literacy services
 - Promote the innovative and creative approaches to teaching and learning used by Adult Literacy Services
 - Provide meaningful and person/group-centred materials and resources

- Provide goal orientated opportunities and a step-by-step breakdown to achieve goals
- Promote guidance services as a free, confidential space to explore options
- Working in partnership with disability support services
- Working in partnership with minority advocacy groups

Question 4.6

In your view, what outreach strategies work best to engage adults and communities in need of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy support?

Currently the CDETB Adult Education Service has literacy tutors meeting adult students in a wide range of contexts including community centres, homelessness services, drug rehabilitation services, primary schools, disability services and family resource centres. This outreach strategy is very effective because it allows the literacy service to encounter people in familiar and comforting surroundings.

This provision can be further enhanced by the following:

- Substantial increase in staffing of ETB Adult Literacy Services, resource workers, educational ICT technicians and administration to promote and respond to local area needs
- Outreach is dependent on the visibility and presence of literacy staff in the local area to respond to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs as they arise
- Increased protocol agreements between statutory & local community agencies

Question 4.7

In your view, what approaches to interagency partnerships work best when meeting the needs of adults and communities in greatest need of literacy, numeracy or digital literacy supports?

Interagency collaborative approaches need time and care. Agencies need to get to know and to trust in each other. An awareness that we are all working towards the same end goals, learner or client needs, is essential. Key strategies include:

- Local interagency fora, where roles and responsibilities of local services are clear and where discussion and planning can take place
- Prioritise literacy as a key objective to interagency work and recognise that there is no “quick fix” for people with unmet literacy needs
- Literacy awareness training
- Established protocols written into strategic plans and role descriptions, we are currently over-reliant on the goodwill and good relationships of particular individuals within agencies, if they move on we must build new relationships again
- A top down national approach whereby all public frontline staff have knowledge of referral pathways and agencies

Question 4.8

Please provide details of any innovative practices you are aware of that encourage and promote Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy.

- Student Voice initiatives in both written and oral productions of students telling their own stories
- Access programmes for apprenticeship and college access – maths, science, IT English for academic purposes and writing skills
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) with homeless service users
- Recognition of Prior Learning with the Defence Forces
- Targeted interagency work (New Horizons)

- Targeted Dyslexia programmes (Decoding Dyslexia)
- Successful Family Literacy programmes with local schools and parent and toddler groups
- Programmes integrating literacy with other topics such as cookery or art
- Study Skills for Carpentry, Joinery and Plumbing Apprentices Handbook

Theme 5: Measuring success

Description

We will need to know if we have achieved the priorities and actions of the strategy. In other words, we need to know what success will look like and how to measure it.

We would like to know how you think we should measure and track our progress towards the aims of the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy.

Question 5.1

How will we know if we have done a good job in reaching the ambition where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society?

- Literacy, numeracy and digital competency rates will increase if we are successful, staged measurement throughout the ten years, but sampled rather than national
- Comprehensive review at 5 and 10 years
- Government should commission an up-to-date report similar to PIACC, using materials from an Irish context, we are still operating on the figures from that report
- Evidence of the wider benefits of learning should be collated, e.g., increased social participation, increased civic engagement
- Request qualitative data from the frontline ALS staff, PLSS will capture statistics but only qualitative data will reflect full participation in society

Question 5.2

Please share your thoughts on ways you think we should measure and track our progress towards the aims of the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy.

- An outcomes approach (learners achieving personal goals), alongside and outputs approach (PLSS related data)

- Gather qualitative as well as quantitative data
- Provide ETBs with budgets and personnel to gather qualitative data
- A recognition that lateral learning is progress, not just vertical
- With individual people, useful tracking methods would include “distance travelled” tools, a tracking tool that includes wider competences including confidence, independence, setting, transfer of skills from one context to another
- On a societal level, there should be a measurable increase in civic engagement and use of government digital facilities by people who have had previous unmet literacy needs

Question 5.3

Please provide any other suggested actions that you believe are needed to measure success in achieving the priorities and actions of the strategy.

- We need to look at the wider benefits of learning, which include improved social engagement and better health outcomes¹¹
- Measurements that focus on outcomes such as certification and increased human capital will miss important benefits of learning
- Understanding, appreciating and observing process is important, this and the wider benefits of learning are occluded if all we use are the metrics of outcomes to evaluate progress

Final Comments

If you have any other comments or views on the development of the new 10-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy please provide these below.

- While we have children leaving school with unmet literacy needs, we will continue to be a sticking plaster over a wound. Working with adults now

¹¹ Recommended by Desjardins and Fuller in Desjardins, R., & Fuller, T. (2007). Understanding the social outcomes of learning. California: eScholarship.org

who need support with acquiring literacies is, of course, hugely important, but unless the necessary supports are in place to ensure that teenagers are not leaving school with unmet literacy needs, we risk being at a similar point in ten years' time. Avoiding this will require an inter-departmental approach and a recognition that poverty, family homelessness, and the under-resourcing of agencies working with vulnerable groups and individuals in socio-economically disadvantaged areas contribute to poor educational outcomes and need to be tackled urgently

- It is important to consider the impact of migration and social change and how that will develop over the next 10 years. Migrants are arriving in Ireland who are pre-literate i.e., no written form in their spoken language, there is an increased need for targeted ESOL literacy programs in all communities
- The strategy should address barriers that people have to overcome while attending literacy services, for example, access to childcare for young Traveller women who have children
- A specific advocacy service within the Adult Education Service would be beneficial to help people overcome barriers



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learning works

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