

Welcome to the third newsletter from the Learner Supports and Engagement Service.

We are a little late getting this issue of the newsletter to you as we wanted to include coverage of our first in-person event which took place on 29 May, in Cathal Brugha FET College, a networking and information sharing seminar for practitioners and some partners from external agencies.

The genesis of the event goes back to the PLN for Support Teachers in FET Colleges and in particular to a conversation between Lorraine and Carrie Archer back in January, which identified the need to ensure that all practitioners and external agencies were fully aware of the learner supports and the scope of provision available across City of Dublin ETB FET centres.



Once Cathal Brugha FET College principal, Patricia O'Keeffe, kindly agreed to make a venue available, Garreth took the lead role in organising the event.

At the early planning stage, we thought if we managed to get 40 participants this would be a very respectable turn out, especially given that the seminar would be taking place in the final week of the academic year. In the end, we were obliged to set a limit of 70 due to the size of the venue and as a result, we unfortunately had to disappoint several late applicants. Obviously, we regretted having to say no to anybody but on a positive side, the demand shows that there is a real appetite for such events among practitioners involved in co-ordinating and delivering learner supports. We expect to hold the next one before the end of the calendar year.

LEARNER SUPPORTS AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE

Coincidentally, but appropriately, the first three speakers at the seminar looked at the role of guidance counsellors in different FET settings; appropriately because guidance counselling is our main focus in this issue. We have contributions from across FET with the exception of the Prison Education Service, an omission we promise to make good on in a future special issue looking at supports available to learners in prison education centres.

Some participants at Monday's seminar were kind enough to express their appreciation of the newsletter; a few others let us know they hadn't received either of the two issues to date. We will continue to work on that but in the meantime if you have a colleague who hasn't received a copy, please do share yours.

We are taking a short break over the summer months to recalibrate and plan and will be back with issue four in September so in the meanwhile have a lovely summer from everybody in the Learner Supports and Engagement Service.

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Editor: John Poole

Layout: Adam Breen

News in Brief

Prize time in Cabra Youthreach

In February, to mark International Mother Language Day, we ran our first competition – Share Your Words - when we invited learners across FET to submit a text in their mother language and tell us why it was important to them.

This month we finally had the opportunity to meet two of the three winners, Rohid Samedi and Scott Higgins, who are both learners in Cabra Youthreach. On the morning, we visited the centre to present their gift vouchers, the cafeteria was fabulously decorated from the Mad Hatter's Tea Party and Eid celebrations of the week before, a fittingly festive setting.

When we arrived, Rohid was busy in the kitchen preparing the morning's breakfast under the benign (but watchful!) eye of chef/nutritionist Carol Curran. On the menu was bolani – crispy golden flatbreads filled with a spicy potato, green pepper and coriander stuffing - a delicious dish from Rohid's native Afghanistan, which we were delighted to sample after the presentation.



Scott was learning about Internet security in his computer class when we arrived. He chose the lyrics of James Brown's 'The Boss' as the words that meant something special to him (it's his MMA hero, Dustin Poirier's entrance song). Scott won't exactly have "money to burn" with his gift voucher, but we hope he's enjoyed spending it!

[Listen to Rohid's and Scott's choices on the Padlet.](#)

News in Brief

News just in!

Delivering on City of Dublin ETB's core belief that every person has a right to access education and training opportunities that will enable them to achieve their full potential, Director of FET Blake Hodgkinson announced on Monday that fees for PLC have been reduced to €50 for the 2023-4 academic year! This will undoubtedly improve access, inclusion and education pathways for current and prospective learners.



Blake had some welcome news at the interval

Learner Support Networking and Information Sharing Seminar

On May 29, five months after our launch, we had our first in-person event – the Learner Supports Networking and Information Sharing Seminar- in Cathal Brugha FET College; the City of Dublin ETB's newest centre hosting the City of Dublin ETB's newest service!

Judging by the atmosphere in the room on the morning and the chat over lunch at the end (thank you Youthreach Transition Centre for catering so well!), the opportunity to hear what is going on across the organisation in terms of learner supports, and to meet with fellow practitioners from different centres was much appreciated by the attendees, of whom there were over 70.



Sneha and John get ready to welcome the participants

After the initial welcome from FET Director Blake Hodgkinson, and an introduction to the LSE Service from Lorraine, we had a series of quick-fire presentations:

- The Adult Education Guidance Service (Fiona Clarke, AEGS North & South Inner City and Michelle Morrissey, AEGS Ballymun)
- FET College Guidance Supports: Inchicore College (Aideen Lyster, Guidance Counsellor, ICFE)
- FET College Learning Supports: Coláiste Íde CFE (Sindy Fitzpatrick, Learning Supports Co-ordinator & Patricia Lynch, Student Supports and Retention Officer)
- Adult Education Service: Learning Supports in the AES (Marie Reilly, Adult Literacy Organiser, Dublin South Central)

Learner Support Networking and Information Sharing Seminar

Following a comfort break (thank you Mary for saving the day when the Burco boiler acted up!) we heard from Dr. T. Stephen O'Neill, Chief Psychologist with the Psychological Support Service and Ronan Gilmurray, Manager Disability Support Service, National Learning Network.

Between them, our eight presenters shared a wealth of valuable information and experience, far too much to process in one morning, as attested by the subsequent feedback but the slides of all the presentations are on Padlet which you can access [here](#).

Seminar Padlet Link



Garreth giving feedback from Table 1 to Lorraine

Learner Support Networking and Information Sharing Seminar

The morning's work finished with a roundtable using the Focussed Conversation Method designed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs in which the facilitators at our ten tables guided a discussion of the mornings proceedings from Objective to Reflective to Interpretive to Decisional (ORID). For the decisional, we asked participants to tell us who we should invite the next time. Job done! We now have a very interesting list of speakers for the next event which we hope will happen early in the new academic year.



Ronan Gilmurray from the Disability Support Service

As it was our first event we were determined that it would be as neurodiverse-friendly and accessible as we could make it by including a quiet room, having fidget toys available and issuing slides to participants in advance. Among our guests were Katie Quinn and Finbarr Horgan from As I Am. We hope we passed muster but will be happy to hear how we can improve in this respect for future events.

Learner Support Networking and Information Sharing Seminar

We also engaged the services of illustrator and graphic harvester Fintan Taite (@fintantaite on Instagram, @fintdoodles on Twitter) to record the morning's happenings. Fintan produced a series of wonderful depictions of the speakers and the issues they raised. For many of us it was the first time witnessing a graphic harvester in action. You can view Fintan's illustrations below or check them out on the Padlet link on Page 6.



The Learner Survey 2022/2023



Sneha Sarcar

A Huge Response!

The annual learner survey officially closed for submissions on 21 April. We are pleased to report that 2,144 learners participated - a stunning increase of 279% on the 2021-2022 survey.

A big thank you to the staff across centres who encouraged, cajoled, and facilitated their learners to make the time to make themselves heard.

An even bigger thank you to the learners who participated. While we worked hard to make the language of the survey accessible to all, we know some learners will have had to make a big effort to complete it. Finally, a special shoutout to Rathmines College who got the Students Council involved and gave out Easter eggs to all who contributed. An eggs-ellent approach that paid off with a total response rate of 20 %. Well done all!



191 responses from Rathmines College

Some striking initial results!

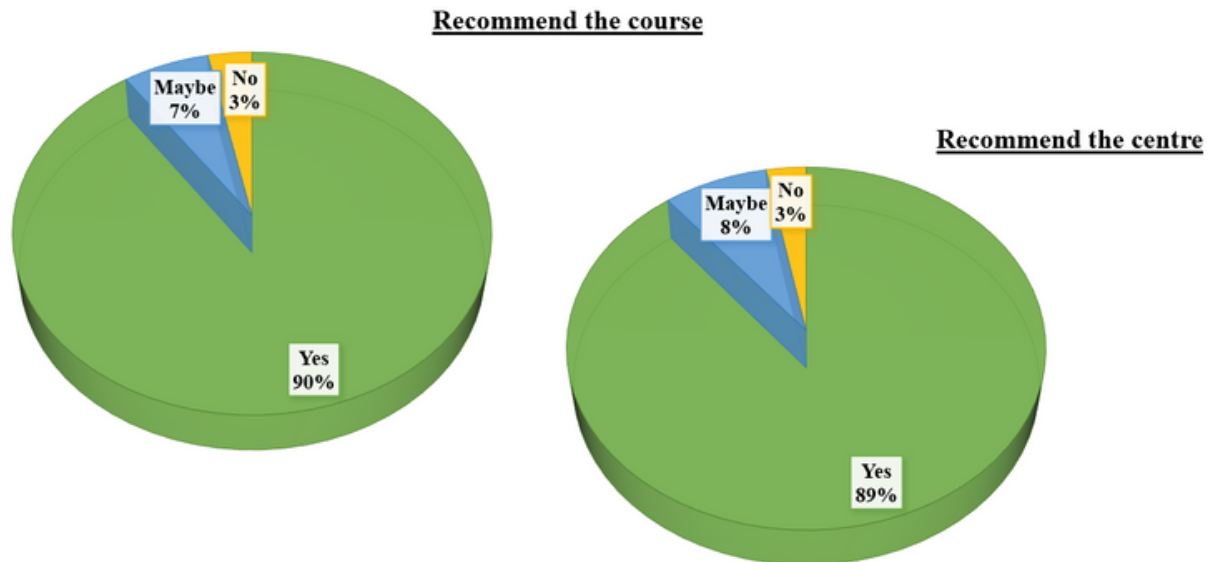
Our learners speak 85 languages and in a vivid reflection of the times in which we live, Ukrainian was the third most frequently mentioned language, after English and Irish. From the perspective of the diversity in our learner demographic, Asian was the third highest ethnicity after White Irish and Other White though this was a question that caused some confusion with learners confusing ethnicity and nationality*



The 85 languages our learners speak

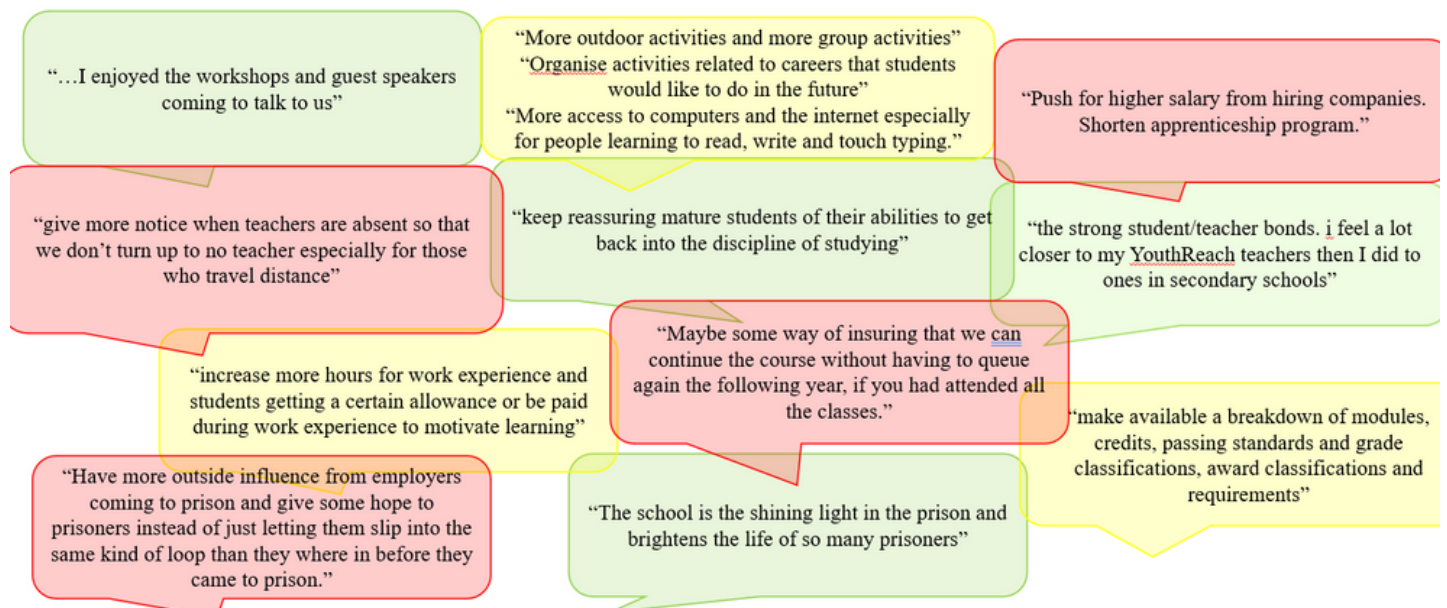
The Learner Survey 2022/2023

The great majority of our learners are enrolled in full-time courses (86%), while 12% are part-time and 2% are enrolled in Craft Apprenticeships. Happily, a huge majority would recommend both their course and their centre,



Much more to come.

Over the course of this month (June), we will be circulating the thematic analysis of the over-arching survey findings, based on cumulative responses from all centres. It promises to make for interesting reading. The first report is scheduled to be shared by mid June.



Green: positive
Yellow: suggestions
Red: critical feedback

*The results this year show a need to refine the wording for questions on ethnicity and languages spoken to get a more accurate picture.

Guidance Counselling in FET

The City of Dublin ETB employs qualified Guidance Counsellors across the various FET services- Adult Education, FET Colleges, Prison Education Services and Youthreach. In this issue, practitioners from the different services provide insights into the work of guidance counselling, from the values that underpin it, to the day-to-day practicalities.



Fiona Clarke, AEGS North and South Inner City and Michelle Morrissey, AEGS Ballymun presenting at the seminar

Niki Gilsenan describes her role as an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor in the AES in Crumlin on while Karen Granville, Guidance Counsellor in the AES in Finglas gives us a peek at a typical day in her diary. Una Mulqueen, Guidance Advocate for the City of Dublin ETB Youthreach tells us about the learners she works with, their needs and how she supports them and Aideen Lyster writes about her role as Guidance Counsellor in Inchicore College of FE.

While each service is tailored to the cohort it serves, our guidance counsellors have a shared objective of providing impartial careers and education information, to help people make informed educational, career and life choices.

Guidance Counselling in FET

The City of Dublin ETB Adult Education Guidance Counsellors' Policy Group, in collaboration with FET guidance colleagues in Colleges of Further Education, the Prison Education Service and Youthreach, describe the core values of the City of Dublin ETB Guidance Counselling as delivering "person-centred, empathetic and solution-focused supports within an education guidance framework". The process is characterised as a collaborative and professional relationship, where, in a striking phrase, "the client is viewed as the architect of their own future", empowering them "to utilise their own capacity to find solutions, to identify their strengths, to acknowledge skills and to self-advocate where necessary".



Aideen Lyster, Inchicore College explaining who guidance counsellors work with

Given the lifelong learning model, guidance counselling staff, across all City of Dublin ETB FET provision, work closely and collaboratively with each other, to ensure learners/students/clients receive the person-centred supports that they require at every stage of their lifelong learning journeys.

In this work, the guidance counsellors are supported by the City of Dublin ETB Psychological Service through PLNs, on-call support and training.

My Role as an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor

'An unconditional positive regard'

At the core of an adult education guidance counsellor's practice is the unconditional positive regard, which every adult guidance counsellor has for every client and learner whom they have the privilege to meet.



Niki Gilsenan, Adult Education Guidance Counsellor,
AES Dublin South Central

I've been that learner!

I am very passionate about my guidance counselling role, and when I explain it to learners and clients, I context it as a safe space where they can explore their past experiences within education and life and consider all the options which may be available.

I myself am a previous FET learner and my own experience of the education system led me into this guidance counselling role. I got the space and opportunity to return to education to realise some of my career aspirations and I found a place where I can now help others realise their own hopes and dreams for the present and the future.

Astounding resilience and determination

No two learners/clients are the same, each person brings a wealth of lived and educational experience so the pathways for returning to education, changing career, learning something new, or reconnecting to a community are varied.

I meet individuals every day who have experienced barriers in education or come up against other systemic failings. A client/learner's experience of education may have been a difficult one; their past life experiences placing hurdles in the way of realising their potential. The depth of what some clients/learners have endured can seem overwhelming but as a guidance counsellor, the sheer resilience and determination they display in overcoming these disadvantages constantly astounds me.

My wish is to create a compassionate, kind and solution-focused space, and I work within this trauma informed, compassionate centred ethos. I am also committed to confidentiality of the client/learner, and in that respect, our service operates within the Irish Guidance Counselling Ethical Guidelines, taking account of the various related policy documents and child protection laws in Ireland.

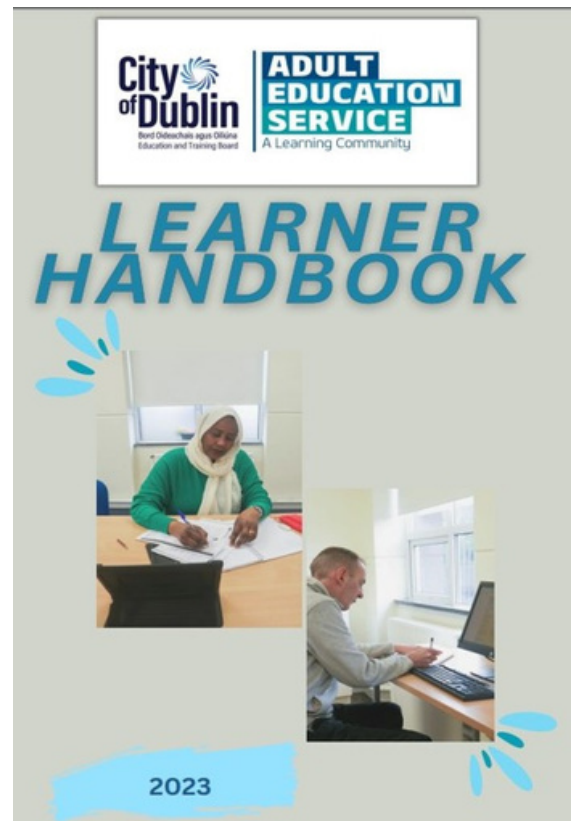
My Role as an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor

A daunting process

I never forget that it may be a daunting process for someone to visit an 'appointment', in an 'Education Building', especially if education buildings have negative past associations so I always phone each client/learner to have a brief 'chat', to introduce myself and put them at ease. The guidance appointment is a holistic space, so regardless of the number of clients that I might see each day, every client/learner will have my full attention. I invite them to share only what they are comfortable in disclosing and what is relevant in their life experiences.

There are many stages to the guidance counselling process, however, my favourite is hearing their story and moving to the hopeful planning piece. This is where the learner/client is offered the opportunity to explore their vocational and educational hopes.

We also offer a user-friendly online programme, which acts as a point of reference for career and education options, however, the guidance counselling appointment is a professional talking space. The coaching element and some of the follow-on structured support may involve psycho educational processes, or a reframing for the client/learner, so they can see what is possible for them.



Practical help

There are also very practical elements, which involve explaining the education system, the types of courses available, the application process, the funding available and the access points.

I help clients/learners with their CVs and cover letters when they are applying for apprenticeships and/or moving into employment from education as well as online applications, such as Fetch course registration, SUSI funding applications and the CAO.

My Role as an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor

The most up-to-date information

There is no timeline for each stage of the guidance counselling process, some clients require a short point of reference for guidance support; for others this might be a longer process. As a guidance counsellor, I need to ensure that I keep up to date with new information every day; I also need to be aware of the related social services, funding options and pathways that are open and available. It involves a great deal of planning, preparation, and research so the learner/client has accurate, relevant information for whatever they are hoping to do. While each appointment is approximately 60 minutes, the follow-up with clients involves practical information, telephone calls, advocacy, or referral to other services



My Role as an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor

Reaching into the community and collaborating with colleagues

I also meet clients/learners in the community, where I visit in an outreach capacity, to offer information about the service to ensure everyone has equal access to guidance support. I offer information to services and organisations that are working with individuals in the community, which might be a Youth Service, HSE, a Homeless Service/s, and/or another education provider.

We produce a newsletter at key points in the educational calendar, working closely with the Community Education Facilitator, ESOL Coordinator and Adult Literacy Organiser to ensure all registered learners in the Adult Education Service are appropriately supported

The guidance work not only involves meeting one-to-one clients, or groups; at times it is creating, collaborating, and liaising on internal organisational processes. One project highlight for me this year was producing, with the support from my Adult Education Officer, a Trauma informed poster and Learner Support Handbook, to ensure that all our learners feel safe, informed, and supported.

However, at the end of the day, my motivation and job satisfaction come directly from the clients/learners: even on the busiest working day, I feel privileged when individuals entrust and share their own personal stories.

The Role of a Youthreach Advocate

Una Mulqueen is Guidance Advocate in Youthreach City of Dublin ETB, working in eight of the centres across the city.

The role of the Advocacy Service is integral to the learner programmes in Youthreach, “the second chance education for early school leavers”.

Una provides one-to-one support around progression plans for learners attending the centres. The Youthreach staff refer the learners to her though as they grow in confidence learners often self-refer.

She says, “Adaptability, empathy & approachability are key to ensuring that the service I provide as Youthreach Advocate is used to its full potential by the learners.

Although Youthreach centres remain open during the summer, the end of the academic year is a busy time when many learners will be preparing to progress to the next stage in their journey.



Photo of Una Mulqueen with a Youthreach learner

The Role of a Youthreach Advocate

Here Una tells us what a day in May might look like.

I have a few learners in the diary to see from last week & meet two teachers in the corridor first thing who refer two more to me. Learners also call in to the room I'm using to request a meeting

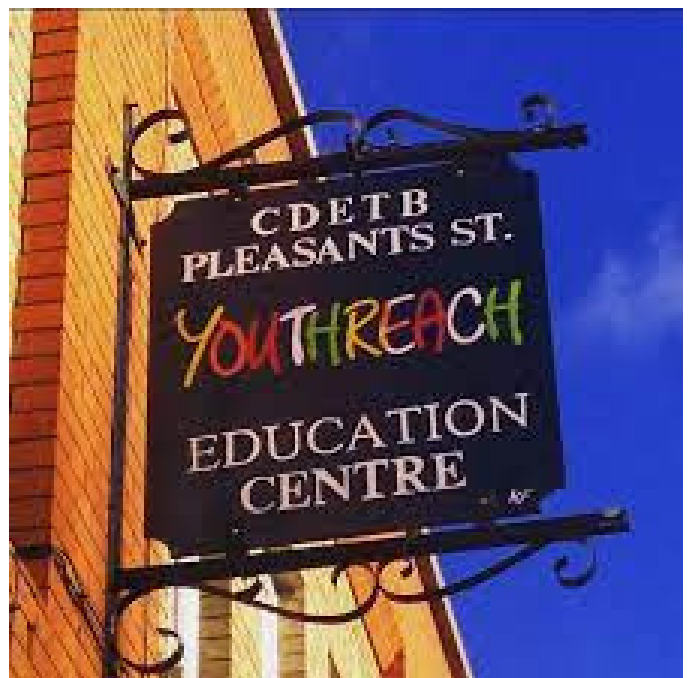
My first learner of the day has been offered a place in a FET college after submitting an application form with me the previous week. I assist him in paying the deposit to secure his place. We discuss the SUSI grant & I tell him I will meet him next week after I've check his eligibilit

Next, I meet with a learner who wishes to go onto higher education. We look at the possibility of his doing an Adult Leaving Cert & need to find somewhere providing subjects he needs to apply for his first choice course. There are specific subject requirements for the degree he wants to do.

The third learner has already identified a barbering course in a FET college for which she wants to apply. She is looking for information on the BTEA. I talk her through the process & outline how I can support her application for it.

After that, I see a learner who asks me to help him with this tax. He just got a new part- time job. This is an area where I don't feel particularly well- qualified so I speak to another teacher about it & ask him to have a look.

My next appointment is with a learner who is new to Ireland. She expresses a strong interest in doing medicine. We look at her options around this. I need to do a bit more research into this & am going to seek advice from other guidance departments. I tell the learner that I will meet her again next week to discuss what additional information I have found out for her.



One of the 8 Youthreach centres where Una works

The Role of a Youthreach Advocate

Next, I meet a learner who has already paid his deposit on a FET course but is a bit confused about the BTEA. I have an information sheet prepared for him and talk him through the process.

Then a former learner drops in looking for support around filling out a medical card application form. I advise him around what needs to be filled in & find a local doctor

Finally, I contact a Tusla Aftercare worker as requested by a learner to discuss her SUSI application & documents needed from Tusla to complete the application. We start the application process.



Una helps learners with CAO application process

The above is a good insight into a typical day for me but there are other supports provided that aren't listed.

Interview skills play an important part in the support offered by the Advocacy Service. Learners can avail of mock interviews in preparation for college or job interviews. I work with the communications teacher by recording interviews with learners and providing feedback as part of the communications module.

I also assist in the development of CVs & cover letters & job searches

A Day in the Life of an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor

Every day in the Adult Education Guidance Service is a school day! Although my diary is usually packed with meetings and appointments there are often queries or unexpected events that come up.

My day begins...



Karen Granville, Finglas AEGS

- 9am** I start the day with checking emails, texts, WhatsApp messages and voicemails as I was out at a meeting yesterday afternoon and I need to catch up.
- 9.20am** One of our adult education students drops into my office on their way to class to ask a quick question about their application to a local FET college. I spend a few minutes chatting to them before making another appointment for next week.
- 9.30am** I spend the next 30 minutes preparing and doing research for my 10am client.
- 10am** My client arrives for their appointment which will last one hour. He was referred from the local Intreo office for guidance as he doesn't know what he wants to study. We discuss various options, assess what he is interested in and make a plan to meet in two weeks' time to make further progress with applications to full-time social care courses.
- 11am** I ask our Guidance Information Officer to help me with some research on social care courses for my client. I do some follow up calls, referral emails and research for this client before I spend some time putting the client information onto our database.
- 11.30am** I visit one of the classes in our Adult Education Centre for a guidance talk. These are ESOL students, and many are thinking of going on to full-time study in September. I outline the education system, talk about financial supports and answer the many varied questions they have. I take some of their details to contact them later for a 1-1 guidance meeting.

A Day in the Life of an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor

- 12.15pm** Back onto the database to input details of the class and I answer some emails. A tutor pops by and invites me to come visit their class soon which I arrange.
- 1pm** Lunchtime with colleagues from the Adult Education Service which is a nice break!
- 2pm** My next client arrives. She is an International Protection Applicant living in direct provision and is seeking guidance about her educational options. She is well-educated in her own country and recently received her work permit but is having difficulty getting work. She is considering retraining.
- 3pm** Team meeting with colleagues from the Adult Education Service. The Adult Education Officer, Adult Literacy Organisers and Community Education Facilitator for our local area will be there. Course planning and a couple of upcoming student events are on today's agenda. The Team Meeting is always a good space to get together and share ideas.
- 4.30pm** After the meeting, I return a phone call to a member of the public who heard about our service through a friend and wants an appointment. I send out GDPR forms to new clients and reminder texts to clients with appointments tomorrow.
- 4.50pm** Finally, I get a chance to pack my bag for tomorrow morning's visit to an outreach group and then head for home. It's been a busy day but I enjoy the variety of this work. You really never can predict what tomorrow will bring!

Recognition of Prior Learning

All adults are learners!

Long experience of working with adults with the City of Dublin ETB Adult Education Guidance Service in Dublin's Inner City informed my initial interest and commitment to the importance of recognising that all adults are learners. Everyone learns in different ways, and in different situations, be that formal, and/ or informal, learning through experience or frequently of necessity. All such learning can be truly valuable; it all 'counts'.



Mary Stokes

RPL Practitioners Network

The 'Recognition of Prior Learning Practitioners Network' (RPLN) was established in 2015, and is an active and engaging network of practitioners where on the ground experience is valued and shared and national and EU policy on RPL is engaged. As a community of practice for people working and interested in RPL the RPL Practitioners Network is co-ordinated by a voluntary steering group comprising representatives of the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), the Irish Universities Association (IUA), Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), TEAGASC (the Agriculture and Food Development Authority), AONTAS and QQI, FESS, ETB representatives, and their work is informed by guidance expertise.

The RPL Network SG revised the Terms of Reference early in 2023 and is currently reconfiguring the composition of the Steering Group having invited nominations from members and in accordance with national policy and the 2012 recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Recognition of Prior Learning

What QQI Says about RPL

What is RPL? QQI acknowledge that "there is increased interest in ways of recognising and valuing learning achieved outside of formal education and training programmes (for example from workplace and life experience or voluntary activities). This process, described nationally as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), can be used for the purpose of access to programmes, or to seek exemptions from parts of programmes or awards. In some cases it can lead directly to certification for partial and full awards."



Tobar Evaluation Report

Meanwhile, in the 2021 ETBI published their commissioned "Tobar Evaluation Report - a pilot project in the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)". In that report, it is noted that RPL:

- demonstrates the core values of lifelong learning, social justice, active citizenship and economic prosperity.
- Puts emphasis on equity and access and acknowledge the powerful role that RPL plays in empowering under-represented groups to access FET pathways,
- develops skills and facilitate entry into work or progression to higher education.
- values learners' life experiences and informal learning
- is a means of validating a holistic range of personal and social learning outcomes, in addition to accredited outcomes in formal learning.

Tobar Evaluation Report

For all of these laudable reasons the Learner Support and Engagement Service is committed to remaining informed regarding developments in RPL policy and practice. We will be returning to the theme regularly in our newsletter

The FET College Guidance Counsellor

Supporting the FET Learner

There are many reasons why FET learners study in Colleges of Further Education & Training (FET). Students go to FET colleges to gain the grades they need to progress to higher education, learners apply to FE colleges to gain the knowledge and skills they need to access their chosen career and go straight into employment. Other students come to FE colleges to retrain or upskill, and we have many learners who just want to learn for the pleasure of lifelong learning. The guidance counsellor in FE colleges supports and guides all these learners to achieve their goals.



Aideen Lyster

Holistic model

The FET college guidance counsellor is trained and qualified to meet the complex educational, social, and personal needs of the learner on their educational journey. They are members of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC); practice the ethics and values of the IGC, receive regular supervision from the IGC and most importantly, practice the Holistic (educational/vocational/social/personal) model when working with all learners.

Progression route

Like the post primary guidance counsellor, the FE college guidance counsellor teaches and supports all learners to identify their progression routes, thoroughly research their college and course choices, fill out the CAO application form and complete the application process. The FET college guidance counsellor provides updated progression information on further and higher education routes in CAO classes and/or webinars and one-to-one guidance session during the CAO application process. For learners wanting to study further afield, we bring them through the UCAS and UNICAS processes.

The FET College Guidance Counsellor

Supporting the FET Learner

Network of external supports

Guidance counsellors in FET colleges know that the social/personal needs of the learner cannot be separated from their career/educational needs. The guidance counsellor is trained to use counselling skills to ask the right questions, emotionally support the learner and if necessary, guide them to access the appropriate internal/external supports, including Jigsaw Mental Health Youth Services, Rape Crisis Centre, Pieta House and Low Cost Counselling.

Accessible and central

Similar to the post primary guidance counsellor, we are 'on-site' in the college at all times, easily accessible and developing ongoing supportive relationship. The FE college guidance counsellor is a central member of the teaching team, as we are part of the College Student Support team, the Learning Support team, the Health & Wellbeing team and often the Critical Incident team. We are one of the few members of staff who liaises with all personnel in the college: management, course coordinators, teachers, administration, and general operative staff to ensure that the learners are supported at all levels. The FE guidance counsellor is also the voice of the learner when it comes to quality assurance and exam board meetings.



Aideen speaking at Cathal Brugha

Diverse and inclusive

FET colleges support learners from a variety of backgrounds with a diversity of needs. There has been an increase in both learners straight from post primary schools and in mature learners who have the chance to go to college for the first time or who need/want to upskill or retrain. There is also an increase of learners from the Travelling community, learners from the LGBTQI+ community, learners with a variety of disabilities, neuro-diverse learners and learners from war torn countries.

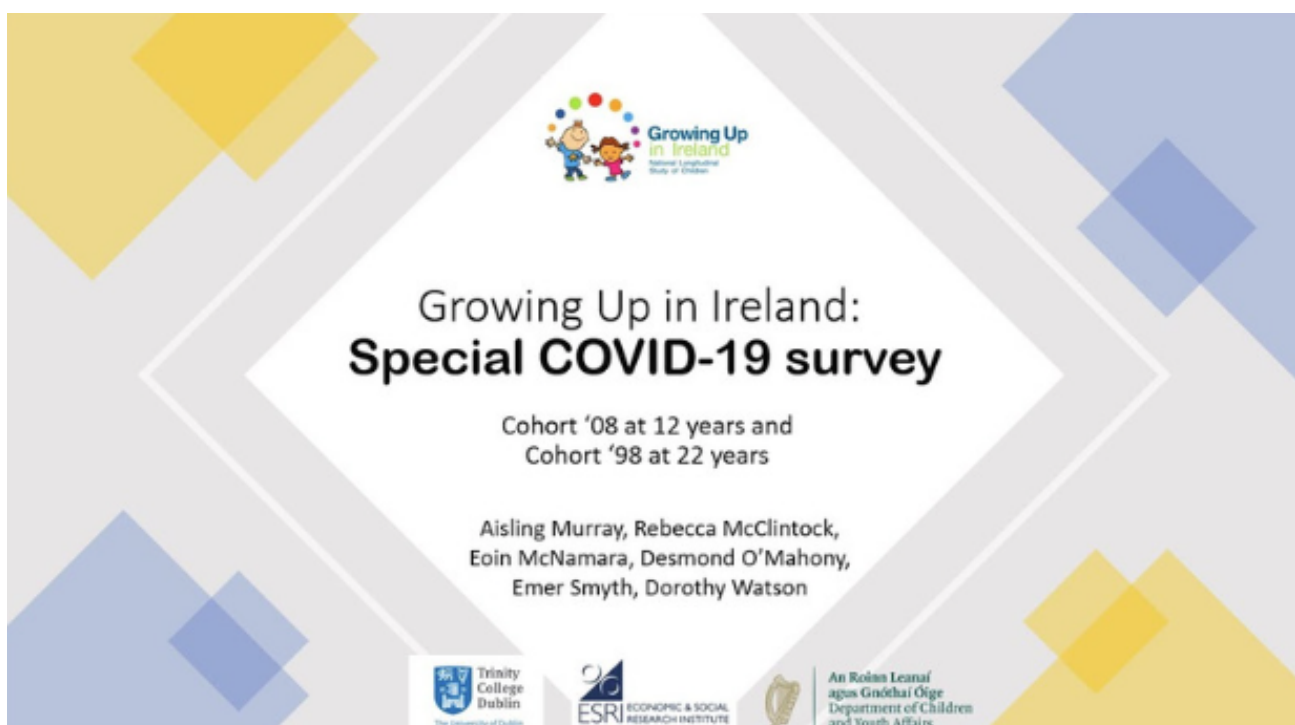
The FET College Guidance Counsellor

Supporting the FET Learner

Many of these learners can struggle with poor literacy skills, dyslexia, dyspraxia, or poor concentration due to lack of support in their lives and/or trauma. It is the guidance counsellor in FET colleges who helps these learners to settle into their courses, navigate their educational journeys, and ultimately achieve their goals

Rising levels of anxiety and depression

Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic seems to have increased anxiety and depression in young adults. Using data from the Growing Up in Ireland COVID-19 survey, the ESRI found 40% of 22-year-old men and 55% of 22-year-old women were classified as depressed. These were much higher figures than two years previously when 22% of men and 31% of women were depressed (Smyth, 2022). The FET college guidance counsellor supports these learners to navigate their anxieties and any life challenges that can arise during their course of their study which can include family breakdown, bereavement, addiction, homelessness, domestic violence. This support is given through one-one sessions, referrals to the appropriate supports, self-care and study plans which all contribute to helping the learner stay in college, engage with their course coordinator, teachers, and peers, continue with their studies and achieve their goals. With the support of the IGC, regular supervision, monthly Professional Learning Network from City of Dublin ETB Psychological services, ongoing Continuing Professional development, the FE College guidance counsellors continue to meet the evolving holistic needs of the variety of FE learners.



[Read more here](#)

Calling all FET educators!

We would love to share examples of innovative practice happening in centres relating to learner supports and learner engagement.

We're always interested in hearing from practitioners so please do get in contact if you are interested in contributing to a future issue.

If you've contributed to, or led a project, initiative or event that is linked to any of the themes below, we'd love to hear about it and showcase it across the organisation. Or perhaps you've completed an assignment or research as part of studies you're undertaking that relates to learner support and engagement. If so, get in touch with us by emailing learnersupports@cdetb.ie and we'll feature it in a future edition.

- Accessibility
- Disability
- Diversity
- Extracurricular/non-curricular events and initiatives for learners
- Inclusion
- Language
- Learner voice
- Learner leadership
- Literacy
- Universal Design (for Learning)
- Learner wellbeing

We can accept video, audio or text submissions.

Finally, if you are organising an event and would like us to cover it in a future issue, get in touch!