

Welcome to the first issue of 2024 and the last of Volume 1.

Over the past 12 months, we have been delighted to be able to provide a window on some of the innovative and inspiring work going on across City of Dublin ETB FET, initiatives that embed and enhance support for our learners while amplifying learner voice and engagement.

Over 12 months, the newsletter has shown (me at least!) just how wide-ranging and far-reaching the educational scope of the City of Dublin ETB FET is through its different spheres and its many partners. Our myriad facets are once more on display in this issue.

Following on from the FET Leadership Day in January (and in the wake of the Dublin city centre riot of November '23), we look at FET from the perspective of our learners who come from migrant backgrounds.

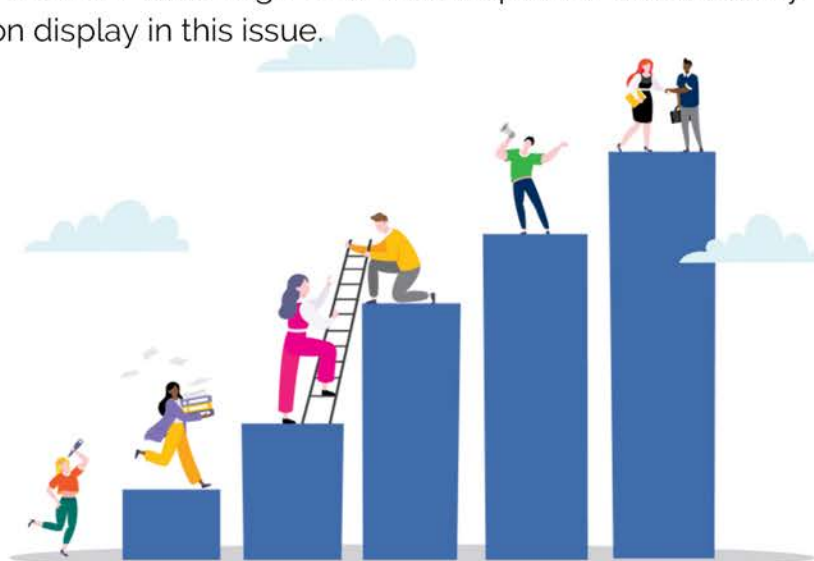
We check in on **Inchicore CFE's Health and Wellbeing Week** and the Education Centre of the **Progression Unit Prison**, both awardees in the recently announced **ETBI FET Mental Health and Wellbeing Accreditation**.

In anticipation of **World Down Syndrome Day on 21 March** we meet learners with Down syndrome who are currently studying with **AES Crumlin**, hear from John Condon, Director of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning with Down Syndrome Ireland and look at **AES Finglas' Work Ready Programmes** for people with intellectual disabilities.

Looking forward to **Ramadan**, which starts on 11 March, we hear from two Muslim learners in **Youthreach Crumlin**.

Mary guides us through the complex area of Recognition of Qualifications in the context of **Recognition of Prior Learning** while Claire Donoghue from the Psychological Service explains **Trauma- Informed Design in Educational Spaces (TIDES)**.

We have updates from **Sinéad Morrin** and **Enda McConnell** from DCU on their **Graduate Diploma in Inclusive Special Education (GDISE)** and **Alan Byrne** on the **AES Football Project**.



A step up for learners

LEARNER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE

Finally, **Coláiste Íde** alumnus, **Hugh O'Callaghan**, talks about his journey as a learner with an intellectual disability and **AES Ballyfermot's Catherine Twomey** tells us about the colourful **Intercultural Awareness Morning**, they held to mark **International Mother Language Day**.

If there is an event or initiative, learner, group of learners or former learners in your centre that you think we should feature, please do get in touch.

Enjoy the issue.

John

john.poole@cdetb.ie or learnersupports@cdetb.ie

LEARNER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE

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Editor: John Poole

Photo and Design Editor: Sneha Sarcar

NEWS IN BRIEF

Voices of Change: Learners Leading the Way

The annual learner survey officially closed for submissions on 2 February. We are pleased to report that 2,791 learners participated - a stunning increase of 30% on the 2022-2023 survey.

The next step takes place on 12 March in City of Dublin FET College, Ballyfermot Campus (Ballyfermot CFE) where we will host a learner conference to share the key findings with learner reps from each service. through facilitated conversations and workshops, they will explore next steps/immediate plans of action.

Following that, survey reports similar to last year will be circulated.



**VOICES OF CHANGE:
LEARNERS LEADING THE WAY
Learner Conference**

City of Dublin FET College Ballyfermot Campus,
Ballyfermot Road (formerly known as Ballyfermot College)

12 March, 2024 | 9:00-13.15

ABOUT

City of Dublin ETB's first conference for learner representatives to discuss the findings from the FET learner survey and explore how City of Dublin ETB can support learners to strengthen learner voice mechanisms in centres

AGENDA

- 9.00 Registration
- 9.30 Welcome, Lorraine Downey, Learner Support & Engagement Service
- 9.40 Conference Opening
- 9.55 Learner Survey Findings- Sneha Sarwat, Learner Support & Engagement Service
- 10.20 Round Table Workshop
- 10.50 Feedback
- 11.00 Learner Panel Discussion
- 11.30 Coffee
- 12.00 Workshop
- 12.50 Conference Close
- 13.15 Lunch

Scan for details: learnerengagement@detb.ie

City of Dublin
Learner Support and Engagement Service

Second Graduation of the Postgraduate Certificate in Inclusion and Diversity.



On 1 February, the 2022-2023 class for the PGC in Inclusion and Diversity donned their finery for their graduation ceremony in Trinity College. The PGC is now in its third year with participants from DDLETB having joined for the first time this year. In our next issue, Professional Development Officer, Carrie Archer will be giving us a full overview of how the programme has developed since its inception and what's in the pipeline for the future.

Photo: A St. Bridgid's Day conferring

ETBI FET Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Accreditation

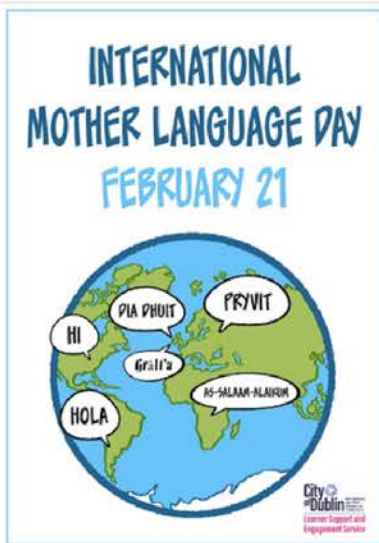
Congratulations to the four City of Dublin ETB projects awarded the FET Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Accreditation from ETBI - Herbert Street Adult Education Centre, Ballyfermot Training Centre, Progression Unit Prison and Inchicore College of Further Education.

AHEAD Panorama Conference

This year's AHEAD Conference takes place 20 and 21 March., a hybrid event from the Croke Park Conference Centre. Garreth, who attended last year's conference on behalf of the LSSES (Issue 2, Vol 1) found plenty of relevance to the further education sector. This year's conference is titled Panorama: Widening the Lens for Systemic Inclusion and Education.

NEWS IN BRIEF

International Mother Language Day



We were pleased to see several centres used the occasion of **International Mother Language Day on 21 February** to celebrate our linguistic and cultural diversity.

You can read about AES Ballyfermot's Intercultural Awareness morning, a great example of inclusion in action on page 36 .

We also loved the video **Rathmines College of Education** produced to mark the day – a simple but effective message of inclusivity, which you can watch [here](#).

Meanwhile entries for our Share Your Words competition are still trickling in (competition closes 1 March. We will be announcing the winners in the next issue.

Finally, check out the fabulous artwork from the children attending the **Foundations Project** After Schools Club on the left.

Artwork from children in the Foundations Project



Do you have learners who could become Ireland's next UN Youth Delegates?



Apply Now to Become Ireland's next UN Youth Delegate 2024-2025 - National Youth Council of Ireland

[UN Youth Delegates Link](#)

Young people from every county invited to apply for chance to represent young people living in Ireland, at the UN Deadline: 18th of March 2024

www.youth.ie

Neurodiversity Celebration Week

Last year Mary, Sneha and I attended some interesting online webinars in Lexxic's Neurodiversity Celebration Week (Issue 2, Vol 1) . Registration for this year's event (**18 - 24 March**) is now open via [this link](#).



Leading for Inclusion and Diversity

Coláiste Dhúlaigh hosted the City of Dublin ETB FET Leadership Day on 26 January. The afternoon session focussed on learners from minority backgrounds. First, Dr. Stephen O'Neill spoke about how the Psychological Service responded to the Dublin city centre riot of November 26 which impacted staff and learners from several of our centres. Then Lorraine explored the barriers facing learners and potential learners from ethnic minority backgrounds in accessing FET. Finally, Sneha looked at some of the initial findings of the 2024 Learner Survey as they related to learners from ethnic backgrounds.

In the following three articles they summarise the key takeaways from their respective presentations.



Psychological Service Response to Critical Incidents - Dr. Stephen O'Neill

A 'Critical Incident' (CI) can be defined as '.... any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of a centre/school/college' (National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), 2016). The incident which occurred on November 23 last in Parnell Square and the subsequent sequence of events was a CI, not just for the City of Dublin ETB centres impacted, but for our city as a whole. While this incident was one of the most extraordinary events to directly impact our centres in recent years, the Psychological Service has a standard response to CIs which helps centres get back to normal operations as soon as possible.

Our response is underpinned by the five principles of safety, calm, connection, efficacy, and hope (Hobfoll et al, 2007). Initially, when the phone call comes into 'Winstead' from the head of centre and a CI is declared, we enter the intervention phase, where the Psychological Service supports the centre to convene its Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT). These teams have been established in most centres and are a means of identifying who needs support, what kind of support is needed, the timing of this support and which team member will provide it.

Prior to a CI occurring is the preventative phase where lots of work can be done to build capacity in the centre and this helps mitigate against centres being overwhelmed. In the preventative phase the Psychological Service offers Critical Incident Training and invites relevant staff to participate in a Critical Incident PLN. The Psychological Service also provides training in Mental Health First Aid and trauma-informed approaches which reduce crises escalating for individuals and centres.

Leading for Inclusion and Diversity

As part of the post-vention and prevention phases of the CI in Parnell Square the importance of having multicultural awareness and cultural humility for staff and learners became evident. As such, in conjunction with the FET Learner Support and Engagement Service, a session exploring our strengths and weakness with regard to multiculturalism was facilitated with staff from the centres impacted. This session was followed up with a collaborative input from the Psychological Service and the Learner Support and Engagement Service on the FET Leaders' day on January 26. The aim of this input was to identify best practices and to build the collective efficacy of FET leaders in relation to being more aware of cultural diversity. This approach is aligned with the City of Dublin ETB's guiding principles of diversity and inclusion. Also, as part of the post-vention phase, the Psychological Service has begun a pilot to establish a cultural and linguistically diverse panel of counsellors for all learners in Youthreach and Adult Education.

Any critical incident is 'a disruption in the usual' and while they can be traumatic and upsetting, they are also an opportunity for learning. In the face of adversity, with the right support, centres can discover their strengths which helps their communities to become more resilient.



Barriers to inclusion experienced by learners of migrant backgrounds in FET - Lorraine Downey

For many generations Ireland was considered a country of emigration, with millions leaving their families and communities for North America, the UK, Europe and in more recent decades, the Middle East and Australia, for numerous reasons, including political and economic. Since the late 1990s the trend has reversed and over the past 25 years the numbers of people migrating to Ireland has surpassed the numbers of people emigrating. CSO data from 2023 estimates that just under 15% of the population was born outside the state.

Leading for Inclusion and Diversity

This diversity is well reflected across FET. In 2020, 22% of all FET learners reported having a nationality other than Irish at registration with 197 nationalities recorded. Over 60% of learner enrolments from learners born outside the EU were enrolled on generic FET programmes such as ESOL and General Learning . However, the outcomes for migrant-origin learners are not as positive as for those reporting Irish nationality. In fact, non-completion rates for EU (33%) and non-EU (40%) nationals were far higher than for Irish nationals (26%). More recent SOLAS data estimates that almost 30% of FET learners are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Having worked in the area of ESOL and migrant education for over 20 years as a practitioner and then in a policy and support role, I have often felt frustrated by the lack of consideration given to the educational experience and outcomes of multilingual learners from migrant and refugee backgrounds in FET policy and discourse at a national level. The tipping point came after the publication of the ESRI review of Post Leaving Cert programme in 2018 which, despite 20 years of demographic changes, featured only one reference to learners from migrant backgrounds and even that only appeared in an appendix with a comment from a stakeholder who questioned whether migrant learners were being served well by FET.

As part of my own research, I have conducted a review of international literature which explores the experiences of migrant and refugee learners in post-compulsory education settings similar to FET in Ireland. Here I will share some of that learning regarding the barriers that such learners face, so that we can begin to consider what we can do in our roles as practitioners, leaders and policy-makers at a local or ETB level to remove or reduce some of these barriers for our learners.

These are outlined in the table below.

Linguistic

- Language skills in general
- Technical academic vocabulary vs basic communication skills
- Complex sentence structure
- Time needed for reading & writing in second/other language
- Recognition of multilingual identity

Pedagogical

- Difference in traditions, e.g visual/verbal in Euro-centric education systems versus aural/oral
- Culturally-bound curricula
- Lack of training for educators
- Teacher attitudes to diversity

Leading for Inclusion and Diversity

Psychological

- Trauma
- feelings of isolation, depression, helplessness and uncertainty about future
- Discrimination, prejudice and racism (in class/centre, wider society)
- Cognitive overload
- Stigma of being in a targeted programme
- Loss of status

Informational

- Availability and accuracy of information
 - impact on pathways, entitlements etc
- Access to guidance supports

Financial

- Transport costs
- Childcare costs
- Need for financial security, to repay debts– Learners attracted to low-skilled jobs

Institutional/Structural

- Admissions requirements and procedures
- Recognition of qualifications
- Programme requirements, e.g. duration of programme, mode of learning

Sociocultural

- Cultural norms
- New learning approaches and differences in learning traditions, expectations
- Social capital – work experience
- Cultural capital – navigating the system
- Status of FET in other countries

In the follow-up workshop with FET leaders, groups reflected on some of the barriers presented and shared examples of practice in their own centres that helps mitigate these as well as discussing future actions that could be taken. Some of these are outlined below.

Linguistic

- Acknowledge multilingual identities – make multilingual glossaries and resources available
- Celebrate learners' linguistic identities – we can all get involved in International Mother Language Day (check out this issue for more!)
- Provide English language support that is targeted for the type of programme
- Embed the language components into the programme so that they are timetabled from the start, not added on later
- Implement a scheme-wide approach to language support

Pedagogical barriers

- Invite more guest speakers from minority ethnic backgrounds in different vocational areas,
- Recruit more staff from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Provide PLD in anti-racism, language awareness etc.
- Embed language components in mainstream FET programmes

Sociocultural barriers

- Source food (especially meat) from halal suppliers in the city
- More inclusive schemes and projects like the Citywide football initiative (see this issue for more on this!)

Leading for Inclusion and Diversity



FET Learner Survey 2023-2024 through the lens of ethnicity - Sneha Sarcar

The annual learner survey officially closed for submissions on 2 February. We are pleased to report that 2,791 learners participated - a stunning increase of 30% on the 2022-2023 survey. Looking into the ethnicity of our learners, while learners who are White Irish represented 58.72% of respondents, a significant minority represent a diversity of ethnic backgrounds.

For the event, we delved into the initial findings, focussing primarily on data received from learners in CFEs and YR/CTC segregating the information using the lens of ethnicity. The first section we looked into was a core question asked to learners across all service spheres around identifying their 3 main concerns as a student in City of Dublin ETB.

In YR and CTCs, White Irish learners stated Mental Health/Wellbeing, Current Housing Situation and Finances as their top 3 concerns. Their peers who come from ethnic minorities stated Finances, Physical Health and the Current Housing Situation.

In CFEs, White Irish learners identified Managing Coursework, Mental Health/Wellbeing and Finances while learners from ethnic minorities selected Finances, Current Housing Situation and Transport as the biggest areas of concern.

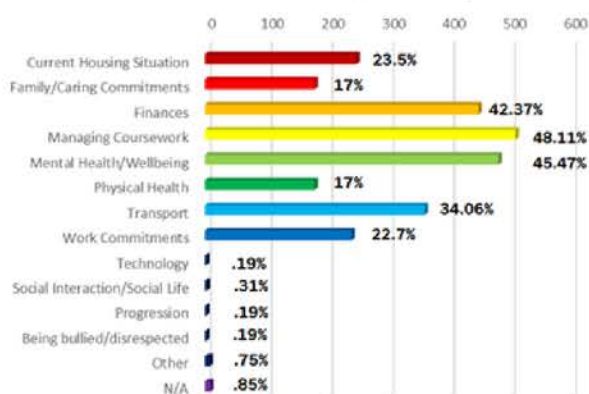
From the open-ended questions asked to learners about what they think we are doing well and should continue doing, learners from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds expressed positive feedback around active engagement in social activities, extensions on assignments and provision of laptops. When asked about what we should improve on, learners requested support with finding work experiences, keeping the library open/having quiet places to study, more mental health support and also being mindful of cultural differences and foreign viewpoints.

Leading for Inclusion and Diversity

Colleges of Further Education

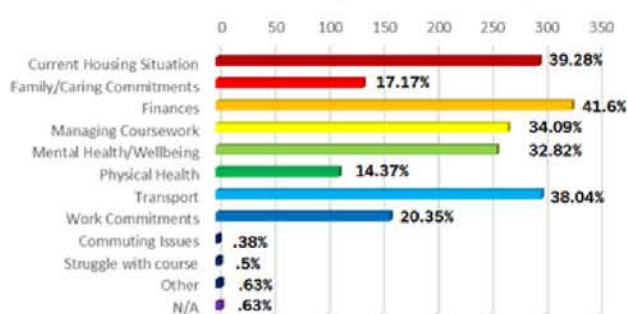
1060 learners

Main areas of concern (White Irish)



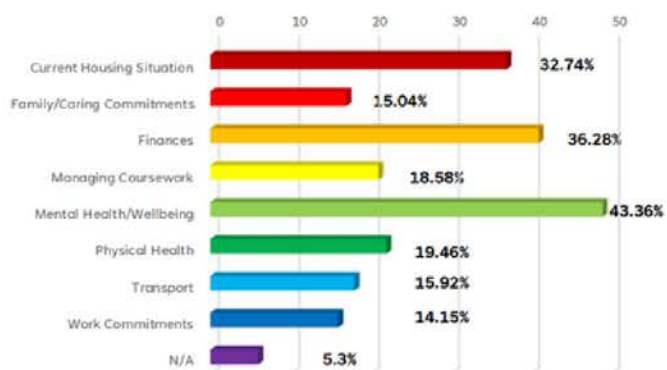
786 learner

Main areas of concern (Ethnic Minorities)



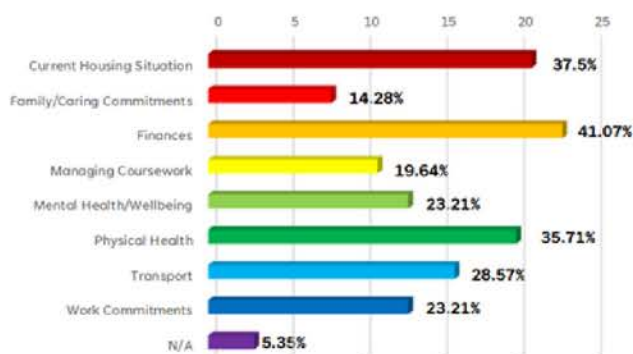
Youthreach/CTC

Main areas of concern (White Irish)



113 learners

Main areas of concern (Ethnic Minorities)



56 learners

"The Future Is Bright" - In Conversation with John Condon, Down Syndrome Ireland



John Poole



Down Syndrome Ireland

When I met Down Syndrome Ireland's Head of Adult Education, John Condon, at the end of February, almost the first thing he told me was that his department was about to have a change of name. Previously, the Department of Adult Education, from March 2024, they would be known as the Department of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. "Research is showing that our members have the capabilities and capacities of lifelong learning", John enthuses "so in recognition and celebration of this we have changed the name".

This is indeed a cause for celebration because as John reminds us, it is not so long ago that people believed a person with Down syndrome was incapable of learning beyond the age of primary school. Recalling a lecturer from his own university days who claimed that a person with Down syndrome "plateaued" around the age of 10 or 11, John says now we know this is not the case. He explains that what might have seemed to be a person reaching the limit of their intellectual ability and capacity for learning could in fact be attributable to other causes such as sensory impairment with people with

Down syndrome often experiencing a deterioration in sight or hearing at this age which was then confused with having reached a learning limit.

For over half a decade now Down Syndrome Ireland has been working with Educational and Training Boards (ETBs) across the country to ensure that people with Down syndrome access to further education and training, whether it is through literacy, personal development or work skills programmes specifically designed for learners with intellectual disabilities or individual places on vocational courses (one member of the community is currently training to be a pastry chef).

John is unstinting in his praise for the ETBs in general – Down Syndrome Ireland currently has projects running with 13 of them – and the City of Dublin ETB FET in particular. He says that Blake (Hodkinson) and John (Moriarty) have "been very supportive" and heaps praise on "the most amazing, dynamic, progressive tutors". He says that when Down Syndrome Ireland goes out to visit classes – "we are not inspectors", he hastens to add – they are struck by "the commitment, understanding and dedication ... they meet".

“The Future Is Bright” - In Conversation with John Condon, Down Syndrome Ireland

When I ask him about World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) on March 21 – the day is set on the 21st day of the 3rd month as a representation of the triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome that people with Down syndrome are born with – he says this year's message is “End the stereotypes” which brings him neatly to a quotation from Dr. Stephen Shore, that John likes to adapt for people with Down syndrome. “If you've met one person with Down syndrome, you've met one person with Down syndrome”.

He tells me that some of the people with Down syndrome who spoke at the Path 4 Stage II recent launch were highly articulate while other people with Down syndrome can be non-verbal. Down syndrome is a spectrum he says, and Down Syndrome Ireland is about celebrating all the members of a community that is between 7 and 8,000 strong in Ireland. He is particularly concerned for more mature members who did not have the opportunities for further education when they were young.

John identifies lack of specialised career guidance for people with Down syndrome as one of the biggest inhibitors to people from their community achieving their full potential. Currently Down Syndrome Ireland is working with a number of ETBs to create a bespoke training package for career guidance personnel who are working in further education around how to create signposts and pathways for a person with Down syndrome to progress.

Overall, John is very optimistic. He points to the fact that the percentage of people with Down syndrome in employment has risen from 6% pre-pandemic to 10 to 11% today. “The future is looking very bright for people with Down syndrome”, he concludes.

John emphasised throughout our conversation that Down Syndrome Ireland is available to provide Down syndrome awareness training even on a one-to-one basis. The training is fully funded by Solas, which means it is free to you or me. (Contact DSI or find out more using [this link](#))



John Condon, Head of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning at Down syndrome Ireland

Learners Get Ready for Work!

On 19 December last, AES Finglas, launched its Work Ready Programmes for learners with intellectual disabilities at an event in the Conrad Hotel. There was an amazing turn out with over 120 attendees (despite the imminent arrival of Santa Claus!) including learners and their families, representatives of ETBs from around the country as well as representatives of different disability service providers.

I was delighted to be among their number for what was, quite apart from the yuletide mood, a very celebratory occasion when we had plenty of opportunity to hear from the learners who would shortly be embarking on the courses. Below **Orna Fynes**, Adult Literacy Organiser writes about the genesis and objectives of the programme.

The Work Ready Programmes

The Work Ready Programme is a set of five modules, which has been designed in a collaboration between City of Dublin ETB and Down Syndrome Ireland under the auspices of the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Innovation and Collaboration Fund.



Orna Fynes

The project aims were to develop a set of modules at Level 2 on the NFQ directly linked to employment. The courses are designed as a progression route for learners who have already partaken in a general learning award at Level 2 or similar. The modules are underpinned by UDL and designed to be accessible to learners with intellectual disabilities. For each module, there is a Student Workbook and a Programme Tutor Guide.

Modules include work skills for working in the following settings:

- Café/Restaurant
- Supermarket
- Hotel
- Hairdressers/ Barbers
- Office

The new modules are available for providers of education and training, to deliver to learners who aspire to learn industry specific skills, and progress to work in areas such as hospitality, retail, and administration.

The Consultation Process

These modules have had learner voice embedded throughout, thanks to a learner focus group who contributed through regular feedback. The content of the modules has been advised and reviewed by our industry partners, to ensure it is relevant. These partners are leading the way in employing staff members with intellectual disabilities and they were in the position to outline the skills and knowledge that should be covered in the courses to promote successful learning outcomes that will lead to employment for our learners.

Learners Get Ready for Work!

The learner focus group consisted of Julie Dalton, Sean Hickey, Eric Nolan, Claire McManus, Billy Kane, Aoife Geoghegan and Morgan Whelan and was facilitated by the Project Coordinator Judy Halford and Aisling Brown of Down Syndrome Ireland. The learners' views on every aspect of the workbook - colour, layout, photos, graphics - were taken into account in the final version.

Finally, for each sector there was a specific project partner:

- Working in a Café/Restaurant: The Together Academy
- Working in a Supermarket: Supervalu
- Working in a Hotel: The Conrad Hotel
- Working in a Hairdresser's/ Barber's: The Grafton Barber
- Working in an Office: Down Syndrome Ireland/DCU

Programmes like this have huge potential to promote meaningful inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities in workplaces across the country.



Julie Dalton, Sean Hickey, Eric Nolan, Claire McManus, Billy Kane, Aoife Geoghegan & Morgan Whelan were on the learner focus group.

Enlightenment and Enjoyment - My Visit to the Personal Development Programme for Learners with Down syndrome

Last September, AES Crumlin launched its Personal Development Programme for Learners with Down syndrome. Focusing on strengthening literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, while building self-confidence and independence, the programme was a new departure, not least because it was taking place on a College of Further Education (CFE) campus, in alignment with a policy of making education for people with intellectual disabilities more inclusive. Marie Reilly, Dublin South Central's Adult Literacy Organiser, kindly arranged for me to visit the learners and their tutors in their classroom in Pearse College to find out how the programme was going.

Of course, I couldn't just turn up. First, I needed the agreement of the six learners. Happily, when one of their three tutors, Ursula Brennan-Richardson, put it to them, they agreed. Ursula suggested we do a "round table" format and I send my questions in advance. Meanwhile, Marie sought permission from the learners' parents to use photos and quotes from the learners in the eventual article.

I asked Ursula if she had any advice on how to approach the learners. Unfortunately, I had been on leave when my colleagues did the Down Syndrome Ireland awareness training in June '23 though I did have Sneha's account (Vol.1, Issue 4) of the insights they had gained.

Nonetheless, I was conscious of having no previous experience working with, or, indeed, even socialising with people with Down syndrome. Ursula was very reassuring.

"They are a lovely group and a real pleasure to work with. They will make you feel very welcome," she promised. Her one piece of advice was to phrase my sentences as simply as possible in case the learners got "stage fright."

They weren't the only ones in danger of stage fright! Despite Ursula's reassurance and having stood in front of 100s of new classes over the years, I was nervous. Would I be clear enough in my questions? Would they feel comfortable answering them? Would I have difficulty understanding their speech? Above all, I remembered from Sneha's article that people with Down syndrome know when people are being condescending. I very much wanted to hit the right note.



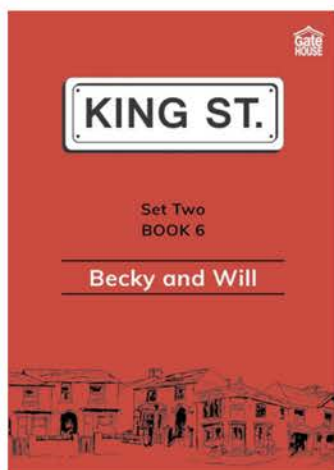
From left to right: Susan Neill, Jeff Curley, Ailbhe Errity, Dylan Ledden, Ursula Brennan-Richardson and Michael Humphries

Enlightenment and Enjoyment - My Visit to the Personal Development Programme for Learners with Down syndrome

Five of the six learners in the class were there – Geoff, Ailbhe, Dylan, Mickey, and Lily – and as we went around saying an initial hello, it was clear that even in this small group there was a lot of diversity. There was quite a big age range – 20 to 35. I learned later – and, as is common, with different coexisting physical and learning disabilities – such as sleep apnea and non-verbal autism. As we went around the class, and through the afternoon, levels of shyness rose and fell, as did energy levels, all of which was managed very skillfully by Ursula and fellow tutor Susan Neill. Everybody was given their space to speak but without any sense of people being put on the spot.

Every class has its livewire and in this one, it is Dylan. When I started off, by asking if they were enjoying their course, he didn't hesitate to say he loved it, and the main reason was that they had "lovely teachers." Now, of course, Ursula and Susan could have had him well primed, but I don't think so! His enthusiasm sounded very genuine, and all his classmates echoed it.

Asked what they most enjoyed in the classwork; all the activities seemed popular.



Jeff and Ailbhe love reading!

Reading was the first thing mentioned by both Ailbhe and Geoff who showed me the books they are reading at the moment – The Flat and Becky and Will from the King Street Readers series. Mickey, who uses Lámh as part of his communication, enjoys performing, and told me about playing the wicked witch from The Wizard of Oz, (while also trying to teach me some Lámh gestures).

Lily showed me examples of her writing from her meticulously organised folder. Dylan enthused about the dance routines they had learnt, his personal favourite being Michael Jackson's "moonwalk."

I then had the opportunity to see the classroom's touch screen in action when Geoff led the class in a word game in which they had to match a given letter with the initial letter of four food items displayed on the board. Their familiarity with items like a vanilla pod and Yorkshire pudding was striking for me coming from an ESOL classroom, where you would never use such examples but of course, this group of adult Irish learners would have just the same range of culinary references.

Next, I got a demonstration of their numerical skills through telling the time. Interestingly, although we were using a high-tech interactive screen, they were reading the traditional clock face with its additional complexity, which I know well from ESOL!

Enlightenment and Enjoyment - My Visit to the Personal Development Programme for Learners with Down syndrome

Apart from the skills displayed, I was impressed with the level of mutual support and cooperation between the learners. If anybody was faltering in their answers the others were there to help. Ursula said learning to share was an important part of the personal development programme.

Over the course of the afternoon, I heard about a lot of other things the class had enjoyed. A few weeks before they had joined with the college photography class to pose for their portraits. Some were too shy to repeat the poses they had struck but others had no such inhibitions.

I heard about their part-time jobs: Geoff works in a pub and Spec Savers, Ailbhe works in a nail bar on Saturdays where she enjoys meeting the clients, and Mickey does a stint in Tallaght Garda Station on Fridays. (When I asked him if he ever had to arrest anybody, he was coy. "Maybe a bit," he said.)

Overcoming initial shyness, and with Ursula and Susan's encouragement, I was privileged with insights into their lives – Mickey's trip next month to London to see Frozen, the colourful socks Dylan will be wearing for World Down Syndrome Day, Lily's need to hide the cakes at home (not from her two siblings but from her dad!), Geoff and Ailbhe's friend from their basketball club who sadly died recently. I even heard of a classroom romance, but my lips are sealed!



Wear colourful socks to support World Down Syndrome Day on 21 March.

To end, I asked them if there was anything they would like to ask me. Dylan didn't miss a beat; "I have a question! How are you?"

I immediately remembered Sneha writing in her article how when a person with Down syndrome makes this routine enquiry, it is best to answer honestly as they will have noticed if you are having a bad day. Happily, I could in all sincerity reply that I was great. I'd had a very interesting afternoon meeting them and their two teachers (who are indeed lovely!), we were about to have tea, biscuits and chocolate and the mid-term break was in touching distance. What wasn't to like?

Health and Wellbeing Week in Inchicore College of Further Education



In conversation with Aideen Lyster

Inchicore CFE's Health & Well-being Week has its origins in the Health Promotion Day Aideen Lyster initiated in 2007 as part of the HND BTEC Personal & Professional Effectiveness programme she was then teaching. When Aideen became the college's guidance counsellor in 2015, principal, Donnchadh Clancy, asked her to turn it into week-long event. What started as an opportunity to assess learning outcomes on Team Building and Reflective Practice modules for one course, has become an important fixture in the college calendar, led by Aideen, but delivered and supported by the H&WB team, management, teachers and learners.

Taking place annually in the second week of January, H&WB week is, Aideen says an opportunity for all ICFE learners and staff to be more open about minding and supporting their mental, physical, emotional and social health and wellbeing. All the courses in the college get the opportunity to host a health & wellbeing-related activity or event in which they are interested.

Aideen is at pains to emphasise that each year the learners are lead, supported and assessed by a teacher on their course. They identify, plan, prepare and deliver the activity/event of their choosing which she then supports at college level, ensuring it aligns with the values and ethos of H&WB week.

Asked why this kind of event is important in a college of further education, Aideen says "The aim of the week is to raise awareness and collective responsibility regarding staff and learners' health & wellbeing, to remind and reassure that when we mind our health & wellbeing,

we have more capacity to be present in our daily lives, to achieve our goals and enjoy the experiences, whether it is study, work or anything else in between."

This year the Business and Human Resources QQI Level 6, Applied Psychology in the Community QQI Level 6, and Sports Coaching QQI Level 6 classes were involved in organising and running events. The HND BTEC Sports Science and Dance Performance classes also took prominent roles. Learners are assessed on learning outcomes in areas such as team-building, leadership styles, event management, and conflict resolution. Aideen says most learners enjoy this style of learning and assessment, which is underpinned by UDL. She lists the many positives: "It takes them out of the classroom, it helps them to apply theory to practice, they get to demonstrate and learn other skills, they get to meet learners from other courses, and they enjoy the sense of performance, engagement, achievement and fun on the day". (Emma Nangle's account of participating in the week, which you can read below, certainly bears out Aideen's words.)

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Kicking off on 15 January, which is dubbed Blue Monday in the media and is, supposedly, the most depressing day of the year, Aideen decided on a more balanced approach. "Of course, we can all feel blue", she says "However, there are **many shades of blue**".



That Monday, many of them were on display as learners and staff raided their wardrobes and drawers for their best blue clothes with the prize for the best outfit going to **Martha Kazeka Fampumu** from Early Learning and Care 1.



Then in a determined bid to defy those blues, there was the **Dance Off the Blues** event led by a performance from the QQI Level 5 Dance Performance learners, followed by a Dance Off between some the "professionals" and learners from other classes. About 100 learners strutted their stuff to a mixture of pop, hip-hop and dance classics like Macarena and YMCA with Bohdan Kapon from QQI Level 5 Theatre Studies ultimately triumphing.



On Tuesday, Mary Hulgraine, the Ladies Gaelic Football star, held a packed hall of 250 learners and staff captive as she spoke about a life, which combined stardom on the pitch with alcohol and prescription drug addiction leading to eventual homelessness. Her story of her road to recovery and her message of hope had a huge impact, many telling Aideen afterwards that they had found the talk very emotional.

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"Mary's story was not theoretical but very practical", says Sydney Phakathi, a Level 6 Business and HR Management learner, "That touched the audience." Laima Langyte, another Business and HR learner said "Mary Hulgraine, in my opinion, gave positive thought to all the guests, that in life, if you have a difficult time, you always can reach for help and you always can change your life extremely."



Mary Hulgraine signs a football for principal Donnchadh Clancy.

Throughout the week there were workshops which were all well attended including nursing tutor, Maggie Noonan's Positive Sexual Health and Well Being talk.

On Thursday, I was in the college myself to see Irish Nigerian stand-up comedian Emman Idama. His routine about how his dyslexia wasn't diagnosed until his 20s was very funny and got a lot of laughs, as did his story of how Santa turned out to be a racist for a little Nigerian boy just arrived in Ireland. His show ended on a sombre note when he shared a personal family tragedy but overall, the lunchtime audience was well entertained. The Pre-Paramedic class, who earlier had attended a workshop with Jigsaw, were especially enthusiastic both about Emman and the whole week, pointing out that as future paramedics, facing horrific scenes on a regular basis, they would need to know how to look after their mental health.

Student teacher Siobhan Daffy's Drum Circle on the first day and the Laughter Yoga on the last were very popular bookends to a week that is clearly very much appreciated by staff and learners.

Does your college or centre organise events to promote health and well-being? If you do, let us know and we will be happy to feature them in future issues.

Acts Of Kindness Brighten up the Canteen Ladies' Day



Emma Nangle

Hello! This is Emma Nangle again!

In the last newsletter I wrote about being on the Student Council in Inchicore CFE. This time I'd like to tell you about participating in our Health and Wellbeing Week. Unfortunately, I couldn't go to everything that was happening over the week, but those I did participate in, were great.

On Wednesday there were two events held : The Act of Kindness event and the 'Get Fit for your Health and Wellbeing' event. The Act of Kindness event was organized by a group of learners in my class (Psychology in the Community Level 6), as part of a group project in one of our modules. The idea was to get learners to anonymously fill out Act of Kindness cards which would be collected, then later in the day distributed amongst other learners who would fulfill the act of kindness that was stated on the card they got. I helped with collecting the cards from learners and promoting the ideas behind it.

When I received my act of kindness, I immediately knew who I wanted to do it for. The lovely ladies who run the canteen always make sure that learners at Inchicore College are fed and watered. They do their best to keep the canteen clean and comfortable so that learners have somewhere to sit. They are always friendly and kind to us, so I felt that they deserved the same in return. My card said I should buy somebody flowers, so I went to the shop and got them flowers and a box of chocolates. I wrote a note on the box of chocolates that said, 'Be kind to our canteen ladies as they do their best to feed and look after us.' They loved the surprise, and it made me feel good to do it too!

Overall, the kindness event was an enormous success.

The second event, 'Get Fit for your Health and Wellbeing' was held in the hall and was also run by members of my class as part of a group project. Their idea was to run a number of fitness circuits which learners could take part in. The learner with the best time in each exercise would win a prize. This was also a tremendous success, and a lot of learners took part. There was music, fitness information on a PowerPoint, a BMI checker and lots of different activities such as a rowing machine, skipping and football games.

I personally didn't win anything, but it was fun to take part in the event and others thought so too.

When I asked one of my classmates, Jake, his opinion of Health and Wellbeing Week, he said "I enjoyed it, especially the fitness event. As an organizer it was rewarding getting learners engaged with physical activity, especially when it was clear they were branching away from their comfort zones."

I think the whole class would agree.

All throughout the week you could feel the good energy and positivity, it was clear everyone was happy and so many learners took part.

No Bars to Education in the Progression Unit's Education Centre



Maria and the team write:

The Progression Unit Prison was one of the recently announced FET Learner Mental Health & Wellbeing Accreditation awardees for their Prison Education and Red Cross: Drop in Centre. Here Maria Ward, Head Teacher, and her colleagues in the Progression Unit's Education Centre (PU), write about other successful initiatives and developments in the centre in recent months.

A First for the Progression Unit (PU)

Last year, on 6 December the Progression Unit hosted its first university degree awards ceremony, a proud moment in our history.

Three learners graduated from the Open University's distance learning programme, with the support of Education Services to Prisons (ESP) through a partnership between the Irish Prison Service, City of Dublin ETB, and the Open University of Ireland (OUI)

One learner graduated with a BA (Honours) Business Management, a second obtained a Diploma of Higher Education (Open) while the third graduated with a Certificate of Higher Education in Arts and Humanities.

The learners received their academic parchments following an exciting academic procession held in the church in the PU.

The ceremony was attended by John Addy, Assistant Director, OUI, Sheila Vaughan, Senior Advisor, OUI Blake Hodkinson, FET Director ETB, Stephen O' Connor, ESP Education Organiser to Prison Education, Assistant Governor Moran, Chief Officer O'Mahony as well as proud members of the graduates' families.

The learners themselves decorated the church beautifully making it a fitting venue for a memorable occasion.

Once the formalities were over there was tea and cakes to celebrate and we hope to hold many such events in the future.

Recycle and Reuse – two environmentally inspired initiatives.

A First for the Progression Unit (PU)

For the first time in prison education this academic year, the PU will be including the QQI Young Social Innovators Programme in its curriculum. Four of our teachers took part in the training in DCU and then adapted the programme to suit our learners and the prison community.

No Bars to Education in the Progression Unit's Education Centre

The programme provides a unique opportunity for young people to explore and take innovative action on an issue they care about, to engage with their community in new ways and to make a difference in the world around them. The project that PU learners are most interested in centres on the theme of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle and it will lead to a QQI Level 4 Special Purpose Award.

The Junk Kouture Fashion Show

Continuing the theme of reusing and recycling, learners will once again have the opportunity to show off their creative flair this month when they model their outfits for the Junk Kouture Fashion Show. Learners make and do with used materials to create imaginative outfits, which they then show off. Learners put on the first one back in 2022 and it was an enormous success, much enjoyed by the whole school. The upcoming show is causing plenty of excitement.



The Junk Kouture Fashion Show is very popular!



High fashion for St. Patrick's Day?

Words Galore

There is no shortage of opportunity for learners with literary aspirations (or who just want to get some thoughts down on paper) to express themselves. We have a regular Creative Writing class where learners develop new skills and share ideas. Several learners have worked with our music teachers to put their poetry to music, strengthening our cross curricular links. Some have taken part in the Listowel Writers' Competition while others have published work in **All In** the magazine for prisoners from across the island. There is the debating team and, of course, there is the PU's own school magazine - **The Insider**

The Insider started in 2022 following a Learner Voice focus group.



No Bars to Education in the Progression Unit's Education Centre

This learner-led project displays the work of the PU learners and includes poetry, art, pyrography, articles, school news and puzzles. Each prisoner gets a copy of the magazine delivered to their cell and the hope is that seeing the variety of subjects on offer in the school will encourage all prisoners to engage with the education centre.

Barista craft training

Finally, prisoners now have an opportunity to qualify as a barista. This has been a joint collaboration between the Irish Prison Service and City of Dublin ETB over the last two years. The course aims to have learners ready for employment on release. A stand-alone course, which consists of three classes per week over five to six weeks no wonder it's a popular addition since learners get to sample the learning in the cleverly named **Progresso** coffee shop!



Progresso Coffee

This is just a small selection of the commendable initiatives that form part of the PU's educational work. We will be hearing more from them in future issues, and would also like to hear about the work being done in other ESP centres across the City of Dublin ETB.

Supporting our Muslim Learners during Ramadan



Rory Nolan

With Ramadan starting on 10 March, Rory Nolan, from Crumlin Youthreach spoke to two of his Muslim learners on behalf of our newsletter. The podcast and article that resulted are full of valuable insights.

Click here to listen to the [Interview](#)



Rory writes:

Have you ever heard of Wudu? Why is Ramadan important to Muslims? Why is the Irish weather important during Ramadan? What does Haram mean?

Crumlin Youthreach is no stranger to diversity; at the time of writing this article we have learners and staff with familial links to twenty different countries. This diversity mirrors the changes in Irish society and although I cannot speak for everybody, I believe, the education received as a teacher from this diversity in the classroom is invaluable and priceless. The interview we recorded shines a light on many elements of Ramadan that I never knew about.

Our Interviewees:



From left to right: Jaber and Dowood

Our two interviewees were enthusiastic about sharing what it is like to attend school during Ramadan. First, we have Dowood Ahmad, who is half-Irish and half Pakistani. He is sixteen and lives in Dublin 10. He only joined Crumlin Youthreach this year.

The second eager interviewee is Jaber Alhamoud Al Housain who hails from Syria and is seventeen years old; Jaber lives in Dublin 6 and is also a new learner in Crumlin Youthreach. Jaber is an unaccompanied minor with a remarkably interesting personal story that we are developing separate to this article, about his journey to Ireland.

Physical and mental challenges

As I said above, learners can teach us a lot about their own cultures either from here in Ireland or as far away as Syria and Pakistan. This interview highlights the struggles faced, both physical and mental, by Muslim learners who attend school during Ramadan, struggles that will surprise many readers and listeners.

What can Irish schools do to help?

Once readers and listeners have digested all the interesting information around the physical and mental toll of Ramadan on learners during school, Dowood and Jaber share what they think schools in Ireland can do to support their Muslim learners during Ramadan while Dowood shares an unfortunate story from one of his previous schools and how it might have been avoided.

VIEWS FROM TWO SIDES OF THE DESK

In the third instalment from the City of Dublin ETB FET practitioners currently studying for the Graduate Diploma in Inclusive Special Education (GDISE) in DCU, Enda McConnell recounts his experience of observing classes in Cloverhill and Wheatfield Prisons while Sinéad Morrin describes her experience of being observed for her recent practicum.



Enda writes:

The final week of block one at the end of October 2023, saw us complete three days of placement in other schools/educational settings; the intention being to observe classes and to discuss with teachers, how they identify and differentiate for special education within their groups.

Firstly, I would especially like to thank Michael Roddy, Head Teacher, Cloverhill Prison and Brenda Fitzpatrick, Head Teacher, Wheatfield Prison for organising and facilitating my visits. I spent two days in Cloverhill and one day at Wheatfield. To get a real sense of teaching and learning at both prisons, I wanted to visit as many classes as possible. I attended music and art classes, nutrition, and personal effectiveness classes, ESOL and maths, ICT and many more.



I felt immediately that I was observing amazing work and engagement between teachers and learners. There was a real sense of bonds, trust and relationships being forged, with learners responding to the very appropriate adult learning models used by all teachers. There were obvious mild learning difficulties and other neurodiverse learners that I met in both prisons, where individual one-to-one sessions are organised for them, providing that learning support.

I also met several learners preparing to sit this summer's Leaving Certificate and two learners undertaking an undergraduate degree at Open University. However, my most memorable experience was seeing so many learners smiling and enjoying their daily activities and learning in school.

All learners were incredibly courteous and welcoming of me into their classrooms and I can't ignore the feeling that the teachers in prison just make them feel human again whilst they are there. Resources may be needed to embed special education provision and UDL principles into Cloverhill and Wheatfield, ever mindful that these educational settings are unique with their own specific challenges.

VIEWS FROM TWO SIDES OF THE DESK

We were told that 'Placement' is generally seen as a crucial part of our course, but I can attest that my visit to both prisons was a highlight moment in my own teaching career. Thank you again to all the staff at both prisons for hosting me, and especially to the learners, where the core principle of second chance education really applies.



Sinéad writes:

It is fair to say that being observed, no matter what your level of expertise or confidence in your own teaching is, can be quite daunting. The last time I felt under the microscope like this was in 2015 while I was doing my placement for the H Dip in Adult and Further Education. It doesn't get any easier, but it is a fantastic opportunity to reflect on your current practices and to increase your knowledge and expertise in relation to learner support. So, what exactly is the practicum?

As part of the GDISE programme, teachers are visited three times by one of the lecturers from DCU and observed teaching two separate classes in different domains. For example, one class might be supporting learners around Communication and Language and the second could be Literacy, Numeracy or Personal & Social Development (PSD). While having another professional in the room taking notes on your practice, might at first feel unnerving, the

wealth of knowledge and expertise gained from their input cannot be overstated. The key I think is to be confident in your own style of teaching while taking on board the specific domain-related suggestions that will ultimately help you to become a better special education teacher (SET). It is very much a supportive and worthwhile part of the course.

My first observation was with my Cultural Heritage Studies class. This particular course involves a lot of reading, researching, and using primary and secondary sources. We were learning about life in the Dublin Tenements as part of the local history module. I especially focused on literacy, specifically reading comprehension. We looked at using pre-reading strategies, such as Question Answer Relationship (QAR) to aid comprehension and make connections to what learners already know about a topic as well as their new sources. The second class, under the domain of PSD, involved a team-building activity called the Great Egg Drop where learners had to work together in teams, to build a vessel to protect a raw egg from cracking when dropped from a height. The focus here was on collaboration and everyone getting to use their voice. Team-building activities like this, as well as being great fun, are great for relieving the stress and pressure often found at this time of the year, as exams loom and assignments build up.

My third practicum will be sometime before Easter and critically this will be summative. It might be an exaggeration to say I am looking forward to it, but I recognise its value and will be sticking to my strategy of incorporating what we have been learning while remaining true to my own classroom persona.

Educational Spaces that Foster Safety, Healing and Growth



Claire Donoghue

Claire Donoghue is a Counselling Psychologist with the Psychological Service. Here she explains what trauma-informed design in an educational context is.

Trauma-Informed Design in Educational Spaces (TIDES)

In education, the physical environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the experiences of learners. For those who have experienced trauma, this influence is even more profound. Recognising this, the concept of Trauma-Informed Design has emerged, aiming to create educational spaces that foster safety, healing, and growth. The Psychological Service has partnered with some of our centres across the scheme in creating trauma-informed centres of education. We have worked with centres at how to incorporate elements of trauma-informed design in their buildings. This article explores the key elements of trauma-informed design, looking at lighting, colour palettes, furniture, safety, psychological wellbeing, and the fascinating field of biophilic design.

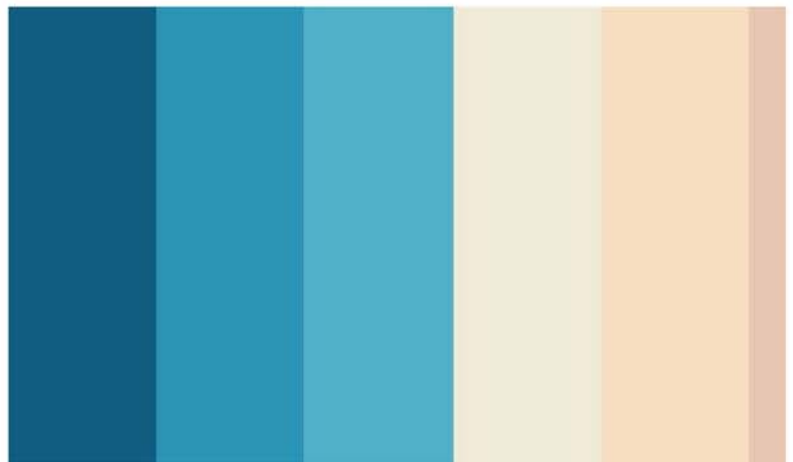
Lighting: Illuminating Learning Spaces

Lighting is not merely functional; it sets the tone for the learning environment. In trauma-informed design, natural light is particularly important. Its positive impact on mood regulation and overall well-being has been well-documented.

Adjustable lighting further empowers learners, allowing them to control their surroundings, while soft, non-glaring lights create a comforting atmosphere.

Colour Palettes: Creating Calm and Soothing Environments

Colours evoke emotions, making the choice of colour palette a critical aspect of trauma-informed design. Soft and neutral tones dominate, creating calming and soothing environments. The ability for some personalisation is important, as it grants learners a sense of agency over their space, while a consistent colour palette provides predictability and security.



Furniture: Comfort and Support

Furniture extends beyond functionality; it contributes to the overall comfort and

Educational Spaces that Foster Safety, Healing and Growth

support of learners. Ergonomic designs and versatile, modular arrangements cater to individual preferences, promoting a sense of control and adaptability. Soft, safe materials further contribute to a physically and emotionally secure environment.

Safety: Physical and Emotional Security

Physical safety is a cornerstone of trauma-informed design. Clear pathways minimise potential triggers, secure storage prevents distress, and dedicated sensory regulation spaces offer retreats for emotional self-regulation.

Psychological Wellbeing: Promoting Healing and Growth

Prioritising psychological wellbeing involves the creation of mindfulness spaces, engaging visual and aural elements, and opportunities for artistic expression. These elements serve as outlets for emotional processing, stress reduction, and community building.

Visual and Aural Interest: Stimulating the Senses

Beyond the static elements of design, dynamic components like visual and aural interest contribute significantly. Nature-inspired artwork, calming music, and even the incorporation of natural sounds stimulates the senses, creating a multi-dimensional, engaging environment.

Art: Expression and Connection

Art becomes a powerful tool in trauma-informed design. Learner art galleries, collaborative projects, and expressive outlets provide avenues for self-expression, fostering connections and building resilience.



Biophilic Design: Bringing Nature Indoors and using outdoor spaces

Perhaps one of the most captivating aspects of trauma-informed design is biophilic design. This involves bringing elements of nature into the educational space. Living walls, natural materials, and nature-inspired views serve not only aesthetic purposes but also contribute to stress reduction and an overall sense of wellbeing. In cases where bringing nature indoors is not possible there is the option of creating outdoor spaces that are immersed in nature and can also lend themselves to an educational purpose.

In conclusion, trauma-informed design goes beyond aesthetics; it is a philosophy that recognizes the profound impact the physical environment has on individuals, particularly those who have experienced trauma. By integrating elements like natural light, calming colours, comfortable furniture, and biophilic design, educational spaces can be transformed. In these spaces, learners find not only an environment conducive to learning but a safe space where their unique needs are acknowledged and supported. As we continue to explore and refine trauma-informed design principles, the educational landscape becomes not just a place of learning, but a space for healing, growth, and empowerment.

Adult Education Service Football Project Update



Alan Byrne

Back in September Alan Byrne, Education Development Worker with Dublin South Central Adult Education Service (AES), told us about the football project for learners in the AES he was in the process of launching (Vol. 1 Issue 4). Here he brings us up to date with how it is going.

Alan writes:

The football project is now in full flow with pitch sessions taking place across the city at various locations within the AES. We have had over 100 people sign up to the project with representation across genders. There has been a diverse range of learners taking part in the project to date, including learners from the literacy service, recovery projects, and community education classes. In addition, we are now delivering weekly sessions in some direct provision centres as part of literacy classes in terms of health and physical well-being.

We have seen some amazing talent and had some great fun over the past few months and will aim to keep growing the project to enable access to sport for all learners within our service. There is an important health literacy classroom component to the project as part of our literacy aims and this can be delivered in any centre or with any community groups as part of the project. Resource packs have been sent to all regions to enable this educational element.

Next up is our inaugural adult education 5-a-side tournament which will take place in mid- March. I am sure each region will have a team representing them with the chance to be crowned 2024 champions! I will be in touch with tournament details in due course.

If anyone would like to get involved in the project or know more about the classroom-based part of the project, please get in touch anytime - alan.byrne@aes.cdetb.ie

I would like to say a huge thank you to our volunteer coaches and ETB staff members - David, Sinéad and Cormac - for all the support they have provided to date. A project like this is not possible without the help of volunteers.



Since Alan submitted his update, the official kit has arrived!



RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING – WHAT ABOUT PRIOR QUALIFICATIONS?



Mary Stokes

Working to engage and support all, especially potential City of Dublin ETB FET learners, wide networking and reliable information sources are vital. In this article we're presenting information on developments and some great examples of work happening in City of Dublin ETB FET which we hope will be of interest and value to everyone working to engage and to support productive and meaningful learning for all engaging with City of Dublin ETB FET.

Viewing the evolving landscape of FET through a '**Recognition of Prior Learning**' (RPL) lens imposes understanding of the allied, yet different, challenges presented by '**Recognition of Qualifications**'.

As Guidance and Information Services, Guidance Counsellors, Recruitment Officers, and others providing career advice and information will know, the 'currency' and professional validity of all qualifications changes and develops over time. The EU Commission hosts information on their [Regulated Profession Database](#), while nationally, Recognition of Qualifications is supported through the [ENIC-NARIC page](#). The European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) were established to improve recognition of qualifications and periods of study in European countries and beyond. These networks, "are the result of an ongoing collaboration between the national information centres on academic recognition of qualifications of, in total, 55 countries." The national information centres are operating under the principles of the [Lisbon Recognition Convention \(1977\)](#)

QQI, who hosts NARIC Ireland, states "Statements for hundreds of qualifications from many countries can be downloaded from our database at your convenience. These **comparability statements** are designed to help individuals

understand their qualification in the context of the Irish education system and may help employers, institutions and other bodies with recognition decisions. The comparability statement offers advice including a comparable award and level on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and a description of the learning outcomes associated with the given level on the NFQ." In order to best serve the individual, it is critical to understand what the 'comparability statement' offers – generally recognising the person has achieved a 'level' that would compare in the Irish system to, for example, a 'Level 6 Award'. The website goes on to state: "There are a number of regulated professions in Ireland. Anyone wishing to practice in one of these professions, should contact the relevant authority and (the) list of Registration bodies for certain employments. Recognition advice provided by NARIC Ireland does not represent right of access to employment, a regulated profession or education and training.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING – WHAT ABOUT PRIOR QUALIFICATIONS?

Recognition decisions for the purposes of accessing further education and/or employment are made by education institutions, professional recognition bodies and employers."

As noted, **professional qualifications** are qualification requirements that a person **must** have to work in a regulated profession. Europe-wide information on this is also available on the European Commission's [Regulated Profession Database](#). In Ireland, the list of 'regulated Professions' is shared by [DFHERIS REGULATED PROFESSIONS AND COMPETENT AUTHORITIES LIST](#). Some examples of regulated professions in Ireland include electrician, teacher, architect, doctor, accountant, pharmacist, estate agent, gas installer, dental hygienist, security guard, and more.

So, for City of Dublin ETB FET staff and learners, it is useful to consider the 'currency' of all qualifications; those acquired in the past, or qualifications achieved outside of the state. This underpins an urgency to develop City of Dublin ETB FET understanding, information sharing, and collaborative practice regarding Recognition of both Prior Learning and Recognition of Qualifications. Further to this, the promotion of 'Learning Pathways' must be a priority for FET providers.

National developments such as the establishment of the [National Tertiary Office \(hea.ie\)](#) have as their objective the development of "Joint Tertiary Degrees... co-designed and co-delivered by Higher Education Institutions and the Education and Training Boards to provide seamless transitioning pathways from Further Education to Higher Education."

Meanwhile, the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) is tasked with delivering an "investment targeted towards increasing capacity in higher education in skills-focused programmes designed to meet priority skills needs."

The [HCI Investment targets increased capacity in HE Skills Focused Programme Design](#) underlines the increasing value in supporting FET learners to recognise their existing learning and a clear understanding of their qualifications and progression options.

Significant to the **City of Dublin ETB FET Learner Supports and Engagement Service** is the urgency for consistency and reliability of information vital to support potential and existing FET learners regarding qualifications, career development and access to FET – particularly for those from outside Ireland.

City of Dublin ETB Adult Guidance and Information Services, FET Guidance Counsellors, Guidance Information Officers, Recruitment Officers, and many other support staff in City of Dublin ETB FET provision support the delivery of clear and up- to- date information. A challenge can be in broadcasting this information across the whole of City of Dublin ETB FET Campuses.

One great example of current practice is outlined by City of Dublin ETB Adult Guidance and Information Service in Finglas, where the AEGS Guidance Coordinator and Guidance Counsellor Karen Granville and Adult Guidance Information Officer, Jacqui Mythen have developed an excellent 'Padlet' resource to share information:

Jacqui Mythen observes, "**The Information and Resources Padlet for Asylum Seekers** is a digital learning tool designed to provide up- to- date

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING – WHAT ABOUT PRIOR QUALIFICATIONS?

information on education options for those seeking asylum in Ireland. It is particularly targeted at those who have their work permit and are allowed to take part in FET. It is a “live” resource which can be updated as needed remotely and the recipient gets the updates automatically.



Karen and Jacqui have produced a Padlet resource to share information

In our Adult Education Guidance Service, we get a lot of queries from people seeking asylum who are looking to upskill. As a Guidance Information Officer, one of my roles is to provide educational information to the general public and I was seeing a real need for a tool that would help me to do this. In particular, residents of our local direct provision centre were dropping in looking for the same information on a daily basis. In response to this continuous demand for information, I created an online padlet which I would give them to allow them to go home and digest the information. Then they could

refer back to me if they had any questions. Of course, the Guidance Counsellor is available to meet with people who may feel ready to start a course...”

[City of Dublin ETB Adult Guidance Service- Information and Resources for a person who is seeking Asylum \(When they have work permit\)](#)

Crucially, “The padlet allows the client to have done their research **before** meeting the Guidance Counsellor.” This is vital – to be genuinely ‘person- centred’, information always needs to be contextualised and supported by the support staff available.

Yet another example of developments in professional requirements implying change for providers is the new awards standards for Early Learning and Care (ELC) developed to replace the ECCE standards at Levels 5 and 6. The implications for some City of Dublin ETB FET participants regarding their employment options have given rise to a proposed ‘Pilot’ RPL programme to support experienced former City of Dublin ETB learners who did not complete their ECCE awards at level 5 and 6 to complete their qualifications using the new ELC qualifications.

Meanwhile, developments continue at a pace. QQI remains a vital source of information, providing links to services and maintaining Ireland’s connections and supporting the emerging realm of RPL for FET and HE. QQI also hosts the link to ‘Europass’, a free online platform that offers a range of information, tools, and resources to help support those considering working and learning across Europe. [Europass | Quality and Qualifications Ireland \(qqi.ie\)](#)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING – WHAT ABOUT PRIOR QUALIFICATIONS?

With so many ongoing developments, City of Dublin ETB FET Learner Support and Engagement Service hopes to continue to support the City of Dublin ETB FET QADG Working Group on RPL and to share practice and support innovation in the months to come. We are privileged to be part of the Recognition of Prior Learning Practitioners Network Steering Group supported by QQI and look forward to participating at the upcoming International VPL (Validation Prior Learning) Biennale,

May 6-8th 2024. We encourage those interested in this active and exciting area to register for this event:

[Register here](#)



Join us for the 5th Validation of Prior Learning Biennale, located in Kilkenny, Ireland, from May 6-8, 2024.

The conference, jointly hosted by Canada, Ireland and the USA, will discuss validation of prior learning in the context of our conference theme: 'People, validation and power: democracy in action?'

Participants will have opportunities to explore approaches to validation, the systems used and the potential they offer. We will also consider underlying forces at play, challenges faced, solutions developed, and what all of this means for individuals, for societies, for skills, for inclusion and mobility in the bigger picture of our global practices today.

**PEOPLE, VALIDATION
AND POWER:
DEMOCRACY IN
ACTION?**



**LYRATH ESTATE
KILKENNY,
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ORGANISERS



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— Supporting the recognition of prior learning skills (RPL)
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A Colourful Morning in Ballyfermot Adult Education Service



The Ballyfermot Adult Education Service had a great Intercultural Awareness morning last week, organised by our Level 3 Personal Effectiveness class. The idea and the execution were entirely the work of the learners. They wanted to celebrate the diversity in their class, the adult education service and our community. They were supported and encouraged by their tutor Pauline Gallagher. **Catherine Twomey**, Adult Literacy Organiser in Ballyfermot tells us more....

We had presentations about different cultures, and we celebrated the history and stories of Ballyfermot. Nathalia introduced us to the rich culture of Moldova and brought some cherry delicacies for us to sample. Naz spoke about the diversity of traditions, religions and historical sites in the Arab world and gave us a belly dancing lesson. Guests who are living in Ballyfermot spoke about sport in the Ukraine and about the community of Irish Speakers in Ballyfermot.



There were people in the room who had arrived in Ballyfermot in recent years and people who have lived here for 70+ years and we all agreed it is a very special place.

Mamy Nzema, a founding member of the Sisters of Cherry Orchard, opened the event and spoke about how we can encourage inclusivity and celebrate our communalities as much as our diversity. The Sisters of Cherry Orchard are a group of African women who live in Cherry Orchard. They meet in the Blue Door project once a week where they exchange ideas and work on sewing with their AES tutor Elizabeth Tierney- they are active members of the community and will be participating in the Cherry Blossoms Community Festival to showcase their cuisines and the outfits they have been working on with Elizabeth.



Ballyfermot AES celebrating cultural diversity

My Educational Journey



John Poole



Hugh O'Callaghan

I met Hugh O'Callaghan last October when Garreth and I attended the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities (TCPID) 20th anniversary celebration Learning without Limits. Hugh was one of the graduates who took to the stage to talk about his experience studying at TCPID (2016 - 18) and how it had impacted his life.

After he graduated from Trinity, Hugh continued his studies in Coláiste Íde, where he studied Sports and Leisure Management. As an alumnus of City of Dublin FET College, I asked him if he would tell us something about his learner journey and he kindly agreed. The following is compiled from Hugh's answers to some interview questions I put to him via email.

I went to St. Malachy's Boys' National School in Edenmore in Raheny and then to St. Augustine's School in Blackrock. I was a student in TCPID from 2016 to 2018 from where I graduated with a Certificate in Arts, Science, and Inclusive Applied Practice. As part of this programme, I did an internship in the GPO.

I didn't always have an interest in sport. That started when I was aged 16 and I began playing basketball for the Special Olympics Killester Basketball Club. I learnt to swim a bit when I was about nine, but it is only in the last few years that I took lessons to learn properly.

After Trinity I went to Coláiste Íde where I did QQI Level 5 in Sports and Leisure Management. Then I did a Dublin City traineeship course also in Coláiste Íde which is when I got my Water Safety Pool Lifeguard Certificate and First Aid qualification which opened the way to my

current job in the Trinity College Sports Centre Pool where I work part-time as a lifeguard.

I found studying in Coláiste Íde harder than in TCPID because it is a mainstream college with no real supports like there were in Trinity. There was an ability program to help learners for the first two years but then it ran out of funding.

That said, I still think Colleges of Further Education (CFE) like Coláiste Íde are a good choice for graduates from TCPID or other people with an intellectual disability. It gives you a chance to improve your CV to get the job you want. Also, for example, I was allowed to split my Sports and Leisure Management course over two years of four modules each as I was under stress trying to do it in one year.

I think if CFEs could get teachers with special training to help learners with intellectual disabilities it would encourage more people with intellectual disabilities to do their courses.

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!

And remember, for the **March issue**, we would particularly like to hear from educators (and indeed learners!) who are involved in events for International Mother Language Day.

Guidelines for contributors:

Short bulletin: 100-300 words

Article: maximum 800 words

Please send any accompanying photos as attachments (don't include in the Word document).

Deadline for receipt of submissions for the next issue is **Friday 22 March** but please get in touch with me any time by email john.poole@cdetb.ie if you have an idea and want to discuss it.

The Archive

We understand that it is easy to miss out on the newsletter amidst the many emails you must be receiving throughout the day.

It's also extremely tedious when you have to scour through emails, trying to find one specific email or embedded resource.

To make it just a little easier, here are all the newsletter issues and direct links for each.

- **Volume 1**

- Click here for [Issue 1](#)
- Click here for [Issue 2](#)
- Click here for [Issue 3](#)
 - Included attachment: [Fintan Taite Graphic Harvest](#)
- Click here for [Issue 4](#)
 - Included attachment: [Learner Survey 2022-2023 Reports](#)
- Click here for [Issue 5](#)
 - Included attachment (1): [South City Singers Reel](#)
 - Included attachment (2): [Tracey Russell Interview Part 1](#)
 - Included attachment (3): [Tracey Russell Interview Part 2](#)
 - Included attachment (4): [AONTAS Photo Gallery](#)