



THE PRIDE ISSUE



IN THIS ISSUE:

- The LGBTQIA+ Quiz
- Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland 2024 Study
- The LGBTQIA+ Podcast

And much more!

Welcome to the last issue of the academic year 2023 -24.

In this issue, we anticipate Pride Month when rainbow flags fly in celebration of the diversity of gender identity and sexual orientation here in Ireland and around the world.

When you recall that it is only 31 years since sex between consenting men was decriminalised here, the extent to which the situation of LGBTQI+ people in Irish society has improved is staggering. Come June, there will indeed be much to celebrate. However, as the results of EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) survey published on 14 May show, for many LGBTQI+ people across Europe, life can be a long way from bells and whistles and colourful parades. While more LGBTQI+ people are now open about who they are, they face more violence, harassment and bullying than before.

The [Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland 2024](#) study from Trinity College and Belong To (the national support organisation for LGBTQI+ young people) published in April, also makes for disheartening reading. Máire Dooey, Senior Psychologist with the City of Dublin ETB Psychological Service and Carrie Archer, who as well as being PLD Coordinator, lectures on gender identity and sexual orientation on the City of Dublin ETB/ Trinity College Postgraduate Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion, address the concerning findings of the study from their different perspectives. Sneha helps to put this into the context of City of Dublin FET College, looking at the relevant findings from the 2023- 24 Learner Survey.



After that we have perspectives from a Youthreach centre and an FE college. Following on from his insightful conversation with two Muslim learners in the last issue, in this podcast Rory Nolan from Crumlin Youthreach speaks to two of their learners from the LGBTQI+ community while Howard Lodge, Director of Nursing Studies in Inchicore CFE, in his first contribution to the newsletter, writes about the college's Queer Club.

As society's understanding of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities has grown more inclusive, so has the acronym of the community celebrating Pride grown longer. At my first Pride parade in London in the early '90s, we marched under an LGB banner. In 1996 (and not without opposition) LGBT was officially adopted. Since then, the acronym continues to lengthen. Today Belong To offers support to LGBTQI+ young people and that is what we have mostly used here but LGBTQIA+ is now increasingly common and we use that on occasion.

Do you know what all the letters stand for? Before continuing, why not test your knowledge of the language of gender identity and sexual orientation in a quiz adapted from an activity Carrie uses on the PGC course.



[LGBTQIA+ Terminology Quiz](#)



Beyond the expanding alphabet of inclusion, there is the shifting connotation of words. Having been taunted for being “queer” as a schoolboy in the '70s, as a college student in the '80s, I embraced the appellation “gay” with the fervour of a drowning man grasping a lifebuoy. According to the prolific gay novelist Edmund White, the success of the 'gay' label was that it made no reference to sex so everybody could be comfortable with it! Nonetheless, I was surprised to discover recently that 'gay' had also started out as a term of abuse. Listening to Alby and Maggi on Rory's podcast the wheel may be coming a full circle, with “queer” largely rehabilitated, and “gay” developing negative connotations.

Elsewhere in this issue we meet some of the actors from Liberties College's production of Made in Dagenham which brought the house down during its four- night run in the Civic Theatre in Tallaght, we drop in on Pearse College's Graduate Photography Exhibition and Limitless Horizons, the AES Finglas and Cabra celebration of creativity and learning in Coláiste Íde and we cheer on the teams in the inaugural AES five-a-side football tournament.

Mary reports on the Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) Biennale she attended at the beginning of May; we check in for a final time with Sinéad, Susan and Enda, who, since September '23 have been sharing their experiences of studying for the Graduate Diploma in Inclusive and Special Education (GDISE) in DCU and we hear from Tom Shortt, Arts Officer with the Irish Prison Education Service on the Alternative Ways of Seeing exhibition. Finally, we report on Mountjoy Education Centre's Intercultural Awareness Breakfast.

We will be back in early September when we will be celebrating International Literacy Day, International Day of Sign Languages, European Day of Languages and Green Ribbon Month. We would love to hear from you if you have anything planned in connection with any of these events.

In the meantime, happy reading, happy Pride, and happy holidays.

John (john.poole@cdetb.ie or learnersupports@cdetb.ie)

In this issue

Pages

- News in Brief 4-8
- No Room for Complacency! 9-10
- Transforming Classrooms: Ensuring Authentic Inclusion For LGBTQIA+ In Our Colleges and Centres 11-12
- LGBTQIA+ and the Learner Survey 2023 – 24 13-14
- Planes, Trans, and Automatic Freedom 15-16
- Who's for a City of Dublin FET College Pride Event? 17-18
- LGBTQIA+ Pride Flags 19
- And the Winner Is.....Inclusion! 20-23
- "People, Validation and Power: Democracy in Action" - the 5th Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) Conference 24-25
- Before The Grease Paint Goes On 26-28
- Back to the Halls of Academe: the Final Report Card 29-32
- The Alternate Ways of Seeing Exhibition 33-35
- Breakfast with a Difference in Mountjoy Prison 36-37
- Calling all FET Educators! 38
- The Archive 39

Editor: John Poole

Photo and Design Editor: Sneha Sarcar

NEWS IN BRIEF

Liberties College's Made in Dagenham a hit at the Civic Theatre

Having had a sneak preview of a rehearsal, I arrived at the show with high hopes, but Lorraine admitted afterwards she hadn't been sure what to expect. After the curtain came down and a prolonged standing ovation, we were both genuinely blown away, outdoing each other in our choice of superlatives. Any notion that this might be akin to a top class secondary school production (Lorraine's old school could boast no less a talent than Paul Mescal in one of its shows) was completely off the mark. Here was a group of performers – actors, singers, and dancers – on the threshold of their professional careers.

The stagecraft they have acquired was evident in everything they did: the convincing Essex accents, the impeccable comic timing, the exuberant ensemble playing (shown off to great effect by the dynamic stage set), the seamlessly slick movement of props on and off the stage and that's before you even get to mention the leads!

The last musical I saw on stage was a West End production of Priscilla Queen of the Desert. Admittedly that wasn't today or yesterday, and my memory may have faded, but hand-on-heart I can say this production was every bit as professional. We look forward to seeing them on stage and screen in the years to come.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Thought-provoking projects in Pearse College's Photography Graduate Exhibition 2024

The opening of Pearse College's Photography Graduate Exhibition on 9 May was, according to course coordinator, Martin Clegg, thronged, with the families, friends, and subjects of the 13 learners who have just completed their QQI Level 6 fulltime photography course.

I was talking the Martin the following afternoon and while it was much quieter, there were plenty of visitors dropping in to admire the work on display. While portraiture predominated, the themes explored were wide-ranging: the housing crisis, dementia, girls' boxing, soccer,

Buddhism, farming and technology, the climate crisis, mother/daughter relationships, communication through eye-contact, folk remedies, boyhood, over-thinking life and ethnicity.

In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Martin and his colleague Dee White describe the studio space where the exhibition is on display as a place "... where we invited so many people from our wonderfully diverse college in to collaborate and interact with us." I was immediately reminded of the Personal Development class for learners with Down syndrome, whom I met back in February, who had such great memories of having their portraits done.



Solas meets learners in advance of FET Strategy 2025

When SOLAS asked the Learner Support and Engagement Service's help in setting up a consultation with learners as part of their development of the new FET strategy for 2025, we contacted Ballyfermot College of Further Education which had the range of learners (VTOS, Traineeships and PLC students) SOLAS wanted to meet. (A big thank you to Deputy Principal Kenneth Rea for all his help in making it happen.)



NEWS IN BRIEF



Ballyfermot College learners had their say with SOLAS

On 15 May, Garreth was in Ballyfermot College to welcome the learners and thank them for agreeing to participate. SOLAS got to meet 14 students (if not more) divided into 3 groups and hear about their learner' experiences at first hand in sessions lasting between 30 and 40 minutes.

After the sessions, the SOLAS facilitators gave positive feedback. We will have to await the publication of the SOLAS FET Strategy 2025 to find out if the learners were equally pleased!

Limitless Horizons: a celebration of creativity and learning

Over 400 adult learners ranging in age from 18-90 took part in Limitless Horizons, a celebration of the work of community education classes funded and delivered by the City of Dublin ETB, Adult Education Service, Finglas and Cabra.

This wonderful event, which took place in Coláiste Íde, showed off the skills and talents of their learners in art, creative writing, photography, singing and guitar, sculpture, ceramics, sewing, collage, jewellery horticulture, mosaics, and more! There was live music from the fabulous Forever Young Chorus, Dublin 7 Women's Shed choir, and the Finglas Guitar Sessions group.



AES Finglas Cabra learners were delighted to be meeting in person after the interruption of Covid

NEWS IN BRIEF



The D7 Women's Shed Choir



Forever Young Chorus

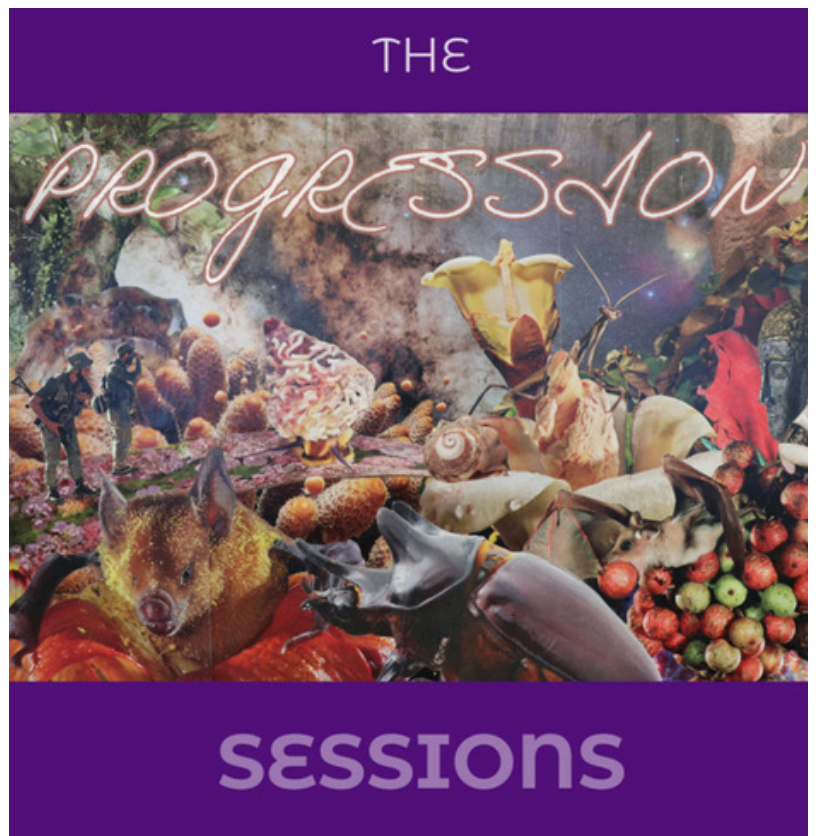
"Learner voice was an integral part of the event, from development to showcase," says Community Education Facilitator Clare Behan and on the day six learners spoke. Four of them read from their pieces of creative writing published in **Words to Picture Pictures to Words** which was launched at the event. It is a beautifully produced anthology of text and artwork which you can enjoy here

[Words to Pictures/Pictures to Words Link](#)

"The Progression Sessions" charity album launched in aid of St Vincent de Paul.

Following on from the success of its 2019 Christmas Album in aid of the Simon Community, Mountjoy Prison's Progression Unit launched a new concept album, 'The Progression Sessions' on 22 May. The artists on the cleverly named album are learners who share the experience of being in custody in Mountjoy Prison and the 14 tracks on the album reflect a rich and diverse blend of genres and themes. The songs are about love, family, despair, joy, longing, regret, remorse, resilience, and reflect the transformational learning journeys of these enhanced prisoners. The album was launched in conjunction with the International Conference on Music Education in Prisons, a four-day conference based around music education in prisons.

Link to buy the album: [Progression Sessions](#)



NEWS IN BRIEF

Quite apart from the money these albums raise for good causes, these multi-task projects where learners are involved in composing, performing and engineering , enhance their job prospects on release, allowing learners to apply for jobs in a variety of roles within the music industry including performance, composition/songwriting, sound engineering, production, studio management, music journalism, stage management, teaching and education.

Sewing and ESOL in Herbert St. Adult Education Centre

ESOL tutor Simone Van Horick contacted the newsletter to tell us about the sewing class that has been running in Herbert St. Adult Education Centre every Wednesday since February. Community Education tutor, Sinéad Kane, teaches the class of five women how to use an electric sewing machine while Simone provides language support through simplified instructions, visual aids, repetition, and one-to-one assistance.

While the learners are acquiring a valuable skill, they are of course also improving their communicative English in a relaxed, sociable environment. (Anybody who is a fan of Coronation Street will know that sewing and chatting go together as naturally as tea and biscuits). Simone says, "As the support tutor, I take immense pride in helping to guide them through this journey of learning and empowerment, witnessing their growth both as soon-to-be skilled seamstresses and confident communicators." Currently all the learners are women, but Adult Literacy Organiser Paulina Espejo says their doors are open to male learners.

Over to you gentlemen!



Sarah (Top) - Linda (Bottom) are both intent on becoming experts at stitching.

NEWS IN BRIEF

AsIAM Sensory Audit roll out

As regular readers will be aware the Learner Support and Engagement Service (LSES) first engaged with AsIAM, the national autism charity, at the 'Learner Support Network and Information Sharing Seminar' hosted by the LSES at Cathal Brugha FET College, in May 2023. Since then, for the better part of a year, the LSES has been working regularly with the charity. Following on from the three professional development webinars in October 2023 (still available and accessible at the links below), the second strand of this engagement has focused on the sensory and environmental evaluation of our FET centres from the point of view of a neurodivergent learner. Funded by the LSES, AsIAM has already conducted sensory and environmental audits of two colleges (Cathal Brugha and Pearse). Further audits (the financial term can be misleading suggesting huge outlays will be involved when in fact significant improvements can be made at very little cost), are due to take place in the new academic year and these will include Youthreach and Adult Education centres.

According to Katie Quinn, AsIAM's Autism Friendly University Coordinator, we won't need to conduct sensory audits of every building across City of Dublin FET College. The audits will generate a lot of recommendations that can be applied across different centres and the learning arising from the audits will be shared in future sessions.

- [Introduction to Autism](#) (PW: @O82Ea2\$)
- [Supporting Autistic Learners in Work Placement](#) (PW: !9=Z5%rn)
- [Strategies for Teaching Autistic Learners](#) (PW: D13v=9lm)

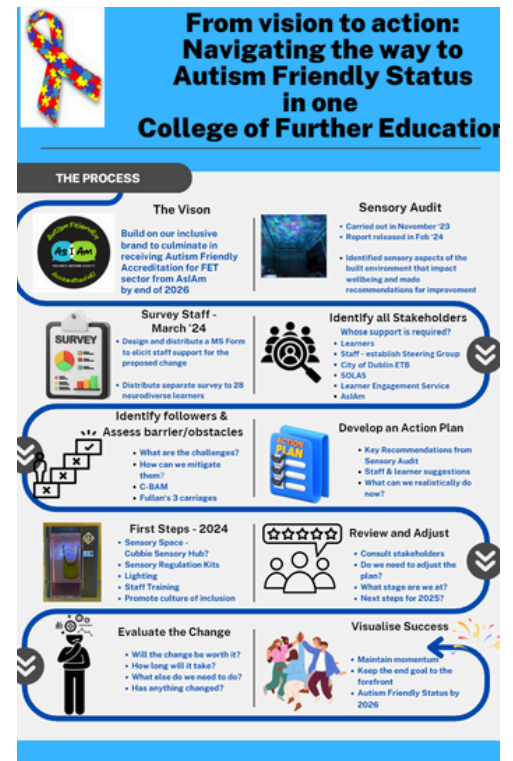
Lifelong Guidance network

This month has been very active in Lifelong Guidance counselling – on 7 May Gov.ie hosted a 'Lifelong Guidance Network' event to 'facilitate discourse on implementation of lifelong guidance to 2030 and showcase exemplars of lifelong guidance across Ireland'.

This event will be of significance to City of Dublin ETB FET Guidance Counsellors across the service and follows the publication of the National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance, and the Strategic Action Plan 2024-2030. Those Guidance staff who are members of the

Institute of Guidance Counsellors will be interested in the launch of the IGC's Strategic Plan 2024-2027 which names four Strategic Priorities, noting the backdrop and increased demand for supports for learners – matching the LSES Learner Survey findings!

[IGC National Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#)



No Room for Complacency!



Máire Dooley

The '[Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland 2024](#)' study is a follow-up to the 2016 LGBT Ireland report, focusing on the mental health of over 2,800 LGBTQI+ individuals in Ireland and public attitudes towards them. It was published this April (2024) and was headed up by Professor Agnes Higgins, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin, and Moninne Griffith CEO, Belong To.

Of concern, the report indicates that for the 19-25 age group, within the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland, there have been increases in mental health challenges since the 2016 study.

There continues to be issues with depression and anxiety, with an increase in rates of severe/extremely severe symptoms. Self-harm and suicidal thoughts have also increased. While there has been no significant increase in the use of alcohol since 2016, there has been an increase in drug use for non-medical reasons. On the opposite side, positive impacts on their mental health include legislative changes, making LGBTQI+ friends and positive media representation.

Overall, the report suggests that while there have been some positive developments in relation to policy, media representation and inclusion, significant challenges remain, particularly in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

The study suggests investing in accessible mental health services tailored for LGBTQI+ individuals, enhancing community support and developing inclusive healthcare policies. The report highlights the need for targeted support and interventions to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the 19-25 year LGBTQI+ population in Ireland.

Several recommendations are provided for educational institutions to support LGBTQI+ students. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

- Implement inclusive policies that specifically address the needs and rights of LGBTQI+ students.
- Create a supportive environment that promotes the wellbeing of LGBTQI+ students including access to LGBTQI+ affirmative services and resources.
- Highlight programmes that raise awareness and understanding of LGBTQI+ issues among staff and students.
- Ensure the availability of safe spaces where LGBTQI+ students can express themselves freely and receive support.

Educators can receive training on LGBTQI+ inclusion through professional development, online resources and collaborating with LGBTQI+ advocacy groups and organisations.

No Room for Complacency!

In terms of strengthening rights, enhancing protection, and providing supportive environments, there are further recommendations for legal gender recognition, hate crime legislation and to roll out the LGBTQI+ Quality Mark in schools and centres of education.

The report is very timely and informative. Despite legislative and societal changes, the report highlights that we, as a society, need to do a lot more to support LGBTQI+ individuals in our schools, colleges, workplaces and in our community.

The core values of City of Dublin Education and Training Board are Excellence in Education, Care, Respect, Equality and Community and our mission is to provide professional high-quality education and training services for people in Dublin City that contribute both to the personal development of the individual as well as to the overall social, economic, and cultural development of the city. The recommendations of this study are based on four thematic pillars, visibility, inclusion, safety, and health. There is no room for complacency in our schools and colleges when it comes to true inclusion.

The Psychological Service provides support to staff and learners across the City of Dublin ETB to promote the ethos and mission of the organisation and to promote lifelong learning for all in an inclusive environment. We are actively involved with student support teams in centres, we run wellbeing PLNs for staff, we are involved with the roll out of the 'Active Consent' programme in our colleges, in collaboration with National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) and we are providing a multi-cultural and multi-lingual pilot counselling service in Youthreach and Adult Education. We are running Youth Mental Health First Aid training to all staff who deal with learners across the City of Dublin ETB, and we run workshops in Restorative Practice, Trauma Informed Practices and Neurodiversity. We also provide an 'on-call' service that staff can avail of if they encounter any difficulties or dilemmas in relation to the wellbeing of their learners and colleagues.

To support us in education settings and in our city in general, the following resources will prove very useful.

The Department of Education along with GLEN (Gay and Lesbian Equality Network) has produced a resource for schools to support them in becoming more inclusive and safer for LGBTQI+ individuals. [Department of Education and GLEN Resources](#)



**Supporting LGBTI+
Young People in Ireland**

Transforming Classrooms: Ensuring Authentic Inclusion For LGBTQI+ In Our Colleges and Centres



Carrie Archer

In May 2015, two weeks after the successful marriage equality referendum, I submitted my master's thesis titled "How do further education and training teachers contribute to the (in)visibility of their LGBTQ students." My interest was driven by my experience as a mature student who didn't come out to peers and as a bi teacher who remained closeted for the first three years of my career. I wanted to understand how to ensure students and teachers like me could be their true selves. Although I use many resources to support LGBTQ+ inclusive environments, the recent Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland study (April 2024) did not surprise me.

It highlighted ongoing challenges, particularly for young and trans individuals, contradicting the misconception that the marriage referendum solved everything. Our work in education is far from done, as these students still face significant disparities in safety and belonging.



Over the years, I have used many publications and research materials to support my ongoing research and help staff create more LGBTQ+ inclusive environments. I wish I could say the findings of the recent [Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland](#) study, released in April 2024, shocked or surprised me. They didn't. But they did disappoint and upset me, making me more determined to drive change. There can be a misconception that the marriage referendum resolved all issues and made us feel safe and valued. This belief can foster complacency and inaction.

Despite positive outcomes, the report shows our LGBTQI+ youth under 25 and trans individuals still face significant challenges, disproportionately affecting them compared to the general population. These are challenges we, as education stakeholders, can uphold, destroy, maintain, or perpetuate. The stark comparisons with [the My World Survey 2 \(2019\)](#) underscore this reality.

In an environment driven by data and targets, are we really looking at the figures?

Compared to adolescents (12-19 years) in My World Survey 2 LGBTQI+ young people aged 14-18 in this study had:

- 3 times the level of severe or extremely severe depression and anxiety
- 3 times the level of self-harm
- 2 times the level of suicidal thoughts
- 5 times the level of suicide attempts

Compared to adolescents (18-25 years) in My World Survey 2 LGBTQI+ young people aged 19-25 in this study had:

- 1.5 times the level of severe or extremely severe depression and anxiety
- 1.5 times the level of self-harm
- 1.2 times the level of suicidal thoughts
- 3 times the level of suicide attempts

Transforming Classrooms: Ensuring Authentic Inclusion For LGBTQI+ In Our Colleges and Centres

The Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland report shows 47% of respondents found their schools LGBTQI+ unfriendly, and 47% experienced bullying, leading to poor mental health (p.11). Trans and gender non-conforming students are twice as likely to feel they don't belong and 1.5 times more likely to be bullied (p.13). How can our learners reach their full potential if they feel unsafe or unwelcome?

What can we do?

- Be an accomplice, not an ally. Allies support from the sidelines and cheer us on. Accomplices get stuck in. They take positive action. They take steps to ensure our inclusion. They "inclusify".
- Getting involved annually in [Pride](#) month, [Stand Up Awareness week](#) in November, the [International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia](#), is important but ongoing education campaigns and supports are crucial.
- Examine your environment. Do your LGBTQI+ learners see themselves. Look around the building. What do they see, hear, and feel when they come into your building, your classroom? What are the symbols they see? Are they represented? Are they welcome? What can be done differently?
- Explore your approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. What are the materials you use and the assessments options you offer? How are you intentionally including materials and resources that create visibility of our community? Are their images, examples, case studies, articles, books, videos that include stories or references to the community?

- Listen to your learners. Include opportunities in surveys, in feedback, in focus groups, in conversation to learn more and to hear what they have to say. Then act on it. Be an accomplice.
- Learn more. There are lots of resources out there. But you can start here with a [90 minute training online badge](#). It is for anyone working with young people who wants to learn more and to understand terminology, managing our own biases, what it means for someone to come out and how we can all improve our practices.

The one thing about education is that no matter how much we think we know, we know there is so much more to learn. Let's do this together.



LGBTQIA+ and the Learner Survey 2023 -24



Sneha Sarcar

During the development of the FET Annual Learner Survey 2023-2024, a conscious decision was made to ask learners questions around gender and sexuality, the premise being that if we were looking to grasp a picture of how diverse our learner population is and understand the niche pockets in which learners might see themselves as a minority, we needed to include the LGBTQIA+ community.

Additionally, it would allow us to gauge to some extent if our learners felt safe expressing themselves in their learning environment and if we as an organization, came across as LGBTQIA+ friendly and inclusive.



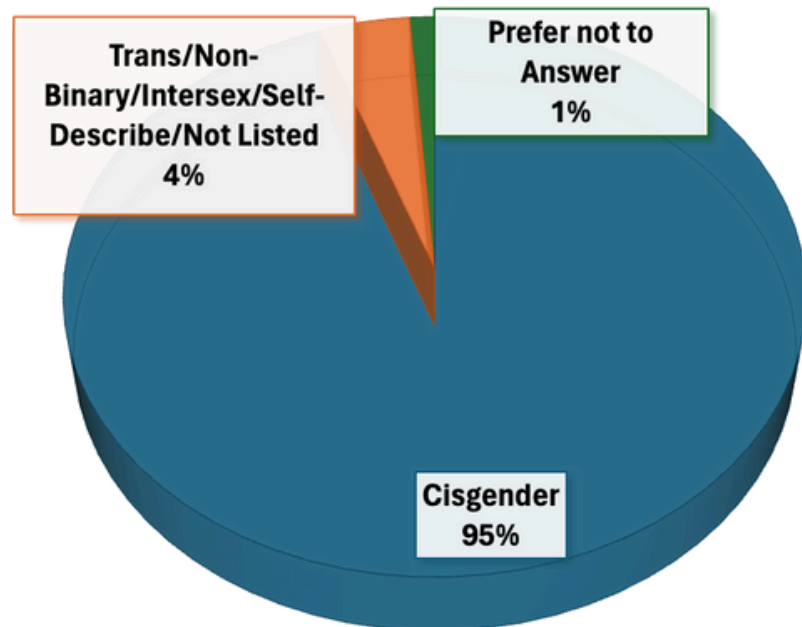
During the design and development of the survey questions, there was resistance to the questions we were asking in this specific regard, with some worried that it might upset learners and that perhaps, they might see it as invasive. It is important to highlight here that when developing these questions, we wanted to ensure that there was a sense of sensitivity in how we asked them.

For this reason, we provided an explanation at the outset, outlining to learners why we were asking these questions and for each of the questions (multiple choice), we included the option **'Prefer Not to Answer'**.

We then piloted the survey with learners from each service sphere to resolve any technical issues that we might not have considered and to temperature check with learners how they perceived the survey. Here again, it is worth mentioning that during the pilot, learners were curious about the gender/sexuality questions but upon explaining our intentions and mindset, they were on board and supported the decision, even applauded it.

The data we received was very informative and for the most part, learners actively engaged with the questions.

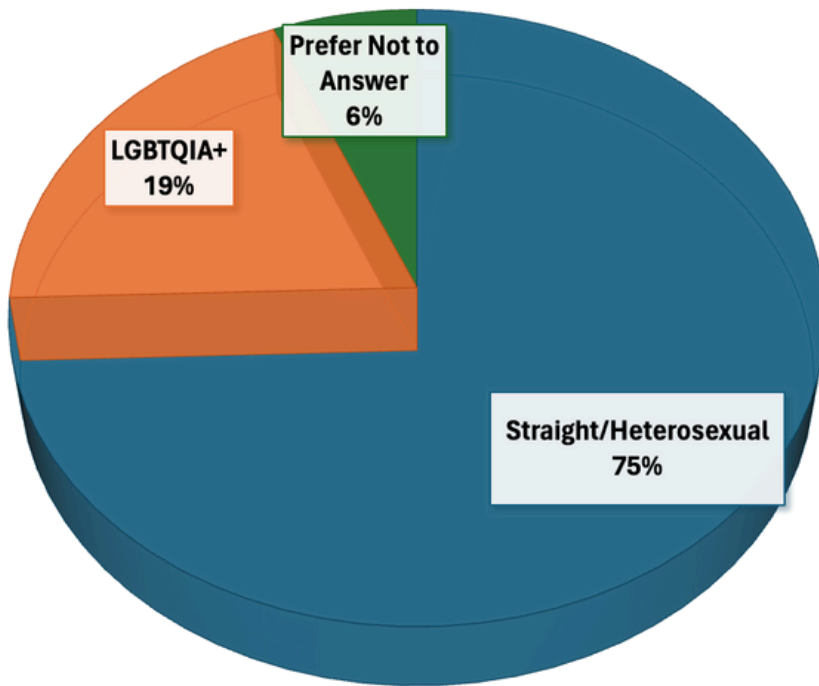
Of the 2586 learners who engaged with the survey (CFEs, TCs, YR and CTCs, Adult Education) **95%** of our learners are cis-gendered and **4%** of learners identify as trans, non-binary, intersex or prefer to self-describe.



Pie chart displaying data results regarding the gender identity of learners within City of Dublin ETB who engaged with the Annual FET Learner Survey 2023-2024

LGBTQIA+ and the Learner Survey 2023 -24

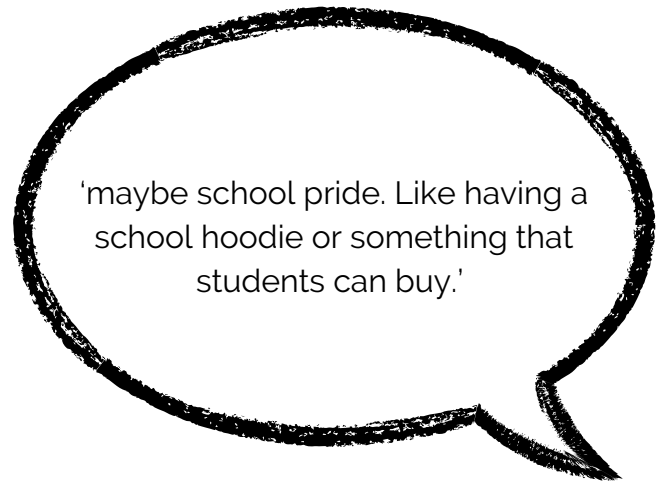
Close to **20%** of the learning cohort who engaged with the survey are LGBTQIA+. Overall, less than **8%** of learners chose not to answer the question.



Pie chart displaying data results regarding the sexuality of learners within City of Dublin ETB who engaged with the Annual FET Learner Survey 2023-2024

We also received some qualitative data from learners who selected the option 'prefer to self-describe' and 'not listed' where they shared how they might identify or how they felt at present about their gender and sexuality, which can be inferred as learners feeling safe in expressing their thoughts through the survey.

Here are some comments from learners about LGBTQIA+ and how we can support them better:



Planes, Trans, and Automatic Freedom

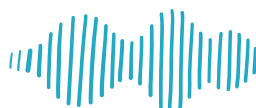


Rory Nolan

Who decides to come out on a plane to their mother? Is it even possible to come out to someone on a swing? Are school uniforms really uniting everybody? How does Crumlin Youthreach offer freedom and a clean slate?

Every day is a school day and with Pride month around the corner it was especially informative to sit down with two of our learners and discuss what it is like to be a member of the LGBTQ+ community in our mainstream education system and then afterwards compare it to a City of Dublin ETB Youthreach setting.

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



Alby and Maggi are coming to the end of their time with us here in Crumlin Youthreach, two students who have come far on their personal and educational journeys. When John Poole the editor asked if we could contribute towards this issue of the newsletter, I knew their stories would be worth capturing.

Having met in secondary school through a devious strategy by Alby which involved a fox and a Dublin Bus ticket, they have been inseparable ever since, bound together by their strong individual sense of expression and similar plight to understand themselves and where they fit in.

How many times can someone come out to their mother? Alby shares a hilarious story about coming out to his mother on an aeroplane but explains how it did not exactly go to plan, while Maggi's coming out story to her sisters throws up quite the surprise.

It was interesting to hear about their different stories when it came to changing their names in the same school and the different reactions they received, Alby especially, provides a deep insight into this experience as a trans man.

I listened as Maggi shone a light on the stifling nature of school when it comes to self-expression and how Youthreach helped alleviate that grasp.



Alby painting his mural



Transgender Flag

Planes, Trans, and Automatic Freedom

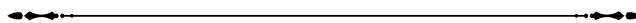


Maggie out strolling



Lesbian Flag

Editor's note: There is a loud noise very close to the beginning (disguising the mention of a school by name). Do not panic. The rest of the podcast will play without interference.



'Queer' was a word overheard during my own childhood as a slur towards anyone who didn't fit a certain standard as a male. Maggi goes into good detail regarding the terms rebirth as a term to describe a broad spectrum of non-normative sexual or gender identities.

The journey ends with some advice for other students in a Youthreach setting and beyond who may find themselves in a comparable situation. Their advice is founded in lived experiences that unfortunately and fortunately have happened. The advice didn't stop with future students and just like with our last episode there is advice for personnel who work in education and who may or may not have learners like Alby and Maggi, Alby's advice is considerate and constructive, Maggi's is direct and straight to the point, true to their nature.

Who's for a City of Dublin FET College Pride Event?



Howard Lodge

Fadó fadó, there was a 17 year old lad living in a dreary northern English town. He loved Miss World, Cilla Black (he had even designed dresses for her and sent the pictures to her management company) and the Eurovision Song Contest. He also had developed the most insane crush on a friend of a friend called Marc Smith, a stocky blonde lad, with a beautiful smile. The crush was a secret. He had no one to confide in, there was no support system at his college, no like-minded role models and certainly no safe space. This was 1984 in Hartlepool. The lad was me.

Of course, I had pals there who were generally the kind of people that got beaten up in the playground. Together we were known as the 'weirdos' or the 'queers' or the 'freaks' and we liked to crimp our hair and wear guyliner and bangles (hey, it was the 1980s). We also encountered our fair share of abuse and violent threats from people who hated our difference and our desire to openly express ourselves.

We had to learn the rules of life ourselves by trial and error. Even amongst ourselves, although we 'knew' we just couldn't say the words. There was nothing in the way of support groups back then and we were too young or too scared or too closeted to go to gay pubs (the nearest one was actually 30 miles away in the metropolis of Newcastle Upon Tyne). So, we had to be our own support group, our own support network, silent in our collaboration but there for each other. I will forever be grateful to the Heidis, Oonas, Jocks and Anthony Turnstones of this world for keeping my unspoken secret and teaching me it was ok to be me.

I vowed at the time that when I was older, I would do all in my power to enable individuals to be just that, individual. I would honour and celebrate difference and I would ensure that there was a place at the table for anyone who needed it. That place would be safe and comfortable, and people would find solace and support in the company of like-minded others.

Fast forward 40 years, Hartlepool is well and truly behind me, and I have arrived on the shores of the Emerald Isle. I'm now living in Dublin, a fully paid up Irish citizen and enter stage right, my lovely husband Seán. The world has changed so much since I was a spikey haired 17-year-old swooning over Marc Smith's winning smile. Now we have same sex marriage, employment equality, pan, trans, gender fluid people, polyamory, throuples, anything goes!

Who's for a City of Dublin FET College Pride Event?

However, within this new Ireland, this paragon of liberalism, it would be easy to get swallowed up by society and lose the identity we strived for so long to create. I'm not sure about you, but the last thing 17 year old me wanted to be, was mainstream!

Young LGBTQI+ people still need support and still need to be around other people who understand what challenges they are facing as individuals who don't fit into the heterosexual norm. As a teacher and out and proud gay man, I became very conscious of this within the Further Education environment. Going to college is a hugely important experience in life. It's an opportunity to truly be yourself and to meet others who are travelling on a similar path. So, cue the creation of the Inchicore College LGBTQ+ Society. We use all the usual cliches of the safe space, peer support, assured confidentiality, non-judgemental approach, yet here these cliches have meaning and resonance.

The society has been active for about four years now and we have supported young people who are gay, lesbian, bi, pan, trans, ace, questioning and allies thereof, in fact anyone who wants to be part of the gang. We gossip, we share snacks, we celebrate gay Christmas, we support, we listen, we play games, we organise drag bingo and gay cake sales and most of all we show the face of visibility and that diversity, inclusion and equality are the ethos of how people should be treated within Inchicore College. We also act as a resource to point participants in the right direction for forging a gay social life and finding the gay community within our beloved city.

My role in the Inchicore College LGBTQ+ Society (or Queer Club as we named ourselves) is small. I organise the room, I print the posters and I host the meetings bringing everyone together. The banter, the craic and the creativity come from the members of the group. It would be my dream for all the colleges in the scheme to have their own LGBTQ+ societies from which we could create a network for inter-college activities such as meet ups and even a City of Dublin Education and Training Board Pride event. (Hear! Hear! Ed's note)

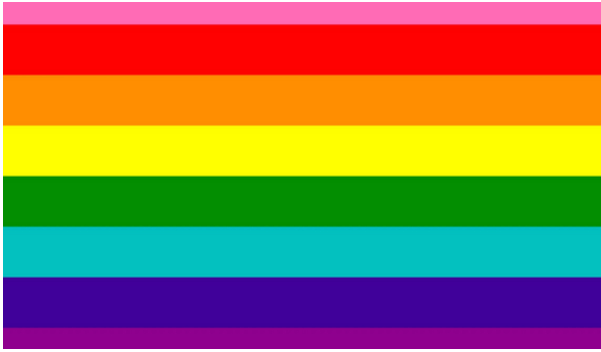
There has been so much learning for me in running the group ranging from the importance of intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ Community, the challenges of being LGBTQ+ in other cultures to the proper use of pronouns. It has also highlighted the need for on-going diversity and inclusion training across the staff in the scheme. Things change rapidly. Things develop. It's important to me, as an older gay man and a teacher that I embrace the new thinking and challenges that greater multiculturalism in Ireland has brought as well as the new freedoms of expression now embodied in the people who grew up in Ireland.

However, there is one caveat, change itself can change and it is vital that the younger generation are aware of LGBTQ+ history and how the community got to where it is today. We fought, we protested, we campaigned, we lobbied and we struggled. Our rights were hard won and can sharp be taken away.

PS I found Marc Smith on Facebook.....he's not actually all that.....



LGBTQIA+ PRIDE FLAGS

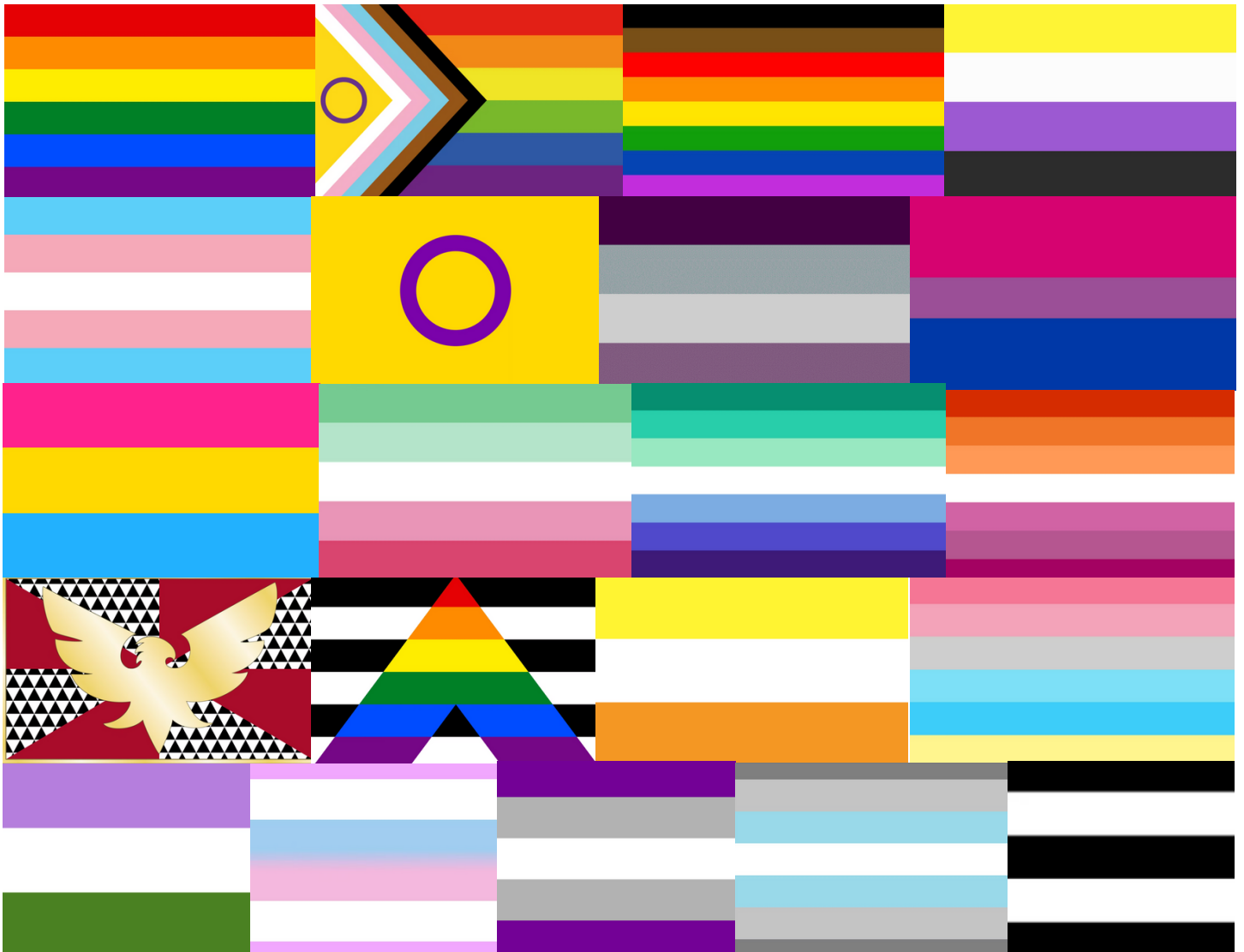


Rainbow flags have a history dating back to at least the 18th century, but since Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man to hold elected public office in the United States, asked his artist friend Gilbert Baker to design a flag to represent the San Francisco gay community, the multicoloured flag has become inextricably associated with Gay Pride and the LGBTQIA+ community.

The Gilbert Baker Pride Flag

Since the Gilbert Baker flag was first carried in the 1978 parade in San Francisco, it has gone through many variations and iterations. In the dark days of the AIDS pandemic, a black stripe was added to commemorate the horrendous loss of lives. Today, many groups within the LGBTQIA+ have their own flags.

To know more about the flags, what they represent, their significance and how they originated, click the link: [LGBTQIA+ Flags and What They Stand For](#)



And the Winner Is..... Inclusion!

In September '23 Alan Byrne, Education Development Worker for AES South Central Dublin, first told us about his plans to provide the opportunity for AES learners to play soccer in a project he was launching under the Literacy for All Strategy. In the intervening nine months, thanks in no small part to Alan's drive and commitment, the project has gone from strength to strength.

Alan Byrne



John Poole

When I went along to the five-a-side tournament in Pearse College, I got to see and hear first-hand how much Alan's initiative has meant to learners, above all to those from international protection or in direct provision who have such limited opportunities to play sport. (On the noisy sideline of the first game, as an example of the practical difficulties they face, Alan told me of one player who, the day before, had contacted him to say he couldn't take part because he had no trainers to wear.)

The players on the day ranged in age from early 20s to early 60s; they came from as nearby as Santry and as far away as Somalia and though they were mostly men, they were not exclusively so, with the talented Hannah Daly scoring the first goal of the tournament.

The project has captured the imagination of many across City of Dublin FET College, including Ballyfermot College-based documentary maker Clare Fox. Clare, who, we are delighted to say, first read about it in this newsletter, is making a documentary about the project that is destined for the documentary film festival circuit. (We hope to speak to Clare in our September issue about what attracted her to the project.)

In the meantime, we asked Dylan Hanna, fresh from his success in the Pearse College Graduate

Exhibition to document the tournament for us. Sneha has put together a collage of Dylan's work on page **22-23**.

On the eve of the tournament, Alan still hadn't acquired the trophies he would present to the winners. Another person would have been in a panic but not Alan. In Premier Presentations and Awards he admired the most expensive trophies on display in the shop, bemoaned his meagre budget before charming the shop into donating them!

Here Alan reflects on the achievements to date and sets out the next goal.

Alan writes:

On 15 May, as part of the ALL strategy health and physical literacy project, we held our inaugural Adult Education Service 5-a-side tournament. This tournament is the culmination of a lot of behind the scenes work by project coaches from across the city to deliver a dual strand project focusing on classroom - based health literacy and pitch based- physical literacy with social inclusion at its core.

Keeping true to our one service model, we collaborated with our FET colleagues in Pearse College who acted as tournament hosts and entered two teams of their own.

And the Winner Is..... Inclusion!

Key to creating a truly inclusive project that would encompass the needs of all learners, we set about addressing barriers to access to sport from the outset.

Through ALL strategy funding and support we were able to supply learners with weekly coaching sessions, equip teams with our first ever adult education service team kits, and supply training equipment where needed. Most importantly of all, we collaborated with local sports clubs and colleges who have provided safe and welcoming spaces for all learners to train and compete through the year.

Access to sport is key to driving extra-curricular activities for learners in the adult education service and addresses an existing gap in learner needs. By doing so we can have a positive and lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of all learners, widen participation in our service and break down barriers to participation in sport and wellbeing programmes.

On the day of the tournament, we had many diverse cohorts in the adult education service, play and compete alongside their peers in Pearse College. Learners from direct provision, addiction recovery schemes and adult learners returning to education after a long time away from learning all played with passion and conviction. It was a fantastic showcase of talent, with some brilliant games played and a great spirit of collaboration evident for all supporters to see.

In the AES Cup final 2024, Pearse College White team won out after a closely contested game against a very talented Ballymun AES team. The game finished 2-2 at full time and was decided by a thrilling penalty shootout. In the AES shield final, Finglas/Cabra had a convincing win against Pearse College Purple team to take the cup back to their region.

So, as we stand, it is one trophy to the adult education service and one to FET college. This leaves us with plenty to play for in the future. On the back of this year's training sessions and tournament, there are now plans to establish our first ever City of Dublin AES 11-a-side team to play and compete in college leagues and cups. Watch this space.

A special mention to the people that have helped to ensure the success of this project. To the coaches for their effort, determination, and passion for learner wellbeing, well done to you all and thank you. To the learners for taking part and working together throughout the year, well done and keep going! To the AEOs, CEFs, ALOs and all AES staff for supporting the project and championing inclusion, well done and thank you. To the ALL strategy team and particularly Andrew Connolly - a million thank-yous for helping us to break down barriers to access.

To the team in Learner Support and Engagement Service for igniting the flame and helping to keep it burning, our many thanks from all the learners and to our colleagues in Pearse College who not only understood what we are trying to achieve but went to great lengths to help us get there, thank you to your amazing staff and learners who were pivotal to the project's success. A special mention to college principal - Ciaran MacNevin and sports department co-ordinator James Claffey for everything during and leading up to the day.

Finally, thank you to Premier Presentations and Awards, without whose generosity, we might have had no prizes to present at the end of the tournament.

Congratulations to all winners on the day but the biggest winner of all was inclusion!

Yours in sport, Alan!

And the Winner Is..... Inclusion!



Dylan Hanna

Dylan Hanna has just completed QQI Level 6 Advanced Photography in Pearse College. Sport was the theme of Dylan's graduation show project, so when I asked course coordinator Martin Clegg if he thought anybody from the class might be interested in photographing the Five-a-side tournament for the newsletter, Dylan was an obvious choice. I think you will agree he has done a great job capturing the event.

Next year, Dylan hopes to take up a City of Dublin ETB photography residency based in the college's enterprise centre from where he will continue documenting the college's sporting life.



And the Winner Is..... Inclusion!



“People, Validation and Power: Democracy in Action” - the 5th Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) Conference



Mary Stokes

As a member of the QQI supported RPL Practitioners Network Ireland steering group, where I represent the City of Dublin ETB Learner Support and Engagement Service, I helped to coordinate and - along with my City of Dublin ETB QADG RPL working group colleagues - attended the “5th International VPL Biennale” which took place in Kilkenny from 6 to 8 May.

Jointly hosted by Canada, Ireland, and the USA, it was a truly extraordinary event, with 377 delegates from 31 countries represented. The theme and programme were inspired by the traditions of the Canadian Secwépemc Pelkwailc-kt es knucwentwécw-kt (We come together to help one another) and the Irish Meitheal. Participants were invited to ‘gather’, to collaborate, and to share experience and expertise, exploring the dynamic relationship between people, validation, power, and democracy in action.

Attendees from all around the globe represented the broad and evolving landscape of recognition and validation of learning. Validation and recognition are terms used across this emerging arena, however, the implications and procedures may vary – this being a significant element of the work that QQI have been charged with. The emerging role for access, transfer, and progression (ATP) across Further Education and Higher Education holds particular resonance for City of Dublin ETB FET in the context of engaging and supporting learners. VPL and RPL approaches and options are increasingly significant to underpin equity and inclusion, while it is vital that quality assurance and ease of access must be managed and maintained. Additionally, to better serve the demands of ‘upskilling’ and talent development, consideration of industry and employer needs are crucial.

The 5th VPL Biennale needed to facilitate a wide range of issues and considerations, an objective in which this energetic and engaging event really succeeded.

[VPL Biennale Programme](#)

Reflecting on the VPL Biennale Programme, it is remarkable that across the 45 concurrent sessions, the many panel discussions, lightning talks, table discussions as well as the multiplicity of networking opportunities, chats, and conversations, the common thread of a shared commitment to lifelong learning, to fairness and access, to supporting learners and developing reliable and cooperative systems and capacity building, was present throughout.

The common and shared wish to support people and democracy was vividly present and repeatedly evident. The vast and varied programme provided welcome, engaging, and thought-provoking perspectives, and Ireland’s RPL Practitioners Network, along with the national and international organisers did a sterling job. Opportunities for networking, learning and collaboration were remarkable and the atmosphere was positive, warm, and reflective.

“People, Validation and Power: Democracy in Action” - the 5th Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) Conference

Specifically relevant to City of Dublin ETB FET in our work towards the development of an informed and considered RPL system that will both facilitate learners and promote our FET provision, QQI's Head of International Mobility and Prior Learning, Andrina Wafer spoke to national developments. Andrina, who has presented to City of Dublin ETB FET QADG RPL Working Group is worth quoting at length.

“ QQI is the state agency responsible for promoting the quality, integrity, and reputation of Ireland's further and higher education system, ensuring that learners achieve qualifications that are valued nationally and internationally. Irish VPL policy, criteria and guidelines are now being reviewed in the context of our custodianship of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

QQI is charged with proposing a national approach to VPL, following years of organic, collective innovative learning and development that was nurtured in collaboration with our partners, both nationally and internationally. The emerging national approach takes account of significant progress within formal sectors embedding and optimising systemic responses to the provision of services towards the most effective, inclusive structure of systems. We welcome this opportunity to discuss some possibilities and challenges in scaffolding sustainable individual pathways for resilient lifelong learning with appropriate recognition opportunities in partnership with diverse stakeholders, considerations for the NFQ, credentials, standards, and assessment. ”

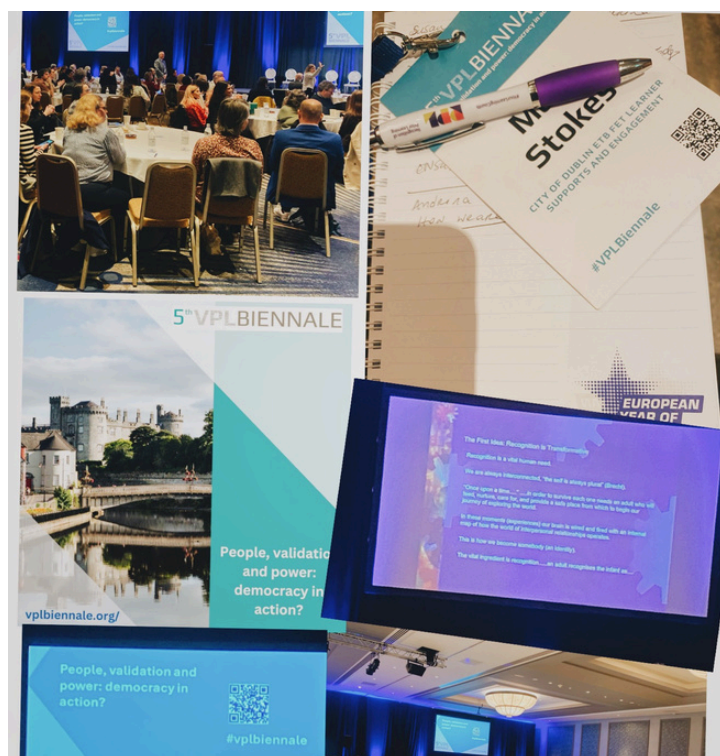
Employment and Community supports, developments and consideration of policy and practice sessions all offered perspectives and exemplars during the conference. From the inspiring and moving welcome session in Kilkenny's wonderful St. Canice's Cathedral on the Monday to the closing panel discussion on 8 May, this International VPL Biennale was highly motivating.

[VPL Biennale Speaker and Session Details](#)

[VPL Biennale Podcasts](#)

[RPL Practitioners Network LinkedIn Group](#)

[Irish Times - University of Life Leads to Serious Academic Credentials](#)



Before The Grease Paint Goes On



John Poole

It was their last morning rehearsing in Mark's Alley when I dropped in on the cast of Liberties College's end-of-year musical *Made in Dagenham*. The next day, rehearsals would move out to the Civic Theatre where the show was due to run for four nights. With under a week to go to opening night, there was a palpable air of excitement mixed with nervousness. Director Simon Manahan and Musical Director Brian Daly wouldn't be putting up with any media distraction as they put their performers through their paces! So as unobtrusively as possible, I snatched quick conversations with a random selection of the actors. I knew from talking to them about the ISICs back in November that they would have plenty to say!

I should have recognised **Ciarán Hayden** from my days teaching in Larkin Community College where Ciarán was an arts scholarship student. Once he'd reminded me, I remembered that he'd been a leading light in the school's much praised production of **Beauty and the Beast**. Here he plays the lovelorn Monty. When he graduates from Liberties, he's headed to the Brighton Academy to do a BA in Musical Theatre, one of five in the cast who successfully auditioned for places there. **Conor O'Brien**, who plays Eddie O'Grady in the show and **Laura Walsh** who plays the hard-swearing Beryl will be joining Ciarán on the Sussex coast.

Like Ciarán, **Sarah Brohoon's** involvement with the performing arts, started at a tender age. She was only three when she first went to stage school. In her transition year, Sarah attended the College of Dance to do their full-time dance course. Dancing is her passion, but she is also interested in casting and directing and the business end of theatre. She is planning to study communications in DCU next year but for now all her energy is going into playing the sassy Sandra. Of the current wave of Irish actors making waves, she singles out Alison Oliver (*Conversations with Friends*, *Saltburn*). Should I say actor or actress? Sarah says she's not fussed.

Adam McDowell is another early starter, going to stage school at five and continuing on to Youth Theatre Ireland. He's playing British Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson and throughout our conversation Adam is waving around the trademark Wilsonian pipe to great effect. He says it's a treat to play a real person. I asked him had he heard the salacious revelations of the week before regarding Wilson's private life. "I know," he says. "I played dubious characters in the last two musicals (*Kinky Boots* and *Young Frankenstein*) but this year I thought I had moved on to portraying a respectable, decent man only for this scandal to come out." He finishes by telling me he has idolised Andrew Scott for years and he is also a huge fan of Brendan Gleeson's



Before The Grease Paint Goes On

Towering over me at six foot who knows how tall, I wasn't likely to forget Fiachra Brennan whom I met last November when Garreth and I were in Liberties College for the ISIC photo shoot. Then Fiachra was gearing up to play the soon to be slain Duncan in the Scottish Play. This time he's playing Stan, Eddie's mate. Fiachra plans to do Drama Studies in UCD next year. With Drama, Film and Theatre to be introduced as a senior cycle subject for the Leaving Certificate Established in 2025,



Fiachra hopes he will be able to combine a career in teaching with acting. It may be a golden age of Irish acting but in Fiachra's words you are still "constantly pursuing possibilities."

Abdi Omar, who is in foundation year, is playing Ronnie and a journalist in the production. Although he dreamt as a child of being an artist, this was not an easy option in his native Somalia, where he grew up in a devoutly religious family. However, when he moved to Germany as a teenager he got involved in theatre as a hobby and on coming to Ireland he decided it was time to take it seriously. He did the Gaiety School of Acting's Irish theatre summer programme designed to introduce acting students from outside of Ireland to our great playwrights. Next year he plans to audition for the Lir Academy.

Standing out in the courtyard with Abdi is **McJesus Ngwa**. Like Abdi he is playing several roles, outstanding among which is his Black Elvis- like Las Vegas singer. It's hilarious. McJesus reckons he's been interested in acting for five or six years which makes him a relative latecomer compared to many in the cast. He mentions having been an extra in the children's TV series Little Roy as helping whet his appetite.

McJesus plans to continue his acting studies in Dundalk Institute of Technology's BA in Musical Drama.

To conclude I ask them both what they think are the prospects for actors of colour in Ireland. They are both upbeat believing there are many more roles today than even a few years ago saying it's important that there are people of colour represented on TV, film, and the stage in Ireland. Hear, hear to that.

Before The Grease Paint Goes On

The last person I speak to before the full cast is needed for a big song is **Lisa Golden**. She plays Claire who in Lisa's words is "a bit of a ditz" and a far cry from Lady Macbeth whom Lisa portrayed back in December. When I tell her I don't know any of the songs from Made In Dagenham, she says the cast were the same but now they have all fallen in love with the show. Lisa's talents aren't confined to treading the boards; she is also a keen photographer. She took the photos accompanying this article.

Before I head off, I get to hear the full cast perform the show's title song. It's a belter, which I am hearing for the first time. It leaves me very much looking forward to seeing them in action, on the Civic Theatre stage.



Back to the Halls of Academe – the Final Report Card

Last September we met five City of Dublin FET College teachers who had just embarked on DCU's Graduate Diploma in Inclusive and Special Education (GDISE). Over the year, they have been keeping us updated on the course and how it is affecting their teaching practice. Now, with all the lectures, assignments, observations, and practicums behind them, three of the five – Susan Cribbin (Plunket College), Enda McConnell (Pearse College) and Sinéad Morrin (Cathal Brugha FET College) share their final reflections.



Susan Cribbin

The GDISE was a very intense year but getting to meet with other like-minded teachers was brilliant. The course is very primary school and mainstream secondary school focused which didn't always correspond well to the setup in FE colleges. On the other hand, as a parent I now know a lot more about the CAT4 test, so parent-teacher meeting conversations are making more sense!

The stress levels over Christmas were extremely high trying to complete a personal profile to submit at the start of January on a learner we had literally just met when we returned to school in October. The course told us not to assess learners for the sake of assessing but in the same breath berated us for not having enough assessed information in our profiles. Sometimes, it felt like you couldn't win!

Profiling classes was interesting as we had to spend time actually getting to know learners rather than just pushing ahead trying to get the curriculum covered. Also, my adult learners absolutely loved the fact I was stressing over assignments and profiles the same way that they were.

After the individual profile was submitted. I thought I might catch a breath but there was no lull in course demands. Straight after, we needed to profile full classes and draw up long- and short-term plans. By mid-February, my family and husband wanted to divorce me!

The course was extremely demanding and at times I admit I questioned why I was doing it and how it related to further education but then you would talk to another student on the course or learn a new technique to make your classes more accessible- PowerPoint Live was a fun tool to promote with several non-native English speakers on return to school after the January block- and my faith and commitment would be restored.

The highlight of the year for me was taking part in the electives. I chose deaf studies which only one other student had chosen. It was a really intense week, but the lecturer Senan was amazing. Although there were only two students, we had two sign language interpreters, Senan and one or two other guest speakers. I learnt so much and really enjoyed it. It dispelled several of my misconceptions and I even got to learn some basic Irish Sign Language (ISL).

Would I recommend the course? First, I would stress that it isn't FE focussed. Second, you can forget about having any free time for the duration. On the plus side, meeting colleagues from other colleges and schools, sharing

Back to the Halls of Academe – the Final Report Card

resources and experiences made it enjoyable and helped preserve my enthusiasm and sanity at certain times of the year. So, that's a “maybe” from me, at least for now.



Enda McConnell

For my final contribution to the LSES newsletter, I'm going to focus on our Elective Week.

This was block three of the course and took place in February. It was the last time some of us were 'on-campus' with others 'on zoom,' while the whole class was back together for one last time, on the final day.

For Elective Week, the class was split up into “preferred” categories, with the course coordinator making a great effort to accommodate us all. We could choose from the following electives: SI723 Specific Speech and Language Disorder; SI724 Autistic Spectrum Disorders; SI722 Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing; SI728 Inclusive Education; SI729 Applied Behaviour Analysis in Education; SI730 Dyslexia/Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) and finally, SI731 Wellness.

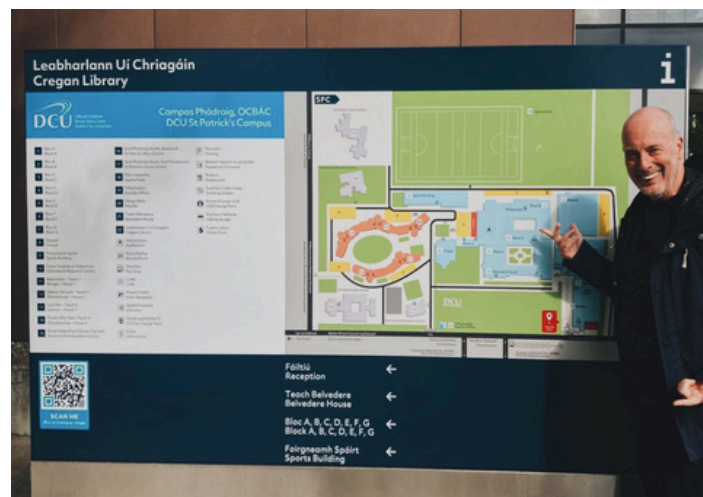
I chose SI730, as I felt that this SLD is the one I have encountered most often with my FET learners.

The elective involved various aspects such as the impact of dyslexia at a cognitive level, the challenge of impaired phonological awareness, and the social and emotional aspects of dyslexia.

A good starting point was getting the terminology right. According to the Dyslexia Association of Ireland the terms 'person with dyslexia' and 'dyslexic person' can be used interchangeably to reflect differences in preference and use. In choosing between person first and identity first language, the key is to be guided by the learner.

We have all experienced learners at FE colleges who present with various challenges in reading and writing communication.

They may have issues around planning and sequencing assignments and poor retention of information/knowledge, due to a lack of reading skills. Poor syntax, spelling and grammatical errors pose barriers to effective written communication. The inability to proofread and poor notetaking are among some of the other problems encountered.



By and large people with dyslexia in FE colleges have not been formally assessed, but there are informal assessments which can be completed by special education teachers (SET) and/or regular FET teachers, to assess reading and writing standards. The debate as to whether we should assess for literacy difficulties or assess for dyslexia, means that

Back to the Halls of Academe – the Final Report Card

some learners are singled out for learning supports while a lot of other learners receive no support, even though they require it.

Informal literacy assessments are only valid if they help the learners to learn. These may include phonological awareness (PASS test), quick phonics screener, single word reading with word count per minute and accuracy, text reading, working memory tests, spelling, and writing exercises.

The elective also looked at practical aspects for schools/colleges involving screening, and assessing for dyslexia, considering dyslexia, as a neurodiversity, developing dyslexia aware schools/colleges, and finally identifying assistive technology for our dyslexic learners.

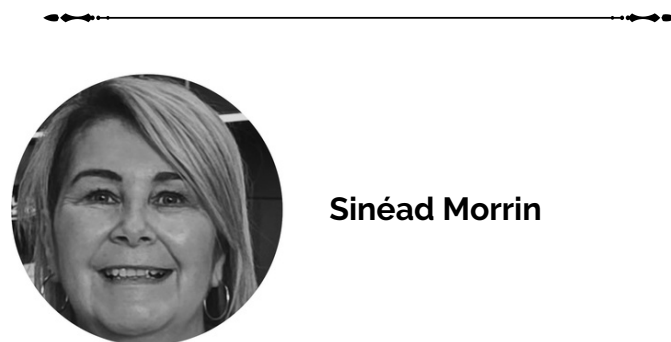
All the above is working towards "the dyslexia friendly school" a concept which was developed by the British Dyslexia Association and ensures that excellence is achieved by replacing current practice with best practice, setting, monitoring, and reviewing learners progress, and intervening when required using a strengths-based approach.

At the centre of this change is the mainstream teacher using inclusion and differentiation in their classrooms. Audits can be conducted in our FE colleges to see what gaps in knowledge exist and what recommendations can be made at a whole school/college level.

This- elective week was intensive, challenging but ultimately rewarding and enjoyable, as indeed was the whole course. I will strive to implement the new knowledge gained into my dyslexia friendly classroom, using as much assistive technology as I can - for example, the

'reading progress' tool on Microsoft Teams which assists in assessing learners' own reading fluency and progress, independently.

In conclusion, the course is very worthwhile, and I would recommend others to take the DCU plunge. The diploma aims to transform mainstream teaching into teaching that recognises diverse learning profiles, promoting a teaching and learning strategy which ensures no learner is left behind.



Sinéad Morrin

Reflecting on the past year and my participation on the GDISE, it is amazing how much we can learn and grow when faced with challenges. Having submitted my last assignment late on Easter Saturday night, I am realising what a whirlwind of a year it has been. The workload might have seemed endless at times, but I can now appreciate the knowledge and skills I have gained and the wonderful connections I have made.

The above mentioned assignment was for the Collaboration & Leadership module and was a very practical application of the new knowledge and skills we were acquiring.

We were tasked with creating a vision for a change that we would like to make in our settings to help improve the sense of belonging for learners and strengthen our inclusive ethos.

Back to the Halls of Academe – the Final Report Card

Building on the Sensory Audit of Cathal Brugha FET College, carried out by AsIAM and funded by the LSES. I developed a three-year plan for the college potentially gaining official accreditation from AsIAM as an Autism Friendly Campus, should this become available to colleges of further education in the future.

It is currently only available to Higher Education colleges.



The first step involved identifying and surveying some of the key stakeholders (Learners, College staff, City of Dublin ETB, SOLAS, AsIAM and the Learner Support and Engagement Service) to ascertain the relevance, level of readiness and resources available.

There was an excellent response to the staff survey with 40% of respondents expressing an interest in actively getting involved with the initiative. The next step was creating a plan for the stages involved and considering how as a leader, I could effectively develop this project and evaluate its potential impact.

This required me to consider the potential obstacles and challenges and how I might mitigate them as well as taking on board the recommendations of the AsIAM sensory audit report and suggestions from staff and learners. I then considered what the first steps would be – what could I realistically achieve by the end of this academic year and into the next.

Overall, I found this assignment to be the most interesting and worthwhile of the course - it was not just academically enriching but it was also an opportunity to create meaningful change.

From a professional perspective, it allowed me to develop my leadership skills and take time to meaningfully consider the evolution of change management in an educational setting and what my role in that process might be.

Free now from the pressures of assignments, I look forward to putting my plans and ideas into action and ensuring that Cathal Brugha FET Campus is a welcoming, inclusive environment where all learners can flourish and feel a sense of belonging.



The Alternative Ways of Seeing Exhibition



Tom Shortt

Alternative Ways of Seeing at Rua Red the South Dublin Arts Centre in Tallaght from 20 March to 27 April was the first national exhibition of the art and craftwork of prisoners organised since the pandemic. The exhibition featured work made by men and women detained in fourteen prisons around the country, of which seven are in Dublin.

Here, Tom Shortt, Arts Officer with the Irish Prison Education Service writes about the exhibition and the role of the arts in prison education.

There is a school providing second-chance education in every prison, and ETB teachers go through airport style security each day to get to their classrooms. Prisoners who choose to attend (approx. 40%) make their way from the prison landings to the school under the supervision of dedicated prison schools' officers, and a prisoner's name must be on a roll call in order to make that journey to escape the boredom of the landing for a few hours. Meanwhile other prisoners prefer to go to the gym, or to work as cleaners or in the kitchens, and many prisoners work and attend education to keep themselves busy.

Art classes are very popular in prison schools and artist Eddie Cahill was invited to visit prison art rooms and craft workshops to select the exhibition at Rua Red. Cahill, a former prisoner, is an inspirational figure in the world of prison arts as he succeeded in transforming his own life, motivated by a positive experience of art in prison. He explains how he spent an eight-year sentence in the prison gym but when sentenced to a second term, and determined to change his life, he decided against the gym the second time round, and to his surprise, found what he was looking for in an art class. He discovered a talent for painting that he wasn't aware he had, and as he worked at making art he forged a new identity for himself and left his criminal career behind.

Today he creates powerful paintings, full of insights on the causes of crime, and the traumatic outcomes suffered by victims and offenders. Eddie put his heart and soul into the selection process for the exhibition. He visited six of the seven prisons in Dublin and others around the country, and he devised the title Alternative Ways of Seeing for the exhibition. Eddie is an advocate for prison education and prisoners showed him a lot of respect when he visited prison art classes. They appreciated what he has achieved and what he had to say, and as a result it became an exhibition that belonged to prisoners because of Eddie's input and presence.

The work was made in classrooms and cells in fourteen prisons in the Republic, one prison in Northern Ireland and in post-release centres. Eddie's lived experience of incarceration and the therapeutic power of art to overcome trauma informs his selection. The exhibition reflects how the absorbing activity of making art changes lives, boosts self-esteem and improves attitudes, leading to a reduction in offending behaviour and reduced recidivism. Prisoners work independently, with teachers and with visiting artists, producing deeply symbolic drawings, fascinating landscapes, time consuming models, colourful and creative work in ceramics, fabrics, glass, typography,

The Alternative Ways of Seeing Exhibition

printmaking, leather, stone, metal and wood, and a highlight of the exhibition is a model made of bread.

Visitors found the work both moving and meaningful. One man in Cloverhill carved panda bears from soap for his nine-year-old daughter. In Cork a man built a brightly coloured and fully furnished doll's house from recycled materials.



A model maker in Wheatfield made an old sailing ship and a barrel top wagon from matchsticks with a real sense of history and heritage. In contrast, a man in Castlerea made a perfectly modern tow truck and caravan with lollipop sticks. His attention to detail included a car jack and tools lying on the flatbed of the tow truck.



Paintings featured in contrasting styles, from a Mountjoy surrealist to a woman in Dochas who created huge enigmatic drawings with markers on prison bed sheets. A man in Portlaoise explained his atmospheric landscapes, how one was a scene he glimpsed from a prison van on his way to court, and how he could not wait to get back to the prison to capture it in paint on canvas. He was in care since the age of six, and seeing his paintings triggered Eddie to talk about the time he escaped from the infamous Daingean Reformatory aged thirteen, and spent two days trying to find his way out of the bog of Allen before making it home to Crumlin on a bicycle five days later.

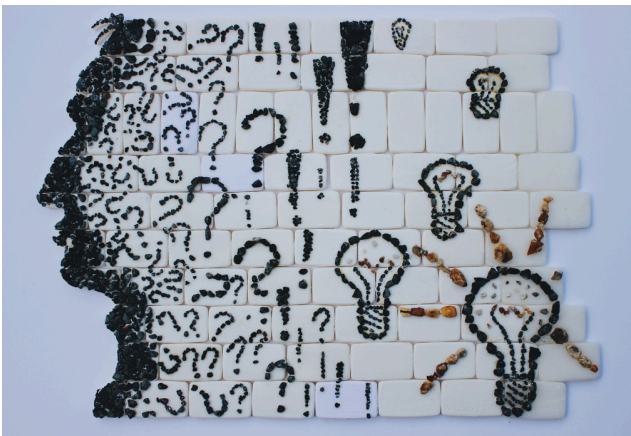


There were two ceramic pit bull terriers made by a man in Limerick, and three large ceramic pots by a man in Cork with scenes he painted on them of the riots on Spike Island in 1985. The artist was one of the rioters, and when the pots were shown in the annual Cork Prison summer exhibition on Spike in 2022 they inspired a documentary titled *Spontaneous Madness*, about the pots and the riots, and you can listen back to it on the RTE Radio 1 Player. This year's exhibition of art work by Cork prisoners will be part of the experience of a visit to Spike Island from 1 June.

The Alternative Ways of Seeing Exhibition

Interviews with three of the artists with work in the exhibition recorded in Portlaoise prison were broadcast on the Claire Byrne Show on RTE Radio 1 on 8 March. One prisoner, released that day from Loughan House Open Prison, came directly to the exhibition on the opening night to see the ceramic heads he made, and the family of a man from Tallaght, also in Loughan House, who makes enormous handstitched patchwork quilts were there on his behalf.

Detailed abstract compositions in pen and ink by a man in Magilligan Prison were included to reflect the close links with Prison Arts Foundation, the organisation that promotes the arts in prisons in Northern Ireland, reflecting how the common language of art crosses borders and boundaries. The exhibition has ended but the legacy of Alternative Ways of Seeing lives on.



Breakfast With A Difference in Mountjoy Prison

When Dr. Anne Costelloe, Head Teacher in the Education Centre in Mountjoy Prison invited staff from the LSES to join their ESOL, Traveller and Gaisce learners for an Intercultural Awareness Breakfast on 24 May, I had no idea what to expect but was delighted to accept. Having recently heard Anne trenchantly defend the case for education in prisons, in a lecture on the PGC in Diversity and Inclusion course, I was very interested to see what this looked like in practice. Not to mention the opportunity to see inside the historic prison.

While we waited to be brought through security, we had the opportunity to chat to some of our fellow guests including representatives of St Stephen's Green Trust, Exchange House, Barka (the eastern European NGO), Gaisce, the President's Award and the Traveller Justice Initiative.



Standing in the famed "circle" where the four main wings A to D converge, I had that sensation I always get when I step into a place steeped in history.

Sneha, who had been in the prison a few weeks previously to conduct focus groups, explained the different categories of prisoners on each wing. The narrow, metal spiral stairs, rising up through three landings evoked a film set but, of course, this was real life.

As we climbed a different set of stairs to where the event was taking place, there were eye-catching examples of the prisoners' artwork on the walls. The hall itself was decorated with flag bunting representing countries from around the world. The food laid out on the tables was also identified by little flags indicating its provenance.

There were no fewer than five guitarists on hand to entertain us as we tucked in to a selection of treats from a Polish potato, chicken and dill soup to a Brazilian carrot and orange cake, both made by the prisoners. There were pancakes and pastries, fresh fruit, cold meats, pickles and dips, far more than any table could manage. Spotting one man discreetly putting a few croissants in a plastic bag before secreting them away for later consumption, I was reminded of certain of my fellow students at the boarding school I went to.



Breakfast With A Difference in Mountjoy Prison

We were entertained with card tricks that had the audience gasping and clapping in appreciation. I heard several people say they wouldn't be playing poker with the conjuror anytime soon but at the end of the breakfast, a crowd gathered around him wanting a repeat performance and a closer look.

There were autobiographical readings by learners who had had to wait for a prison sentence to have a proper opportunity to learn to read and write, stories that were both funny and sad. There were poetry readings by seasoned veterans of several of the country's writing competitions including Listowel Writers' Week's Prison Writing Competition and DCU Library's creative writing competition. (Literacy tutor Margaret Hannigan is always on the look out for sponsors to cover the cost of those competitions that charge an entry fee!)

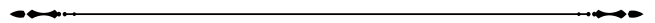
In one corner, art teacher Eleanor Jones presided over a pop up art wall where learners displayed their artistic talents writing the word for "love" in their mother languages.



There were a few solo songs, including a rendition of 'The Girl from Ipanema' in Portuguese and a rousing version of 'Spencil Hill', the musical entertainment ending appropriately with 'The Auld Triangle'. No longer used to rouse the prisoners in the morning, it is still an important part of the prison's culture.

Speaking to Stephen O'Connor, Organiser of City of Dublin ETB Education Service to Prisons, he told us how different the mood is in the education centre compared to on the wings, and the role the education service plays in reducing tension in the prison. Looking around at the cheerful faces, I could well believe it. The atmosphere all morning had been one of boisterous good humour and as I heard the prisoners thanking Anne as they returned to their cells, it was clear they were genuinely appreciative.

The main drivers of the event – ESOL teacher Natalia Walsh, Gaisce teacher Sadhbh Ní Bhaoill, Traveller Liaison, June Edwards and art teacher Eleanor – deserve high praise. It was indeed a memorable morning.



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 issue.

- 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 **September issue**, we would particularly like to hear from educators (and indeed learners!) who are involved in events related to International Adult Literacy Day, International Day of Sign Languages, and European Day of Languages.

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 **Monday 26 August** 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](#)
- Click here for [Issue 6](#)
 - Included attachment (1): [Muslim students attending school during Ramadan](#)
 - Included attachment (2): [Rathmines - International Mother Tongue Day](#)

- **Volume 2**

- Click here for [Issue 1](#)
 - Included attachment: ['The Traveller Way'](#)