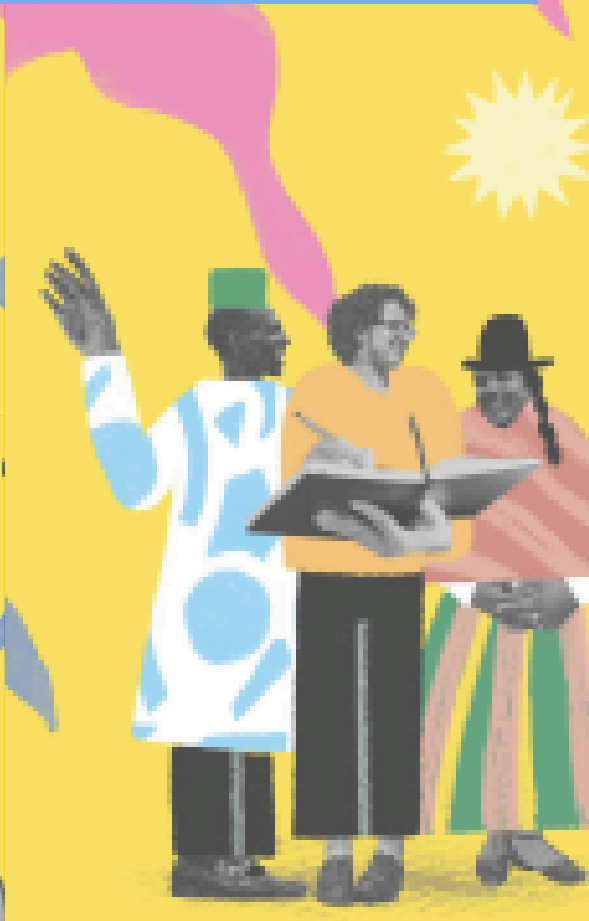




The International Literacy Day Issue



Welcome to the Learner Support and Engagement Service's first newsletter of the 2024-25 academic year. I hope everybody has managed to have an enjoyable summer, despite the less than brilliant weather.

Personally, I've always found the beginning of autumn much more conducive to making resolutions than the middle of winter. My good intention for the newsletter for 2024 – 25 is for it to be slimmer, prompter and more frequent. From this issue, the plan is to be monthly, going out in the first week or 10 days. We hope, in this way, to be able to anticipate important dates from our diversity and inclusion calendar, that will encourage centres to mark and celebrate those that are most meaningful for their learners.

On page **2**, Lorraine outlines what is in the pipeline for our service in the coming months and, of course, as always, we're very keen to hear what you are planning and organising.

In this issue, to mark International Literacy Day, we have a selection of short articles showcasing the sterling work being done across City of Dublin ETB in the literacy field and reflecting the diversity of the learners whose literacy needs are being served.



After a brief introduction to the Adult Education Service's work in the area, by Máirín Kenny, Adult Education Officer (AEO) City of Dublin ETB North Central & Ballymun Adult Education Service Regional Office, you will hear from Andrew Connolly about his work as a Literacy Regional Coordinator and from John Hitchcock, one of our Learner Ambassadors and literacy learners in Ballymun Adult Education Centre. You can read about a voter registration day in Parnell Adult Education Centre, and ESOL and Gardening. Colleen Brennan, this summer's intern with the Youth Education Service (YES) writes about her experience working with young refugees and migrants to improve their literacy and numeracy. As an example of the kind of summer programmes organised by the AES across the city, you can read about Coolock ESOL course and its summer outings.

Turning to other themes, Sneha writes about the Health Service Executive (HSE) Sexual Health Policy Workshop she attended recently and Caroline McKenna Cooper, Director of Adult Education, City of Dublin FET College Southwest Campus Ballyfermot Road writes about two of the Erasmus projects BFCE's learners went on this June.

I hope you enjoy the issue: slimmer, as promised, but nonetheless, still plenty of flesh on the bones, I hope!

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

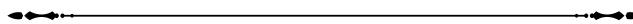
Coming Your Way



Lorraine Downey

As we start into a new academic year, I'm pleased to tell you about some resources and supports which the Learner Support and Engagement Service will be rolling out in the coming weeks to your centres.

We are also at the advanced planning stage for a number of events for learners and staff from October to December which we look forward to telling you about in the next issue.



Using Learner Survey Data as a Promotional Tool

Last year we had a phenomenal response to the FET learner survey (number of responses) and across the board, learners were very positive about their experience in City of Dublin ETB. To support centres in communicating the positive feedback from previous learners to incoming and prospective learners and to the public in general, we have developed a slide deck of branded Powerpoint templates for centres' digital displays in reception areas and for social media. These templates have been issued to centre management teams and can be edited to include your local data.

Learner Hub

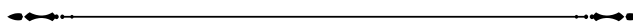
The team has been busy working on developing content for both a Learner Hub and Staff Hub on Sharepoint. Thanks to the Digital Learning Team, particularly Stephen and Eimear for their guidance and support in developing the site.

The one-stop shop for learners and staff will include resources, information and signposting across a number of categories including Supports for learners (Academic, Disability, Health, Finance, Wellbeing etc), learner experience, learner leadership, learner voice. It will also provide a means of communicating news and events relevant to FET learners.

More information to follow in the coming weeks!

Student Council Handbook

Following consultation with student council members and key staff at both our conference in March and focus groups in May and June, a handbook for incoming student councils is being finalised and will be issued in the coming weeks.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Au revoir, Mary

In August, Mary (Stokes) left the Learner Support and Engagement Service to take up a new role as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Co-ordinator across FET in City of Dublin ETB. She will be based in the CDU working alongside the QA team.

Readers of the newsletter will be familiar with Mary's work in this area and the role follows on from her pivotal involvement in the QADG Working Group on RPL last year where she was the lead, working alongside Brid Naughton as chair. In her new role, Mary will be working with key staff in centres to continue this work and to implement the working group proposal.

Lorraine says "City of Dublin ETB is really lucky to have someone with Mary's knowledge and expertise in RPL driving this work forward across the ETB and more broadly through her long-standing involvement nationally with the RPL Network and its steering group"

And John writes: We look forward to Mary's continuing contributions to the newsletter!

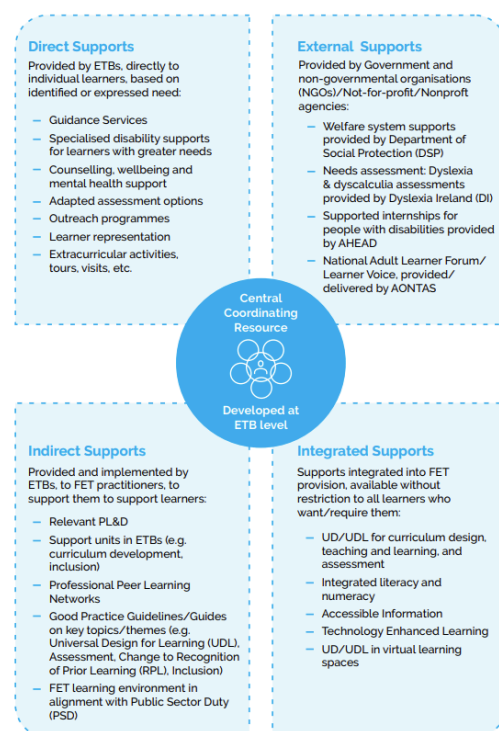
An Important Publication

SOLAS recently launched the **Learner Support Framework Guide** and accompanying position paper. ([Framework Link](#))

The framework guide reinforces the conceptualisation of learner supports including learning, disability, wellbeing, health, financial, transitional etc. It recognises supports beyond the classroom such as guidance, induction and extracurricular activities, all of which contribute to the broader learner experience.

The graphic shows a proposed framework for supports, identifying examples of supports which should be provided directly and indirectly by ETBs and those provided by external agencies. The framework recognizes the importance of supports, activities and initiatives linked to health and wellbeing, personal and social, and equality, diversity and inclusion in contributing to a positive learner experience.

The framework highlights Universal Design as an example of an integrating support for learners. City of Dublin ETB practitioners have been proactive in embracing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approaches for several years and the organisation is thrilled to be shortlisted for the collaborative John Kelly Award (see below)



NEWS IN BRIEF

Following the publication of the ALTITUDE Charter for Universal Design [ALTITUDE Charter Link](#) earlier this year, City of Dublin ETB is establishing a working group to lead the charter's implementation. Watch this space!

John Kelly UDL in Collaboration Award



for Universal Design in
Further & Higher Education

SHORTLISTED FINALISTS 2024

Individual Category

- » Caroline Brennan - Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB)
- » Dorothy Byrne - Kerry ETB
- » Mutahira Lone - University College Cork (UCC)
- » Barry Ryan - Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)

Collaborative Category

- » City of Dublin ETB
- » Kerry ETB
- » Munster Technological University (MTU)

Congratulations to all those who were involved in the City of Dublin ETB's submission for the John Kelly UDL in Collaboration Award which made the short-list during the summer. This award is for Further and Higher Education Institutions that are developing a systematic approach to embedding UDL into their culture, practices, structures, and policies to create more inclusive learning environments and communities. The Awards take place on 25 October in Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Sligo. Watch this space for more details in the lead up to this prestigious event.

You can read more about the awards [here](#).

Universal Design (UD) Beyond the Classroom Digital Badge



AHEAD, UCD and the National Forum are rolling out this 10-week course for colleagues who interact either directly or indirectly with learners beyond the reaches of the classroom setting who wish to utilise the Universal Design for Learning framework to provide an inclusive

NEWS IN BRIEF

educational experience. It will provide practical knowledge and tips to empower student support and engagement staff working beyond the classroom in further and higher education and training. This Badge is sibling to the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning. AHEAD's website has a convenient quiz if you would like to check if this badge is for you.

[UD Beyond the Classroom Link](#)

The course begins on 7 October. Registration is currently open via Eventbrite. [Register here!](#)

Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy

The second Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy was published in the summer along with the associated Roma and Traveller Education Strategy and the implementation strategies/action plans for both for the for 2024-6 period. You can find those documents in the links below.

[National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy](#)

[National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy](#)

International Week of Deaf People 2024

The Irish deaf Society will be celebrating International Week of Deaf People from Monday 23 September to Sunday 29 September. Kicking off on International Day of Sign Languages, this year's theme is "Sign up for Sign Language Rights", focusing on the linguistic rights of deaf people as we approach the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2026. Each day will focus on a different aspect of sign language including on Saturday a celebration of the cultural heritage of deaf communities through the lens of sign language expression.

[International Week of Deaf People](#)

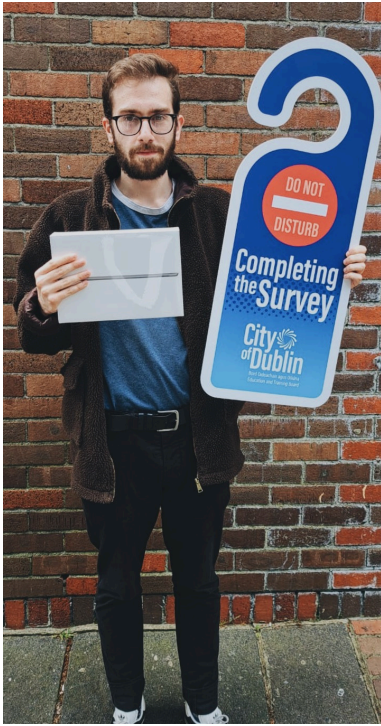
If you have any deaf or hard of hearing learners attending your centre who might like to share their stories with us, we would love to hear from them.

Prizes Galore!

What better way to bring the FET Annual Learner Survey of 2023-2024 to a close than by rewarding learners who completed the survey and entered into the draw to win big? As promised, using a random number generator, Callum from **Ballyfermot CFE** came out on top and won himself an iPad. Sylwester from **Transition Youthreach** got a pair of noise-cancelling air pods,

NEWS IN BRIEF

while Kay from **Ballymun Adult Education Service** received a €25 One-For-All gift voucher.



The prizes didn't end there though!

In recognition of the significant efforts of the student councils in CFEs in promoting the survey among their peers, we were happy to fund a fun day out for the student council from the college with the highest response rate. This was BCFE's student union with an impressive **57% response rate**. Council members enjoyed an afternoon of Go-karting where great fun was had by all.



Congratulations once again to all our winners and a massive shoutout to all student council members who played such a significant role in amplifying learner voice through the survey.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Inchicore College win TikTok- Rethink Ireland Award

In July, Aideen Lyster, Assistant Principal (Community Engagement, Health & Well-Being) and Guidance Counsellor in Inchicore College, was in touch tell us about the award the college won in conjunction with Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), which, of course, is their near neighbour. The award is for the Creative Traineeship 2024 – 2027 IMMA in partnership with Inchicore College FE.

Aiming to bridge the digital literacy gap in Dublin's cultural sector by targeting marginalised youth, the project will invest in increasing creative skills of trainees over three years, and connect ICFE students with alumni for learning and skills exchange.

Empowering Ireland's Youth: TikTok and Rethink Ireland Unveil Awardees of the Digital Future Fund - Rethink Ireland [Link](#)



International Literacy Day



John Poole

On 26 October 1966, the 14th session of UNESCO's General Conference declared that International Literacy Day (ILD) would be celebrated annually on 8 September. UNESCO's purpose was to highlight the importance of literacy to individuals, communities and societies while establishing it as a basic human right. The following year, on 8 September 1967, ILD was celebrated for the first time.



Although much progress has been made in improving literacy rates in the more than fifty years since the first International Literacy Day, illiteracy remains a global problem. There are thought to be more than 750 million adults around the world who cannot read. While it is common to think of South Asian, West Asian and sub-Saharan African countries when we think of low levels of literacy, no nation or culture is immune. Waterford and Wexford ETB (W/WETB) has estimated that there are more than 500,000 people here in Ireland with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

Each year UNESCO chooses a theme for ILD. This year it is "Promoting multilingual education: literacy for mutual understanding and peace". The main international event takes place in Yaoundé in Cameroon, where UNESCO's International Literacy prizes are presented to projects and organisations who have made an outstanding contribution to advancing literacy.

If literacy started in an educational setting as meaning your basic ability to read and write, it has evolved to embrace multiple literacies.

In 2017 ILD turned its focus towards the literacy skills necessary to navigate digital mediated societies. As you will read when you meet Learner Ambassador, John Hitchcock, it was his digital literacy needs that first led him to explore the Adult Education Service.

At the beginning of this year Patients for Patient Safety Ireland (PfPSI) launched its national Health Literacy Initiative, after a 2021 World Health Organisation international health literacy survey found that as many as one in four people living in Ireland suffered from a health literacy deficit.

UNESCO's intention in establishing ILD, was to help focus governments on developing literacy strategies at national and local level. Appropriately, then Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD, and now Taoiseach, launched the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) strategy, on International Literacy Day 2021 with its a vision of an Ireland where every adult has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully engage in society and realise their potential.



Christine Woods, June Kavanagh and Trish O'Brien with Simon Harris, TD, on ILD 2023

International Literacy Day

This year, Minister, Patrick O'Donovan T. D. announced funding of €430,000 for two new literacy initiatives under the ALL strategy. €300,000 has been allocated for Media Literacy to help people understand and think critically about the information they see in the news, ads and social media, and for spotting sources that can be trusted, recognise biases and guard against fake news while €130,000 has been budgeted for Family Literacy, aimed at breaking intergenerational literacy issues in families and encouraging parents to support their children's learning. The projects will be developed in partnership with ETBs, libraries, NALA and Media Literacy Ireland.

private and community and voluntary – deliver services in a literacy friendly and literacy aware way"

The course, entitled Let's talk about literacy, takes approximately 45 minutes, and includes video, text and some interactive pieces.

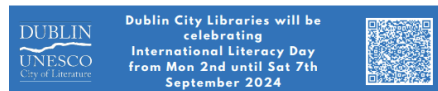
You can link to the home page for the course here: [Let's talk about literacy](#)



ALL also announced the launch of an online literacy awareness training course which will help anybody who has direct contact with the public in their work or through volunteering, to respond better to unmet literacy needs. Launching the eLearning course, Yvonne McKenna, Director of ALL in Solas said, "It is really important that organisations – public,



Promoting multilingual education:
Literacy for mutual understanding
and peace



In another initiative, City of Dublin ETB is partnering with Dublin City Libraries for ILD. Throughout September, libraries across the city will be putting on displays of literacy resources they have with a particular emphasis on those which are multilingual. Literacy coordinators have already hosted information sessions in Dolphin's Barn Library, the Central Library and Kevin St. Library. (Kevin St. being my local library, I dropped by to visit Literacy Coordinator in AES South Inner City and Helen Wade Adult Guidance Counsellor on their stand in the early afternoon.) Bobby will be in Rathmines Library on 10 September, Pearse St. Library on 11 September and Ringsend Library on 17 September.

The City of Dublin ETB Adult Literacy Service



Máirín Kenny

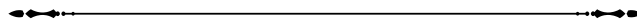
The Adult Literacy Service is here to provide educational opportunities for people who would like to improve their reading, writing, spelling, English language, digital skills, and maths. Students can develop these skills while taking part in lots of different courses including communications, maths, computers, ESOL, history, budgeting, family literacy, childcare, cultural studies, voter education, personal effectiveness and more. During the last academic year, students of the City of Dublin literacy service took part in 11,659 activities. The service is run by thirteen Adult Literacy Organisers who are based in twelve different locations across the city.

The students of the literacy service engage for many reasons. Some people want to improve their literacy skills because they missed out on childhood education. Some students look for support with dyslexia. Others are looking to improve their writing, language and maths skills to enable them to progress at work or to take on a third level qualification or apprenticeship. Many older people welcome a chance to improve their digital skills as this enables them to engage effectively with social, cultural and economic life.

A major part of literacy learning is the development of critical literacy. This is especially important in this digital age. It is not enough to know how to read. Readers need to understand the context and nuance of what they read and where they read it.

The Adult Literacy Service operates a student-centred model and uses Universal Design for Learning principals. Pedagogical approaches are rooted in human rights and transformative theories of education. There is an emphasis on the cultural and social aspects of learning that makes the learning journey an enjoyable and relaxed experience for students.

[City of Dublin ETB Adult Education Service Link](#)



Regional Literacy Organisers and the ALL Strategy



Andrew Connolly

Andrew Connolly is Regional Literacy Coordinator for the City of Dublin ETB. The position was created as part of the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy which was launched in 2021. Across the country there are 16 regional coordinators, one for each of the ETBS. Here Andrew writes about his role and a selection of the projects with which he has been involved over the past year, some of which you may have read about in earlier issues of the newsletter.

Andrew writes:

I took up the position Regional Literacy Coordinator (RLC), just coming up to two years ago. Although I am based in Ballymun, my job involves working with people all over the city. The work focuses on supporting the ALL strategy, which is a government strategy for improving literacy levels across Ireland. We all need literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to take part in society and succeed in life. Key to this has been the creation of Regional Literacy Coalitions involving a wide range of stake holders including job centres, government agencies such as the HSE and TUSLA, library services, and advocacy groups.

My aim is to make it easy for everyone with a literacy need to get opportunities and appropriate support. Collaboration between agencies is one way to promote literacy awareness. In the last year I have worked on eleven collaborative projects, seven of which were partnered with the City of Dublin ETB.

Here is a little about each of them, with links to further information.

[Pavee Point](#) and Coolock Adult Literacy Service (AES) [Coolock Adult Education Service \(AES\)](#), HSE Community Health Organisation Dublin North City and County (CH09) and [TravAct](#), the North Dublin organisation which

works to tackle the root causes of traveller exclusion and includes among its aims the promotion of education amongst Travellers.

Pavee Peck Cookbook was a collaboration between Traveller women, and the Adult Education Service, HSE and TravAct. This cookbook developed literacy skills through traditional recipes as recorded by the group of traveller women, illustrating how healthy meals were prepared without electricity while living on the side of the road. The book and website have been very popular, with requests for copies of the book from across Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Visit the site and see the recipes [here](#).

You can also listen to the women telling their stories [here](#).

[SPIRASI and Finglas/Cabra Adult Education Service \(AES\)](#)

These two organisations worked together to produce ESOL literacy resources which you can see [here](#).

[Dublin South City Partnership \(DSCP\) and Dublin Adult Learners Learning Centre \(Funded by City of Dublin ETB\)](#)

These organisations got together to produce a great ESOL resource called [Alphabet](#),

Regional Literacy Organisers and the ALL Strategy

designed for tutors/teachers working with learners who are not familiar with Roman script and can be used with both those who have many years of formal education and those who have limited or no exposure to formal education. The resource can be downloaded for free.

Finglas/Cabra AES and [Down Syndrome Ireland](#)

Together these organisations produced the [Work Ready Programmes](#). These are five modules which will help learners to progress in work. The modules focus on industry specific skills. You can see the wonderful workbooks at the above link.

[DALC](#) and the [North Inner City AES](#)

Rolled out as [Your Voice, Your Vote: Voter Education and Active Citizenship](#).

This followed in the footsteps of Sr. Bernadette McMahon DC. It runs active citizenship and voter education with adult and community groups. The project trained literacy tutors to deliver the programme. In a year with elections, it is a great development.

[Dublin South Central Adult Education Service](#)

Partnership and Dublin South Central AES

The AES in Dublin South Central partnered with local frontline addiction services.

They worked together so staff can identify literacy issues and refer clients to the AES. [Literacy Awareness Training](#) is available from the AES on request.

Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC) and [Community Action Network \(CAN\)](#) worked

together. Their project developed [Leadership skills in literacy students](#). It enables the learners to promote education in the North Inner City.

[Liffey Partnership](#) (formerly Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership) and [Dublin South Central AES](#).

Keep IT Lit improved digital literacy and language skills. The participants were adults in Ballyfermot and Cherry Orchard. Travellers, senior citizens, and Ukrainian migrants took part in the project. The collaborators were the Liffey Partnership and Dublin South Central AES. You can view their wonderful video on the project web-page. Click [here](#).

You can view projects from all 16 ETBs [here](#). There are many inspiring ideas.

Learner Voice

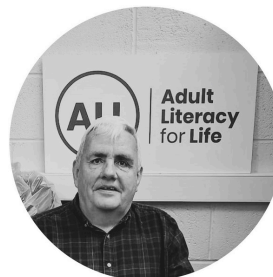
Finally, to the best part of the job: working with learners. Learner Ambassadors are very important in supporting the literacy service. School was not a good experience for everyone. Many learners want support to improve their skills, and another chance at education. Learner stories give people confidence and encouragement. When people working in services hear learner stories, it has a positive effect. The listeners hear about the bravery and achievements of learners. Without the support of other learners, there are people who would not come to our centres.

Do you have an idea for next year that could be funded?

If the idea supports literacy, is innovative and collaborative, keep an eye on the ALL website. You can also contact me at andrew.connolly@aes.cdetb.ie

In Conversation with a Learner Ambassador

John Hitchcock is a Learner Ambassador with the ALL Strategy. The role involves him sharing his own educational journey with the AES with people who might be thinking about enrolling for a course but worry that it might not be for them. John hopes that by talking about his positive experience, he will help others overcome their reluctance whether this is from a general lack of self-confidence, previous negative experience of an educational setting or overestimating what will be required of them. I had the opportunity to chat with John after a recent meeting of the Regional Literary Coalition of City of Dublin.



John Hitchcock



John Poole

I began by asking John how he had come to do his first course with the AES. In fact, for the first one he was obliged to go by his job centre after being made unemployed. They sent me to do a computer course he tells me. He found the prospect intimidating because he assumed that since a keyboard was involved, he would need to be able to type 30 or 40 words a minute and that the other learners on the course would have good typing skills. What he discovered on the first day was that everybody could learn at their own pace and that everybody was in the same boat. This is very much at the core of John's message as a Learner Ambassador, while emphasising the friendly atmosphere in the AES classrooms.

John greatly enjoyed that first course and was soon voluntarily signing up for others. Since 2018 he reckons he has done about 20 courses ranging from Cultural Integration to Budget Management, Communications to Climate Justice.

His first event as a Learner Ambassador was to speak to a group in Pearse St. Library which is not something he would have felt comfortable doing before he set out on his journey with the

AES. Although he had done his Leaving Certificate, he says he was nonetheless very lacking in self-confidence. In school he had always refused to read aloud in the class, now he is able to speak in public.

What advice does he give to prospective learners. "Don't put too much pressure on yourselves" he says "but do try to do a bit of homework outside of the class".

When I ask him at the end of our conversation if he is up for a photo there is a moment's hesitation before he agrees. "I wouldn't have said yes a few years ago" he smiles.

North Inner City Voter Registration Day



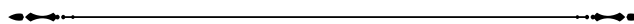
Meliosa Bracken



Denise Todd Goudie

Denise and a team of literacy tutors set up one of the classrooms with paper Voter Registration Forms, information leaflets, and laptops to allow for on-line registration.

Denise Todd-Goudie, Adult Literacy Organiser for North Inner City Adult Education Service, organised a pop-up Voter Registration Event in Parnell Adult Education Centre last April. This event was planned to tie in with the National Voter Registration Day on 30 April.



The poster features the City of Dublin and Adult Education Service logos at the top left. The main title is 'NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY' in large white letters on a dark blue background. Below the title is the slogan 'LET'S ENSURE THAT ALL VOICES ARE HEARD'. A red horizontal bar separates the slogan from the event details. The details include: 'Are you registered to vote? Join our voter registration day', 'Where: Parnell Adult Education Centre', 'Date: 29th April 2024', and 'Time: 12 pm - 2 pm'. A list of requirements follows: 'You will need: PPSN, Eircode (if available), Date of Birth'. At the bottom, it says 'Let's make sure that your voice is heard' and 'Or check if you are on the register at checktheregister.ie'. On the left side of the poster, there is a graphic of a hand putting a ballot into a ballot box, with the text 'NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY' below it.

We advertised the event with posters, flyers and social media posts and invited existing learners from all our classes to come and register to vote

in the local elections. Our tutors were encouraged to integrate literacy and language support around the voting process and the importance of using your vote. Tutors were supported in this by the Voter Registration Training and resources provided by the Dublin Adult Learning Centre, earlier in the year.

Denise visited learners enrolled in the Foundations Project, which provides educational support to people experiencing homelessness and the Drugs Treatment Court Programme, which provides educational support to people with serious substance misuse disorders. Emails were also sent out to our Community Education partners across North Inner City Dublin, encouraging them to spread the word.

On the day, we were delighted to see a steady stream of people coming through the door. We assisted people where needed, especially those who did not have English as their first language and those with literacy difficulties. Many of the participants informed us that they did not know they were eligible to vote in the local elections until they heard about our Pop-Up Voter Registration event. Other participants knew they were eligible but did not know how to register and had never voted before. There was a great atmosphere during the event with people expressing how happy they were that

North Inner City Voter Registration Day



they could use their vote for the benefit of their local area. We also took the opportunity to promote our Adult Literacy, English Language and Community Education programmes, that we run in the Parnell Centre and in partnership with Community Organisations across the north inner city.

At the end of the event, we had supported 41 people register for voting – the vast majority for the first time. We were delighted with the success of the event and plan to hold Voter Registration Events for any future elections.



Ballymun AES Learners Find their Voice



Clare Campbell

City of Dublin ETB Ballymun Adult Education Service has been providing free literacy and English language adult education courses to the wider Ballymun community since it was officially opened in 2014.

From January to June 2024, they had already looked after the needs of almost 700 students and they confidently expect to pass 1,000 by the end of the year. Clare Campbell, Adult Literacy Organiser says "We have an amazing group of tutors in our Ballymun centre: from September 2023 to June 2024, there were 30 part-time tutors working on daytime and evening classes. We also had 8 Volunteer tutors working 1 to 1 with literacy students."

In the spring they made a video featuring three of their learners: Mary O'Flaherty, Lisa Mountaine and Debbie Lynch along with tutor Dee Keating, who does a great job representing the staff in the centre.

Clare, who presents the video, says "Their comments and experiences reflect how a lot of other students feel before and then after they start with an Adult Education Service. They were so brave to agree to taking part in the video, and did so in the hope that it might help others.

Click the thumbnail below to watch the video.



Gardening for English Language Learners in Warrenmount Adult Education Centre



Rachel Parfitt

At Warrenmount Adult Education Centre in Dublin's historic Liberties area, we have a beautiful walled garden, accessed through a door at the side of the building. It was a kitchen garden when the building was a convent, first to the Carmelites, and then to the Presentation Sisters.

Warrenmount has been offering adult education courses now for more than thirty years, and this is truly the perfect garden classroom – a secret garden nestled in the heart of the city. It is such a well-kept secret, that I had worked in the centre for eight months before I even knew it existed!

I am an ESOL tutor, and last term I was working with a group of Beginners. I observed how much my learners loved visiting the garden and talking about the plants and flowers they left behind when they came to Ireland.

Our Gardening tutor, Annie Flynn, and I, put our heads together to devise a gardening class for ESOL learners. In class with me, the students learnt the names of various tools and plants. And then it was over to Annie in the garden for the practical lesson!

Most of the learners don't have a garden of their own. Annie guided the learners to plant, weed, make cuttings and tie up raspberries... and as we did so, the class dynamic slowly shifted. Students worked in teams to dig and plant, and I listened while stories were shared of fruit and vegetables in gardens far away. Annie brought in strawberries from Wexford, and we ate them in the sunshine comparing photos from home; apricots in Georgia, roses in Ukraine, plums in Iraq and bananas in Somalia.

The gardening class finished on a wet June day and the students went home with new skills, new vocabulary, and a succulent they had grown themselves. I went home with so much more; I learnt the importance of having access to an outside space when you no longer have



Gardening for English Language Learners in Warrenmount Adult Education Centre

one, the value of working in a team, and how my class cooperated so effectively in a tranquil environment. I saw different strengths in my learners - two who struggled with writing learnt to write about native plants in their countries. We all learnt how to use washing-up liquid to get rid of greenfly!

This term in Warrenmount Adult Education Centre we are running Horticulture QQI L2 for ESOL learners - a new initiative which has come about because of this happy experiment in our 'secret' garden.



Interning with the Youth Education Service



The City of Dublin ETB's Youth Education Service (YES) for Refugees and Migrants runs a student intern programme each year. This year's intern was Colleen Brennan who is from Rockland County, New York and entering her senior year at the University of Notre Dame where she is pursuing a double major in Applied Computational and Mathematical Statistics and Global Affairs.

She decided to apply for this Irish Internship program with Notre Dame because of her love for Ireland and because of her prior experience working with refugees. In the summer of 2023, she volunteered at a refugee center in Rome, serving hot meals.

Colleen has dual citizenship in Ireland, applying for citizenship through her grandparents who were from the village of Glanworth in County Cork. This was her third visit to Ireland having visited the west of Ireland in 2018 for a family reunion and studied abroad at Trinity College Dublin during the 2024 Erasmus term.



First Jessica Farnan briefly outlines the internships and introduces Colleen, then Colleen gives her account of the internship

Jessica writes:

YES for Refugees and Migrants welcomes student interns from universities and colleges around Ireland and the World, who spend several weeks on the programme learning about our work and developing their skills and understanding of the complex needs of refugee children and adolescents.

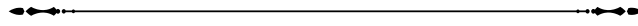
Over the past few summers, we have had the exciting opportunity to collaborate with Notre Dame's Irish Internship Programme and have hosted some of Notre Dame's fabulous students during our summer programme. This year, we were fortunate to welcome Colleen Brennan, who whole-heartedly embraced the internship with energy, professional commitment and an overall positive can-do approach.



Jessica Farnan

Interning with the Youth Education Service

Thank you to Colleen and to all at Notre Dame's Irish internship programme for your support and ongoing collaboration.



Colleen writes:

As I enter my senior year, I can wholeheartedly affirm that the University of Notre Dame successfully fulfilled Blessed Basil Moreau's vision: "The mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart. While we prepare useful citizens for society, we shall likewise do our utmost to prepare citizens for heaven." This summer, I had the invaluable opportunity to participate in the Irish Internship Program. Immersing myself in Irish culture, attending weekly professional development sessions hosted by the university, and working at my internship placement collectively enriched my mind, body, and heart.



Colleen Brennan

I had the privilege of working with Youth Educational Services for Migrants and Refugees (YES), more specifically, in their summer school program. Over the course of eight weeks, I dedicated my time to children aged 13-17, helping to advance their literacy, math, and essential life skills to prepare them for integration into the Irish school system. These children came from countries all over the world, including Afghanistan, Romania, Somalia, Sierra Leone, China, Ukraine and Palestine. Each day at YES. was unique. Some days, I had the pleasure of working one-on-one with children in the classroom. At other times, I focused on creating exams for the upcoming school year to mark the progress the young people made in their learning.

On my first day at YES., I was warmly welcomed, yet quickly realized that my internship placement was more than just a summer school program for refugee children. It was a community. The building itself served as a haven for young people, many of whom had experienced significant trauma while leaving their home countries. Each morning, breakfast bars, toast, and fruit were available to help them start their days, and lunch was served during break time. The couches and bean bags at the school served as a place to rest for children who had experienced a restless night at home. Additionally, the mindfulness room offered a quiet space for kids to collect their thoughts and take a deep breath. Most importantly, my supervisors, like Sara, created a supportive environment for the children to express their concerns about starting school in Ireland or to share their dreams and aspirations for higher education.

Reflecting on my time there, I remember an admirable man once told me, "Trust is a leader's currency". I witnessed the deep trust the young people had in my supervisors, like Sara and Elaine, and understood that this trust was earned. Building such levels of trust and connection with the young people at YES. became the foundation of my internship. Without trust, learning could not take place.

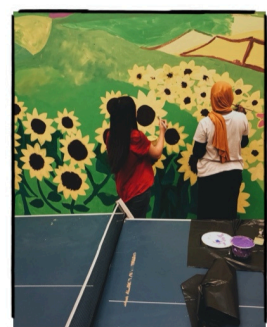
Interning with the Youth Education Service

On the first day, I did not hold the children's trust. I stood in front of all the young faces, not knowing any of their names. But over the course of eight weeks, trust was mutually built and earned. Trust was earned through one-on-one sessions, working through the addition of two-digit numbers and the decimal system. Trust was earned on school trips to the Viking Museum, playing table tennis, baking muffins, and having water balloon fights. Trust was earned by showing up every day, consistently and wholeheartedly.

While this internship was intended to provide me with professional experience, it gave me so much more. YES blessed me with a second home, and more importantly, a second family. My supervisors became mentors, my coworkers became friends, and the students became young people I grew to care deeply about. During my placement, I was known as "Teacher USA". Though I held the title of "teacher", I believe I learned more from the young people than they did from me. I was inspired by their dedication to attend school every day to improve their English and math skills despite at-home struggles, social worker appointments, and the constant worry of being relocated outside Dublin. I was equally inspired by the staff members and instructors at YES. Their passion, commitment, and care for the children were unparalleled.

Leaving YES. was bittersweet. As I return home to the United States, the children and staff members will always hold a special place in my mind and in my heart. While I am leaving, I am proud (and emotional) to know the young people will continue to grow and thrive. Similarly, I am hopeful that staff members will continue to provide this nurturing environment. This experience taught me about the importance

of trust, dedication, and the profound impact community support. As I move forward, I carry with me the lessons and memories from YES., committed to applying them to my future professional endeavors. I am grateful to Notre Dame Dublin and the Irish Internship Program for introducing me to a special place, one that I never expected would be so hard to say goodbye to.



Colleen loved doing activities with the learners.

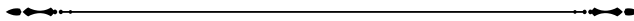
Summer Fun for Adult Learners in Coolock, Darndale and Kilbarrack



Leah Skipton

All learners in the Coolock and Darndale Adult Literacy Service were invited to participate in a number of trips the June. Groups went to our local cinema, 15 Henrietta Street, The Board Gáis Energy Theatre to see "Come From Away" and on a visit to Glendalough. Over 100 learners enjoyed a day of learning outside the classroom.

Learners had an opportunity to mix with people from different classes and form new friendships. The Glendalough hike was a great success with 55 learners from twelve classes and staff participating. Half the group went on a guided hike, working together to reach the top of the Spinc Ridge where they were rewarded with spectacular views of Glendalough. The other half explored the lakes and monastic city at ground level. Both groups enjoyed the time spent outdoors, learning about nature and spotting native wildlife. Everyone worked up a good appetite and enjoyed a picnic together.



English Language Summer Programme

This summer Coolock, Darndale and Kilbarrack ran an English Language Summer Programme. People living in these areas who want to improve their English language skills were invited to participate. Learners did taster classes in Art, Cookery, Relaxation, Qi-Gong, Climate Justice, and went on trips. Learners enjoyed meeting new tutors and trying new activities while gaining confidence in their English language skills. Classes were mixed-level, and forty learners participated.

With my fellow ALO, Breda Hayes, I would like to thank the tutors who worked on this programme over the summer.



HSE Sexual Health Policy Workshop

The HSE's Health and Well Being Division has been organising a series of one-day workshops across the country on working safely and effectively in sexual health promotion. Sneha was very impressed by the one she attended last month.



sexualwellbeing.ie



Sneha writes:

I had the opportunity to participate in the 'Sexual Health Policy Workshop' hosted by the Health and Wellbeing Division of the HSE on 30 August, at the lovely Draíocht arts centre in Blanchardstown.

With the participating group consisting of 15 or so professionals from differing sectors, predominantly youth workers and key workers, the workshop aimed to provide tools and training around the knowledge and requirements for the development of localised sexual health policies.

The workshop was a charged environment, full of enriching conversations, and at times conflicting opinions and stances. Through it all though, the workshop very successfully highlighted the significance and need for sexual health policies and spotlighted concerns and issues that might arise from not having documents in place.

It was incredibly informative, scrutinising pieces of legislation that need updating, identifying the absence of research and statutes to protect people in vulnerable positions and illustrating how difficult conversations can be had while still maintaining a decorum of respect for cultures and religions.

What stood out for me personally, was the period where all the participants were separated into groups and assigned specific scenarios (many of which were in fact based on real incidents). Each scenario outlined an uncomfortable situation people might have found themselves in, regarding sexual health and wellbeing. Each group was then tasked to consider what steps workers could take to enable the victim, if there were any pieces of legislation relevant to the situation and, who might support workers to progress the issue being faced.

At the end of the segment, each group was given feedback, how accurate their research and suggestions were and told of how the real-life incidents might have panned out. Yet again, this was extremely eye-opening, and people were visibly affected, some disheartened, some upset, many shocked and quite a few resigned to the reality of affairs.

HSE Sexual Health Policy Workshop

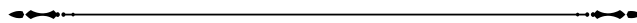
We also got to partake in a Law Table Quiz, which caused a stir, since it emphasized how vaguely written some legislation is, how the remit of sexual health and well-being is more grey than black and white and how often these laws can be misinterpreted or depending on the incident at hand, favour the wrong party.

When the workshop came to an end, it was inspiring to see the shift in energy in the room. People seemed more confident, motivated and driven, armed with facts and logistics that would strengthen this field; it was admirable and inspiring to see how much this field means to people, how they envision the work they are doing positively impacting the larger public they engage with, especially young, impressionable minds.

There was also an acknowledgement of the work done so far and the energy required by each participant and the depth of their desire to inform, educate and protect the public.

Where some workshops/seminars can at times be tedious and taxing, this workshop was anything but. Engaging, interactive and educational, the day seemed to fly by, and I am quite confident, no one would have minded if the workshop had gone on longer.

If you have the opportunity to participate in a HSE Sexual Health Policy Workshop in the future, I strongly recommend it. You don't necessarily need to be involved in the development of policy guidelines to find this session useful and illuminating.



Ballyfermot College Learners Go North and South with Erasmus +



Caroline McKenna Cooper

City of Dublin FET College Southwest Campus Ballyfermot Road has one of the biggest European Commission Erasmus + projects in Dublin and the FET sector. Currently, we have eight partners across Finland, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Malta and Germany.

In 2023/24 with the help of our amazing admin. staff, we organised eight trips across all our partner countries for 65 FET learners and 15 staff. Our project is unique as each year it is bespoke. We do not use 3rd party agencies so every September it's back to the drawing board or Excel spreadsheet to design the new project regarding mobilities and placements. We pride ourselves on offering industry-led placements which will enhance the future employability for our graduates

Here is a brief overview of what we did!! This is only a taster of what is potentially on offer for FET students from levels 4-6.

As our college is remarkably diverse, learners from a wide range of courses travelled, from Art portfolio students in Utrecht to Journalism and Content Creation students in Portugal.

14 students were selected to go to Helsinki in June 2024. Five of those worked for ISR Oy and designed an E-race track for Dublin which we hope to launch with Dublin City Council in 2025. This was an amazing opportunity for our Gaming, Photography and Content Creation students to work with a Finnish entrepreneur and innovator on a project which their friends and family in Dublin will be able to see and experience.

During this time, we were delighted to be welcomed to the residence of the outgoing Irish Ambassador to Finland, Ruth Parkin. Our students were beyond delighted to be greeted in such a warm way by Ambassador Parkin and Stephen Murphy, Deputy Head of Mission. We had a pleasant afternoon, and were excited to tell the embassy team how Erasmus + in Finland

contributes to the Department of Foreign Affairs Nordic Strategy.



Ballyfermot College Learners Go North and South With Erasmus +

Other students worked in the innovation hub at Aalto University for another Finnish entrepreneur on a project for the Pele Foundation which the world-famous Brazilian footballer set up in honour of his mother. The students felt they were contributing to something bigger as they heard that more money is spent globally on cures for male baldness than on maternity health which is what the foundation is all about.



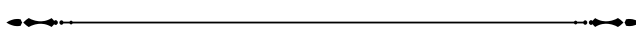
At the end of the two weeks, they made a stunning presentation to the Board of Directors who were highly impressed with their work.



Also in June, a group of Radio, Graphic Design and Illustration students went to Malta for two weeks under the creative direction of teacher Joanne Hogan and ably assisted by Guidance Counsellor Annemarie Lyons. We are so excited about this project which will run for about three years in partnership with BCFE. The students had a live brief for a client who was an NGO involved in conservation and heritage in Malta.



Their threefold brief was firstly to bring the organisation to a younger audience, secondly to design new signage for its sites which would engage visitors and thirdly to design a social media campaign and explain its importance to the board.



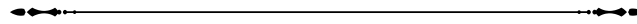
Ballyfermot College Learners Go North and South With Erasmus +

As Erasmus's coordinator since 2013, I can only say how much I love this role and am witness to how it changes lives!

The comments of one of the learners on the Malta project speaks for many: "I found our Erasmus programme well organised. Seeing our project well received made a big impact on my confidence. I think any student of any personality type, background or discipline would enjoy benefitting from Erasmus'.

We owe huge thanks to Léargas, the Erasmus + funding agency in Ireland with responsibility for FET. All our students had their flights and accommodation paid for and received subsistence/pocket money towards their time away.

The spreadsheet is already prepared for Erasmus 2024/25 which will be even bigger and more exciting!



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 **October issue**, we would particularly like to hear from educators (and indeed learners!) who are involved in events related to Learner Voice and Black History Month.

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).
- Please provide the link as is (don't embed or rename it within the body of the write-up)

Deadline for receipt of submissions for the next issue is **Thursday 03 October** 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'](#)
- Click here for [Issue 2](#)
 - Included attachment: [Planes, Trans, and Automatic Freedom Podcast](#)