



Season's Greetings



To All Our Contributors & Readers



Volume 2, Issue 6

December 2024

Welcome to the December issue of the Learning Support and Engagement Service (LSES) newsletter, which, despite our depleted ranks, is another bumper issue. I am delighted to say this is in no small part due to the number of contributions we have in this issue from our learners, the highest number of our 12 issues to date.

December is an important month in the LSES calendar. I do not mean because of the carols and crackers and all the rest of the festive paraphernalia (though we are no Scrooges here in Winstead when it comes to celebrating Christmas!), but because December is the month in which the United Nations celebrates International Day of Persons with Disabilities and International Migrants Day, two communities of learners, whose aspirations and needs are central to the LSES's mission. These, then, are our twin themes in this issue, with three articles devoted to each.

On International Day for Persons with Disabilities itself I was lucky enough to be invited to a coffee morning in Finglas Adult Educational Centre, hosted by its learners with intellectual disabilities, three of whose speeches on the day, we are very proud to publish here, alongside my account of a very enjoyable event.

On the following day in Cathal Brugha FET College, the LSES, in conjunction with AsIAM, held a half-day workshop on Sensory and Environmental Accessibility: Removing Barriers for Neurodivergent



Learners. Lorraine's account of the fully-subscribed event includes access to a padlet with all of the morning's presentations as well as links to previous webinars which AsIAM has done for us.

In our third article Brónagh Bolger, a Programme Coordinator with WALK, writes about WALKways WITH City of Dublin ETB, a collaboration between Warrenmount Adult Education Centre, WALK and Liberties College, which aims to make college more accessible to aspiring learners with intellectual disabilities.

Turning to International Migrants Day, two current learners who are recent migrants to Ireland share their stories and their experience of studying in two of our FET colleges. We also have an article on an ongoing project to produce a graphic novel about being a refugee, in which learners from Ballymun Youthreach have been involved for the past 11 months.

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Elsewhere in this issue, you can read, about a Health Literacy Programme involving Cherry Orchard Football Club, a sustainability initiative from Rathmines College Student Council and a study trip to Tilburg in The Netherlands.

Plenty, then, to digest along with the mince pies, pigs-in-blankets, devils-on-horseback and whatever you're having yourself!

Have a lovely Christmas and come the New Year we look forward to continuing to share news of the great work you are doing in your colleges and centres across City of Dublin FET College.

Best wishes from Lorraine and me

John

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Garreth Moves on

Another month, another departure from the LSES team. We are very sad to be bidding farewell to Garreth but at least, in this instance, he is staying within the City of Dublin ETB fold, as he returns to the City of Dublin Youth service (CDYS) where he worked for many years before joining the LSES.

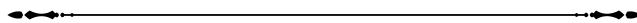
Garreth's two main spheres of activity in the LSES were rolling out the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) and developing and enhancing student representation and student councils in our CFEs.

All his patience and good humour were needed as he struggled with misspelt names, mangled email addresses and fuzzy photos to ensure that as many of our learners as possible got their cards. It is in large part down to his commitment that XXXX now enjoy its benefits.

Events Garreth spearheaded such as the NStEP training in October 2023 and the Student Council and Class Representatives Team-building Day in Learner Leadership Week last month will help to put learner voice on a stronger footing across City of Dublin FET College.



Garreth considered a makeover in Tilburg but we managed to persuade him that he was perfect as he was.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Lorraine takes the Learner Survey Roadshow to Finglas Training Centre



On 11 December Lorraine was in Finglas Training Centre to encourage learners there to do the 2024-25 Learner Survey. Last year Finglas TC had 43 (?) responses. We're hoping this year's cohort will well exceed that number. Once they'd overcome their initial shyness, plenty of learners stepped forward for the camera.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Congratulations to Coláiste Dhúlaigh CFE student Abby Skelly – Homeless World Cup Medal Winner

Coláiste Dhúlaigh Assistant Principal, Laura Roche, contacted the newsletter to tell us that one of their Social Studies students, Abby Skelly, was on the winning Irish women's team for the Homeless World Cup 2024 in Seoul.

Abby spoke about her experience training in South Korea as an intensive 14 weeks, involving climitisation, soccer skills, strength training and much more. "It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to travel to Seoul, I made amazing friends, and we all supported one another so much."

Abby, who began the social studies course in September, became involved with the Homeless Football Team through her personal experiences with family addiction and mental health struggles. She spoke about the purpose of the tournament, which aims to change the lives of its participants. She originally became involved in the project through the Irish Street Leagues which uses the power of sport to transform the lives of people who have found themselves affected by social exclusion.

This year's Irish women's team beat the USA in the Tier 2 Standings. Speaking to the FAI, Irish Street League CEO, Chris O'Brien, said "It was truly inspirational to see how these people have transformed their lives through football. They have experienced so many hardships in their lives yet here they are representing their country on the world stage."



Well Done Abby!

Educational Resources for Adult with Intellectual Disabilities Padlet

Jacqui Mythen, Adult Guidance Information Officer for City of Dublin Adult Education Service, has put together a padlet of educational resources available to adult learners with intellectual disabilities (ID) which will be enormously useful not only to learners and their families but also to everybody involved in providing and supporting education and training in this sphere. If there are any resources that are not included, don't hesitate to contact us or Jacqui and she will be happy to include them so that the padlet is always up to date. [Information for Students with an Intellectual Disability](#)

Dates for your Diary

'Working with Older Learners' – Age Action Online Workshop 23 January 2025

In our November issue ([Vol 2.5](#)) Nicole Alfaro Álvarez, Education Development Officer with Age Action wrote about the workshop she delivers for tutors, teachers and trainers working with older learners. We are now delighted to announce that one of these workshops is now scheduled to take place on 23 January from 2 to 3.30pm for City of Dublin FET College staff.

The 90-minute session is intended to be both highly interactive and very practical, so places are limited to a maximum of 15 participants. As it is predominantly the Adult Education Service which works with older learners, registration, in the first instance, will be confined to AES tutors and staff.

[Click here to register](#)

International Mother Language Day 2025 21 February

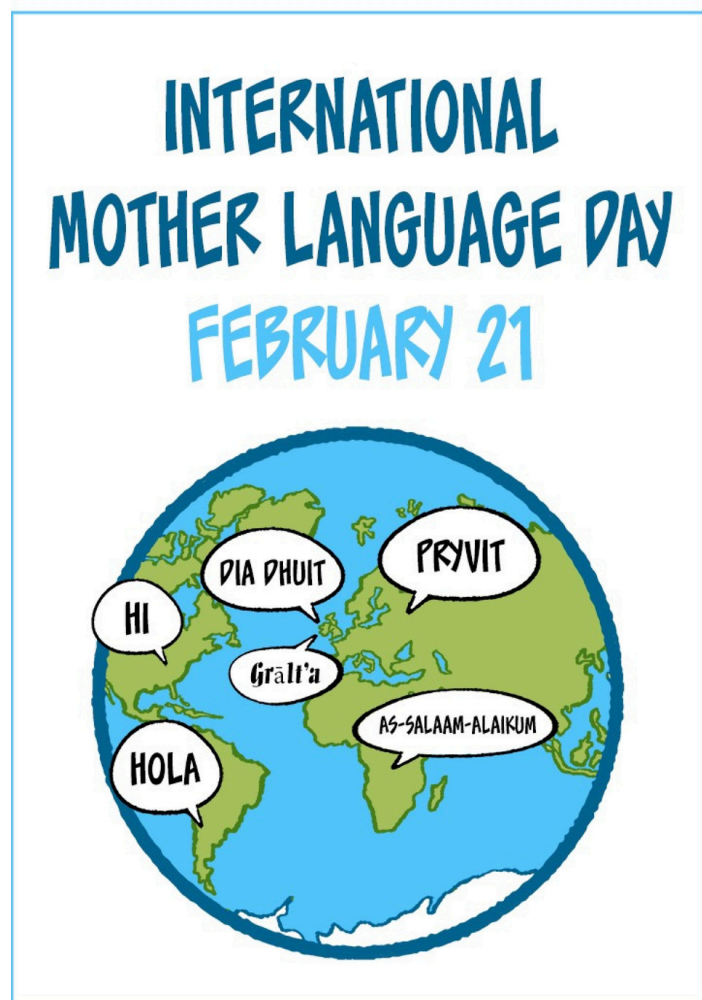
International Mother Language Day 2025 falls on the last day of the spring midterm break but that's no reason why we should miss out on this annual, worldwide celebration of linguistic diversity, which promotes the preservation and protection of all languages.

Last year we had some great initiatives to mark the day, including Rathmines College's multilingual greetings [video](#) and Pleasants St Youthreach's Multilingual Language Wall.

This year, in addition to our third annual Share Your Words Competition ([Click here to view last year's entries](#)), we are planning to host a series of online pop-up language classes at lunch time in the week before the midterm break. We already have a few volunteer teachers lined up but if you know somebody who might like to do an introductory lesson to the Traveller language Cant/Gammon, to Irish Sign language (ISL) or Irish for staff and learners who did not learn it in school, do contact us.

Or, why not organise your own in-person pop up classes in your colleges and centres? With

85 mother languages spoken across City of Dublin FET College, your centre could be a latter-day Babel for a week!



Yes, They Can!



Brónagh Bolger

Brónagh Bolger is a Programme Coordinator with WALK, <https://www.walk.ie/> the Dublin-based disability services and support, non-profit organisation. Here she writes about the WALKways with City of Dublin ETB programme which is now in its second academic year.

Brónagh writes:

"In Ireland today, only one in five people with disabilities will go to college after secondary school. This isn't because we don't want to. Often people don't even believe that we can." Learners speaking in the WALKways with City of Dublin ETB promotional video [WALK - Promo Video \(3\) on Vimeo](#)

Transitioning from a school environment to adult education can be challenging for people with disabilities due to the difference in resources available to them in adult learning environments. WALKways with City of Dublin ETB is a collaborative programme between WALK and City of Dublin ETB which aims to bridge this gap supporting learners with disabilities to develop the skills needed for college in an environment which is supportive and can adapt to accommodate their needs

WALK is a leader in a movement for change, empowering people with disabilities to live self-determined lives in an equal and inclusive society. City of Dublin ETB shares our vision of inclusivity and is motivated to ensure learners achieve their educational ambitions. Through this partnership, learners are

not only supported academically but receive the necessary support to build confidence and independence.

The WALKways with City of Dublin ETB pilot programme was launched in January 2024. This programme incorporates an innovative shared teaching model featuring two City of Dublin ETB tutors working closely alongside a staff member from WALK. This approach fosters a well-rounded and inclusive classroom dynamic. Tutors focus on academic learning while WALK provides specialised supports ensuring students receive tailored accommodations to meet their needs

WALK also provides regular training to the staff in Warrenmount Adult Education Centre on inclusive education and the Low Arousal Approach, [Studio 3 | Training, Coaching and Mental Health & Well-Being Supports](#), which is a non-confrontational approach to managing distress focusing on stress reduction and the behaviours of supporters. The tutors have opened their classroom doors to us in WALK, showed a passion to learn and are creative in their teaching approach

Understanding that each learner has different needs, the programme prioritises reasonable accommodations which include flexible exam formats, accessible learning materials and additional breaks during lessons. By offering these adjustments, WALKways with City of Dublin ETB seeks to remove barriers in access-

Yes, They Can!

ing education, empowering learners to thrive academically and personally.

On 21 November the programme saw seven of its learners graduate with QQI Level 4 certificates. This was a momentous occasion for the students who graduated with other learners from the South Inner City Adult Education Service at Charlemont Resource Centre in Dublin 8. The WALKways with City of Dublin ETB students were some of the many sharing looks of pride and accomplishment.



Anthony and Patrick did a Q&A with Brónagh

The following morning, WALKways with City of Dublin ETB launched their promotional video in Warrenmount Adult Education Centre, which was created by Mango Media who shared a passion for the story the students wanted to tell. People committed to equality and accessibility in education gathered to hear the words of the those involved. Staff from the City of Dublin ETB and WALK spoke about their experiences of working together, sharing a vision for inclusivity in society and openness to making meaningful progress in supporting learners from all walks of life.

We then heard from the real stars of the show, the students. Anthony Murphy and Patrick Ennis

spoke about their experience on the course. Both left school and came to WALK uncertain as to what their future would look like. With a passion for history, Anthony hopes to go on and be student at UCD. He is currently continuing his education and passion for learning by completing further QQI 4 qualifications with reduced in-class support. Patrick made the decision to progress onto employment and is working on the WALKways Tallaght University Hospital Programme. He hopes to one day be employed by Dublin Bus. Each of the students has similar ambitions of progressing on to further education or employment. These are the real ambitions of any young person.



Tutors Karen Egan and Helen O'Keefe and Programme Coordinator Joanne Mitten.

Through their learning on WALKways with City of Dublin ETB all students have grown in confidence and determination and have gained skills which will help them in progressing onto whatever is next. They can see that they can truly achieve anything with the right support. That's not to say things are easy, they never are, but when people believe that anything is possible, anyone can achieve their dreams

WALKways with City of Dublin ETB now supports a new cohort of learners in their personal and educational development.

Yes, They Can!

In addition to the classes taking place in Warrenmount Adult Education Centre, learners will also attend the course in Liberties College one day per week in 2025. This represents a significant step towards creating an educational environment where diversity is not only acknowledged but also celebrated.



WALK staff with Anthony Murphy, Patrick Ennis, Dylan McLure and Charles Carroll, who had all graduated the previous evening.



Current and former students with WALK staff.

Finglas Education Centre Celebrates International Day of Persons with Disabilities



John Poole

I was delighted when Nicola Callaghan in Finglas Adult Education Centre invited me to the centre's coffee morning to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, which was being put on by learners from their Work Ready Café Skills and Preparation for Work Programmes. I was in the Conrad Hotel this time last year for the launch of the Work Ready Programmes and was very happy to be getting the opportunity to meet with some of its participants.

At the door I was greeted by learner Brian McManus, whose job for the day was welcoming guests and distributing colourful badges to mark the occasion. Then I was escorted to the café counter where Kelsey Branigan and Claire McManus, along with their course tutor Grace Bomby, were in charge of serving refreshments.

Busy though they were they took a couple of minutes to tell me about their course and what they were learning. Both agreed that being friendly to the customers and always smiling was key – both women were scoring full marks on that count – but Kelsey was quick to point out that customers could sometimes be very difficult to handle.

The importance of good hygiene and cleanliness was another thing they had learned, they told me, as they talked me through the array of tasty, sweet treats on offer from Rice Krispie buns to Christmas cake. Both were looking forward to finding café jobs and Claire has already set her sights on the local Café Costa.

By the time Nicola called us to order, it was standing room only – the café space packed with the centre's learners, staff, family and friends, happy to join in this special occasion for learners with intellectual disabilities. After Nicola welcomed us all, she handed over to Dee Gavigan, Intellectual Disability Coordinator, who told us how hard everybody had worked to make the coffee morning happen. She pointed to the lovely Christmas tree, which she explained was decorated in purple, the colour of intellectual disability. Dee then introduced three of the learners on the Preparation for Work Programme - John Myler, Oscar Maguire



and Michael Ajibowo – who, in their own words and in front of a full house, told us about their course and their future ambitions. As I listened, I thought how great it would be if they would let me reproduce their speeches in our newsletter. I first approached John who immediately said

Finglas Adult education Centre celebrates International Day of Persons with Disabilities

"Yes, put me in your newspaper." Happily, Oscar and Michael were equally enthusiastic, and you can read what they had to say on the next page.

Then it was the turn of the guest speaker, Michael Losty, whom Dee introduced as an inspiring young man who had a long learning history with the centre. In his PowerPoint presentation, Michael told us about the how he had worked as a smartphone trainer with Avista's day support service in 2019 before setting up his own business in 2020. He explained how having his own business suited him allowing him to work at his own pace. It had, he said, changed how people saw him, which goes right to the core of what International Day of Persons with Disabilities is all about.

The next day, I could but agree with Dee, when she said that the coffee morning had been "a wonderful platform to highlight the achievements of our learners with intellectual disabilities ... a great event for all, with a wonderful sense of community." A very nice way to kick off the festive season, indeed.



Kelsey Brannigan had time for a smile and a chat as she served the guests.



There was a wide array of sweet treats on offer.

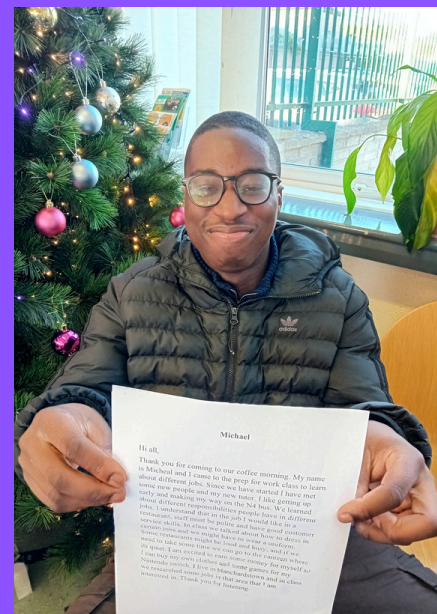
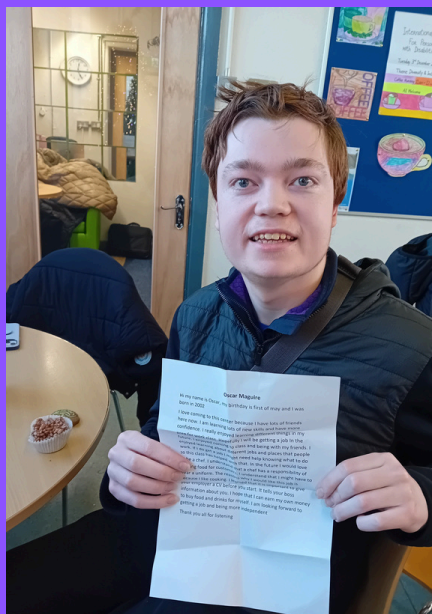
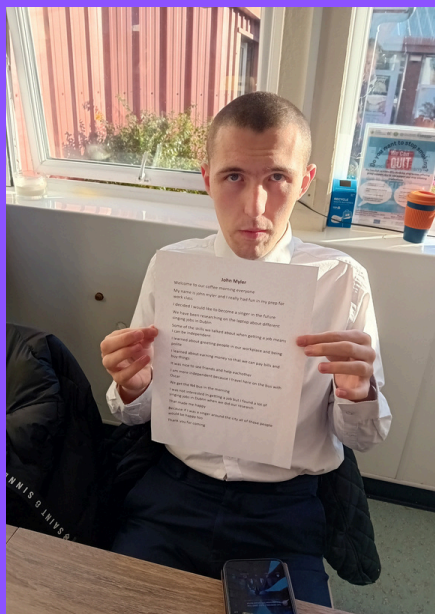


Guests were given a colourful sticker on arrival



Guests listened attentively to the morning's speakers

Finglas Adult Education Centre Celebrates International Day of Persons with Disabilities



Welcome to our coffee morning everyone.

My name is **John Myler** and I really had fun in my Prep for Work class.

I decided I would like to become a singer in the future.

We have been researching on the laptop about different singing jobs in Dublin.

Some of the skills we talked about when getting a job means I can be independent.

I learned about greeting people in our workplace and being polite.

I learned about earning money so that we can pay bills and buy things.

It was nice to see friends and help each other.

I am more independent because I travel here on the bus with Oscar.

We get the N4 bus in the morning.

I was not interested in getting a job but I found a lot of singing jobs in Dublin when we did our research.

That made me happy because if I was a singer around the city all of those people would be happy too.

Thank you for coming

Hi my name is **Oscar Maguire**, my birthday is the first day of May and I was born in 2002.

I love coming to this centre because I have lots of friends here now. I am learning lots of new skills and have more confidence.

I really enjoy learning different things in my prep for work class. Hopefully I will be getting a job in the future. I enjoyed coming to class and meeting my friends.

I enjoyed learning about different jobs and places that people work.

If I do get a job I might need help knowing what to do so this class has helped with that.

In the future I would love to be a chef.

I understand that a chef has a responsibility of cooking food for customers.

I understand that I might have to wear a uniform.

The reasons why I would like this job is because I like cooking.

I learned that it is important to give your employer a CV before you start.

It tells your boss information about you.

I hope that I can earn my own money to buy food and drinks for myself.

I am looking forward to getting a job and being more independent.

Thank you for listening

Hi all, Thank you for coming.

My name is **Michael Ojibowo** and I came to the prep for work class to learn about different jobs. Since we have started I have met some new people and my new tutor. I like getting up early and making my way on the N4 bus. We learned about different responsibilities people have in different jobs. I understand that in the job I would like in a restaurant, staff must be polite and have good customer service skills.

I like getting up early and making my way on the N4 bus.

We learned about different responsibilities people have in different jobs.

I understand that in the job I would like in a restaurant, staff must be polite and have good customer service skills.

In class we talked about how to dress in certain jobs and we might have to wear a uniform.

Some restaurants might be loud and busy, and if we need to take some time we can go to the canteen where it's quiet.

I am excited to earn some money for myself so I can buy my own clothes and some games for my Nintendo Switch.

I live in Blanchardstown and in class we researched some jobs in that area that I am interested in.

Thank you for listening.

Jump Straight in but Remember to Breathe



Daniil Streltsov

Hello, I appreciate the opportunity to write my first article here. My academic pathway to this point has been long and complicated, hence some extracts from it could be of interest.

My name is Daniil and I am originally from Ukraine. I was studying for a degree in International Relations and Diplomacy in Prague, Czech Republic, when war broke out. My mother fled Ukraine, arriving in Ireland in the beginning of 2023, and as I had no financial support to finish my degree, I went with her. After 18 months working full-time as a Data Privacy Specialist, I returned to the academic track enrolling in Liberties College in September this year, where I am studying General Studies.

Currently, I hold the position of class representative and student member of the Board of Management, in Liberties College. Although I have a solid knowledge of English, in putting myself forward for this role, I was afraid I wouldn't be understood. I am also constantly being confused by different accents and there are lots of local expressions and local jargon that I don't understand. However, I decided to go ahead because in my opinion the best solution is to practice. I'm not scared to ask my fellow students to repeat if I don't understand and if I see they don't understand me I repeat myself. To overcome your fear, you have to jump straight in

I would like to outline three main challenges that I am dealing with as a student with a migrant background. The first one, probably common to every student, but even more important for international students, is self-organizing. Time and task management skills

are of precious value for those who are far away from home. All the tasks of adult life abroad, compounded with the demands of the academic pathway, can be challenging and damage your mental health, if they are not organized properly. With the proper knowledge, provided by my college on that topic, I never end up in the "one day till assignment submission" situation anymore. Early in my course we had a presentation on time-management and learned about effective tools, such as organizers, task prioritization and scheduling, and we did a written assignment on that topic, which I found very useful

The second aspect, which I would like to emphasize, is the socialization of international students. As social creatures, we need to be surrounded by friends and family for our abilities to flourish and for our mental health to be stable. Life can be traumatic and the inability to share this with a close friend can aggravate the problem. I have experienced it myself, not only losses but victories, which I had no one to share with. Being completely on your own is horrific. That hit me hardest when I was celebrating Christmas without my family during my stay in Prague when I had to work over the holiday period.

Nevertheless, I somehow managed to deal with it. I have created my set of approaches, which are acceptance, dedication, and self-reward.

Jump Straight in but Remember to Breathe

I accept the fact that I am alone, so I use that time for my personal benefit, developing myself physically and mentally. I am dedicated to creating the lifestyle that suits me, and to surrounding myself with people that are of interest to me. I acknowledge my achievements, and I reward myself for them. For example, when I hand in an assignment I give myself permission to rest. I mean a proper rest, like a walk, or some sport-related activity. I know that with a proper attitude, I can overcome some complications in my life.

Despite it being a complicated issue, there is something that could be done and is being done, to support those in my circumstances. The easiest one is providing students with sources and information regarding social life, activities, and events

Of course, for some migrant students this can be made more difficult because of a language barrier. In that case, proper encouragement from teachers and fellow students is essential, for the student to take their first steps. Students should be encouraged to understand that their life is in their hands, and it would be rewarding for them to make those first steps



All the above-mentioned aspects contribute to the most important, but sometimes unjustly forgotten, area of mental health. All of us deal with stress throughout life but I assume that stress levels could be at their highest during the first steps in academic life. Assignments, tests, and deadlines, it is even more for students with a migrant background. I realized that something should be done about that after I experienced a panic attack. So how am I dealing with that? First, breathing techniques. I have found that this is one of the most effective and least time-consuming tools available. It would be great if every student was introduced to these techniques. They could be explained to students in a matter of minutes and planned into daily life on campus.

Second, sports and physical activity, which would not only strengthen mind and body, but also contribute to opportunities for socializing. College staff and the student council should do everything they can to encourage students to participate in sports and other physical activities. In November, I took part in an orienteering event in St. Ann's Park with students from across the City of Dublin ETB. It is a great example of such an activity. I enjoyed an opportunity to participate in a great team-building event organized by the Learner Support and Engagement Service. Through it, I found out that I am not on my own and made some new friends.

As for our student council meetings to date, we recently decided to initiate a charity program, in cooperation with the Alice Leahy Trust, a befriending social and health service for people who are homeless, which is a close neighbour of Liberties College. Also due to our initiative we

Jump Straight in but Remember to Breathe

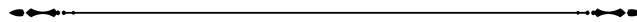
had an event which we called "Knowing Me, Knowing You", in which all students could participate.

Topics discussed at our meetings have ranged from installing socket extensions and coat hooks, to special demands for particular students.

A large part of my motivation for joining the student council was a desire to participate more in social life; it is a great option to make new friends and connections. However, now I am delighted with that opportunity, as I can help to make real improvements for my college and fellow students.



Daniil (second from the left) enjoyed the morning orienteering in St Ann's Park "I hope there will be many more such events." he says.



Immigration and a New Life in Ireland



Sayed Farid Sanai

I am Sayed Farid Sanai, and I am a person who left my home in Afghanistan because of the insecurity caused by terrorism. My country is a place where in the age of communication and artificial intelligence, girls are not allowed to go to school and must stay at home and unfortunately the international community is relatively silent about all this.

Back home I was a news anchor on one of the most popular television channels in Kabul. For various reasons - including war, and the killing of journalists and social activists by armed opposition groups - I could not remain silent in the face of the cruelty and murder of innocent people. Finally, I had to leave my country and take the path of emigration.

Since 2019 I have been living in Ireland and working as a freelance journalist. I wanted to learn English well, so currently I am studying a journalism course in Coláiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education. I want to learn to be a voice for those who live in forgotten lands, where voices are silenced, and they suffer the injustice of gender discrimination.

Emigration is often the result of various challenges one faces at home. In Afghanistan, political insecurity caused by terrorism, particularly toward media activists, civil society, and the people who believed in and supported democracy and human rights, has been high and fatal. Criminal groups, gangsters and the mafia who are deeply ingrained in society there, have long threatened those seeking constructive change, to the point where many have been forced to leave their country. Emigrating from a country in which one has grown up and created social, professional, and emotional links is a difficult decision. It is painful to leave behind all one's heritage and start from zero.

Emigration is a difficult decision because it involves moving to a new society and culture that requires you to start from scratch in many areas of life. On top of that, the stress of drawn-out asylum request processing and uncertainty while waiting for the outcome makes new life even more challenging. Nevertheless, great opportunities are waiting for hard-working people to shape a better future. I have found government support, better public services, new opportunities, and a peaceful society as effective motives for helping to make a new life in Irish society. In sum, immigrants miss their strong connections with their society of origin in a struggle to find new ones in an unknown society.

Every year, people move to Ireland to live, work and study, and others leave Ireland to live in other countries. Some people migrating to Ireland are Irish people returning home, some



Sayed appearing on the RTÉ News

Immigration and a New Life in Ireland

are from the EU and UK, and some who are affected by war or injustice are from outside of the EU. Migration is normal - and increasing globally, according to the OECD.

I am happy to live in a country where the government and the native people are very kind and treat us well and do not make us feel that we are not from this country. My family has never felt that we are foreigners, and we feel integral to this society. I have experienced this welcome everywhere in the government, society and academic environment, it's a healthy democracy, away from discrimination.

I am pleased to have opportunities to study my field at CDCFE and I appreciate my teachers in the Media Department. I learned a lot from them. I look forward to graduating in 2025 and furthering my career as a journalist.



Ballymun Youthreach Graphic Novel - A Work in Progress

Fiona Ginnell, art tutor in Ballymun Youthreach, contacted the newsletter to tell us about the centre's learners' involvement in creating a graphic novel that responds to the experiences of six people from around the world who have come to Ireland as refugees. Her article could not have been more timely, arriving as it did while we were preparing to mark International Migrant Day. Refugees and asylum seekers have been very much at the centre of anti-immigrant protests and fears here in Ireland. That learners are being encouraged to explore the refugee experience in a thoughtful and creative way is very positive.

Fiona writes

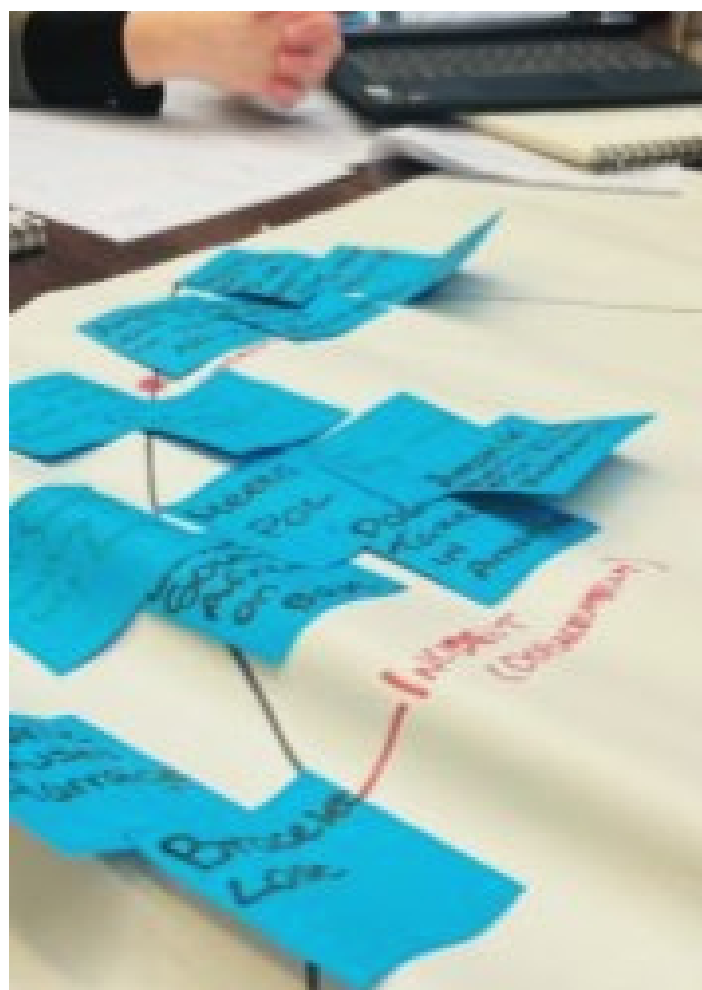
In February 2024 Ballymun Youthreach, took part in a collaboration with DCU's Irish Refugee Integration Network (IRIN) to create a graphic novel. This uniquely inspired project was developed Dr. Maria Loftus, Assistant Professor in French Language, and anthropologist Fiona Murphy both of DCU's School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies (SALIS)

The creative concept was to co-design a graphic novel in response to the stories in their short film [Ordinary Treasures: Objects from Home \(2023\)](#).

This film recounts the journeys made by six asylum seekers. The focus of their stories are treasured objects which hold a symbolic importance, such as a treasured family necklace and a blood stained Nicaraguan flag. Each object is accompanied by a narrative spoken by the owner of the item.

The Ballymun Youthreach participation involved six of our older students and their teachers. Other groups involved in the collaboration were Fighting Words, student teachers from DCU, International Protection Applicants (IPAs) and Asylum Seekers from the DCU Irish Refugee Integration Network.

Each of us brought in an object to discuss in a group workshop. Over the next three months, IPAs, Ballymun Youthreach students, their teachers and facilitators (Marcella Hughes, Lionel Duffy and myself) worked with artist Dominique Li creating a story and visuals for the graphic novel.



Brainstorming ideas for the graphic novel

Ballymun Youthreach Graphic Novel - A Work in Progress

The workshops were enthusiastic and intense, with each member having a personal and creative input.

As three different stories emerged the graphic artist and students took part in drawing sessions to visualize our ideas and develop the various characters.

The workshops provided a new and challenging experience for Youthreach students. This creative process was informative and empathetic, sharing with the participants a first-hand account of the experience of human migration.

I found the collaboration was mutually beneficial, fostering an awareness of difference and inclusion. The multi-cultural diversity, language and life events of each person were respected throughout and our unique graphic novel will reflect this.

The graphic novel is now in mid-stage production. There is no title as yet as the graphic artist is still defining the imagery.



Three of the artist's draft characters for the graphic novel

Rathmines College Champions Sustainability and Student Voice



Darragh McCann

When I met Darragh McCann, a journalism student in City of Dublin FET College, Central Campus Rathmines, at the Student Council Team-Building Day during Learner Leadership Week in November, I asked him if he would like to contribute to our newsletter and he said he would. This is his first article for us.

Darragh writes:

Recent weeks have seen two important initiatives in Rathmines College – the first to move us towards a greener campus and the second to amplify our learner voice. Both have been spearheaded by our Student Council.

Rathmines College has embarked on a mission to enhance sustainability on campus by introducing plastic bottle return bins. This is the first time the scheme has been implemented on campus.

Concerns arose early in the term when the Student Council noticed a surge in plastic bottle waste in standard recycling bins. Students had no other option when getting rid of their bottles and with the introduction of Ireland's Deposit Return Scheme, plastic bottles can be returned via reverse vending machines (RVMs) for a deposit refund of 15–25 cents per bottle.

During their first meeting of the year, Council members proposed ordering bottle-specific recycling bins to separate and collect bottles more efficiently. Following discussions, they secured six bottle-only bins for free from Re-turn. These bins were immediately placed across the two Rathmines campuses.

A rota system has been established, allowing each council member to take turns managing the bins and collecting the funds. An arrangement has been made with Dunnes Stores in the Swan Centre in Rathmines that the bottles can be returned at certain times so no queueing for the deposit return machines. The funds generated from bottle returns will be allocated to support Student Council activities, ensuring that the initiative directly benefits the students



"This is a huge step forward for Rathmines College," said a Student Council spokesperson. "We hope this initiative not only enhances recycling efforts on campus but also inspires a cultural shift toward sustainability among students."

Rathmines College Champions Sustainability and Student Voice

In a second initiative Rathmines College Student Council has partnered up with the LSES to roll out the annual student learner survey to provide a platform for students' voices.

The survey, which is hugely important to the college, gives students a feeling of representation and being heard. It also serves as an important platform for students to share their ideas and experiences within the college campus.

To encourage participation, class representatives were tasked with promoting the survey to their classmates. Students who completed the survey were rewarded with a selection box; a festive incentive that proved popular. Participants simply had to show proof of survey completion to claim their reward

The survey will be used to provide feedback on existing policy, issues or programs within Rathmines College and more widely across City of Dublin FET College .

The survey also gives the student council an idea of what issues need prioritization among the student population and how they can then use their resources effectively. It also gives them an insight into what is happening across their fellow colleges.

The Student Council hopes that by focusing on the voices of the student population, they can build rapport between the student body and school management. The goal is to ensure that students feel supported and understood, making their time at Rathmines College as comfortable and smooth as possible as they navigate the often challenging and complex journey through the education system.

Overall, Rathmines College hopes that conducting the survey will have a meaningful and positive impact, empowering students and ensuring they feel their voices, experiences, and opinions carry weight within the walls of Rathmines College of Further Education and across City of Dublin FET College.



Rathmines College is currently racing ahead in terms of both the number of learners and the percentage of learners who have completed the survey. With an extension until 17 January, there's still time for the laggard colleges to get the finger out! **(Editor's note)**

Cherry Orchard Health Literacy Project - An Overview



Alan Byrne

Alan writes:

Over the past year, the City of Dublin Adult Education Service (AES) Southwest Campus has taken great pride in its pivotal role within a ground-breaking community initiative at Cherry Orchard Football Club, Dublin 10.

This innovative project, titled 'Uisce Cliste: Healthy Hydration for Dublin,' is led by the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) School of Physiotherapy, in collaboration with a diverse array of community stakeholders, including the AES, The Liffey Partnership, Dublin City Council, the HSE, Sláintecare – Healthy Communities, and Pobal.

Our community education team, comprising dedicated community education facilitators, an education development worker, and a community tutor, actively contributed to this vital health research endeavour. Working closely with all partners, including Cherry Orchard Football Club and the RCSI, we crafted and delivered tailored health literacy programs for parents and coaches in the Ballyfermot area. This educational initiative was central to enhancing understanding of hydration and nutrition, fostering healthier lifestyles and overall well-being

Aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, we wove several key targets into our program's

Alan Byrne has been one of our most regular contributors since the newsletter's inception. In the autumn of 2023, Alan was the driving force behind the creation of the Adult Education Service's first soccer team and last May he organised the AES's first five-a-side tournament under the Adult Literacy for All (ALL) strategy. Here Alan writes about the latest soccer-related initiative with which he is involved.

framework. Notably, we emphasized SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being, particularly SDG 3 – 3.4 “reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases and promoting mental health”. To this end, we embraced SDG 4 – Quality Education, striving to broaden access to our adult education offerings in Cherry Orchard. We focused on ensuring equal opportunities for all, providing fully funded, high-quality education that is evidence-informed and tailored to community needs.



Cherry Orchard Health Literacy Project- An Overview

To enhance accessibility, we integrated Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles into our health literacy resources. This approach ensured that our materials were engaging and usable for everyone, thereby supporting SDG 4 -4.6, which aims for “increasing widespread literacy and numeracy among youth and adults.

By building on the synergies between SDGs 3 and 4, and reinforcing the importance of community collaboration, we fostered a robust teaching and learning experience. Our commitment to SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals, specifically the encouragement of SDG 17 – 17.7 which states “effective public and private partnerships, was essential in delivering impactful education tailored to community needs.”



This project has not only broadened participation in the AES but has also laid the groundwork for sustainable health literacy initiatives, positively affecting the educational and health landscape in the Cherry Orchard area. We eagerly anticipate the outcomes of this pivotal research, proud to stand as a key partner in adult and community education, dedicated to the health and well-being of our community while advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.



Tutor, Jennifer Donohoe, explains the Go, Grow & Glow food categories

Yonder in Tilburg - An Erasmus Study Trip



John Poole

Storm Bert had happily blown himself out by the time we assembled in Dublin Airport's Terminal 1 for our study trip to Tilburg in The Netherlands. Led by Lorraine as Head of the LSES, as a group we represented a good cross section of City of Dublin FET College. In addition to Garreth and me from the LSES, we had two tutors from Ballyfermot Training Centre (Graham Hannigan and Stephen Morris), one tutor from Crumlin Youthreach (Jamie McCarthy), Cathal Brugha FET College Deputy Principal, Catherine Smith, and, for the final two days, Mary Hickie, from the International Desk.

Organised under the auspices of the Erasmus + KEY Actions 1 Mobility of Individuals Programme, our reason for travelling to Tilburg was to get to know Yonder, the Dutch city's provider of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and in particular to explore its model of learner voice and student representation.

Our first meeting of the trip was in Mindlabs located in a stunning contemporary building which had all our eyes out on stalks, so it was quite a relief when our host for the visit, International Office Coordinator Ivy Harkes, hastened to reassure us that the building was not actually part of Yonder but where members of its teaching staff came one day a week to participate in interdisciplinary research groups developing interactive lessons using Virtual Reality (VR) in the classroom.

Presenting the project, Joost van Puijenbroek argued that while AI would not replace teachers in the classroom, teachers who didn't use AI would be replaced by those who did. It was time he said for VET to embrace what he termed "Just in Time Learning". The 21st century student expected learning to be accessible when and where s/he wanted it, not when it was scheduled on an institutional timetable.



Listening to this I was struck by how closely it chimes with the UDL principles we are currently embedding to facilitate learners who need to learn at different paces and rhythms and how Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) can facilitate this. We heard about, and experienced, different VR lessons from a game to improve numeracy to water rescue life-saving lesson. When Joost explained how VR could be used to familiarise neurodivergent students with a campus before they started college, Lorraine was nodding in enthusiastic agreement.

In the afternoon we travelled out to Stappegoorweg, a twenty- minute bus ride from the centre, and home to one of Yonder's four campuses.

Yonder in Tilburg - An Erasmus Study Trip

The campus, which would be the location for the remainder of the study visit, is home to a number of schools. The first afternoon we were guests of the School of Art, Culture and Media, and got to meet our first learners – Kris, Meagan and Myrthe - who are all final year Event Production students. From them we got our first insights into how student representation works at Yonder. At the school level, they have student panels which meet four times a year and are concerned with the quality of the courses and internships. The following afternoon we met more members of the student panels, this time from the School of Sports.

Our second morning began with a presentation by Education Quality Advisor Monica Klein who gave us an overview of student participation. In addition to the student panels about which we had heard the day before, she explained how there was an overarching Central Student Council. The responsibilities and role of the council are set out in national legislation and the council has legal advice available to guide it in its deliberations. We all sat up when we heard that the members were paid €45 per council meeting, they attend.

Monica also told us about the annual student survey which is conducted on a national level. There is a dedicated time given over to getting learners to complete the survey with those who are absent on the day, getting the opportunity to do it later. Small wonder they have a response rate of 70% which, goes without saying, had the LSES green with envy.

The council structure was further fleshed out when we met the Student Council Supervisor, Keti Sinac who dedicates two days a week to this role. She explained how even when they are doing internships, the hours students spend on the council are counted against the number of



Event Production Student Panel members Myrthe, Kris and Meagan with Garreth.



Sports Student Panel members Gyo, Mirthe and Boyt gave us a tour of the sports facilities.

hours they have to fulfil for the internship. They also receive certificates for participation which can be used as a credit for their minors. A clear picture emerged of how participation in the student council is fully integrated into their overall programme of study.

Yonder in Tilburg- An Erasmus Study Trip

For the final event of the study trip, we were invited to join the Central Student Council for the last hour of their fortnightly meeting. We fired a barrage of questions at them from what they thought was their biggest achievement as a council (streamlining student access to information), to their greatest frustration (how long it took to get things done). Repeatedly members stressed the importance of monetary recompense both as a spur to their getting involved in the first place and keeping them committed despite the pressure of time. Once more we as visitors were struck by how little involvement (and indeed interest) they had in taking a role in the extracurricular social/cultural side of campus life, which is widely seen as a key role of the student councils in our FET colleges.

Between all the meetings we had tours of several of the schools. Below you can read Stephen, Garreth and Jamies's accounts of these visits and their insights from the trip..



The Central Student Council meets fortnightly

When we got back to Dublin on Friday afternoon, just in time to fulfil our democratic duties, we were all exhausted but well satisfied. The overwhelming consensus was that it had been a very worthwhile trip.



A big thank you to the students and staff at Yonder for their warm welcome and to Mary Hickie and Geraldine McElvaney for organising the trip.

Yonder in Tilburg - An Erasmus Study Trip



Stephen Morris writes:

Following on from our recent Erasmus Trip to Tilburg, I have taken a moment to reflect on the trip. The training facilities available to students were very impressive. From a plumbing perspective, the heat pump jigs, which included a 3KW heat pump, pressurized hot water cylinder with expansion vessel, along with all the electrical and mechanical controls and safety devices, was ideal for demonstrating how the system operated. The concept of fitting the system to a mobile trolley allowed instructors to wheel the system in and out of workshops as and when they are required was ideal.

The Aviation Mechanical Workshop was probably one of the most impressive parts of the tour, the standout features being the helicopter and jet. The opportunity to use the flight simulator was a highlight of the trip. The simulator allows trainees to select the aircraft, the runway and the conditions to take off, fly and land an aircraft. The level of investment in education and training was evident during the campus tour with all aspects of engineering and construction covered and all relevant technologies on display. The concept of focusing on specific areas of education within



specific campuses makes sense as certain trades or courses overlap and this can therefore be accommodated if each trade is available within the same campus.

Yonder in Tilburg - An Erasmus Study Trip

The boiler labs provided trainees with a visual insight into how systems are piped and connected. All systems were fully functional with exhaust flues included to extract all harmful gases. The systems on display ranged from traditional oil and gas boilers to more modern commercial cascade boilers used in large scale projects. It included all pumps, low loss headed pipes and all mechanical and electrical controls. The areas were immaculately presented as was all the equipment on display. For trainees that find visual learning more advantageous, the heating system displays were perfect.



Another area of the campus I found impressive was the metal fabrication workshops. The trainees have the opportunity to train in all three welding disciplines (MMA , MIG, and TIG welding). The equipment installed in the workshops was top quality and again the areas were immaculately presented with trainees responsible for keeping their work areas tidy.



Overall, the trip provided valuable insights into how Yonder delivers courses to students, the standards they expect and the course duration. I feel there were areas we could make adjustments to improve our current delivery methods, but also certain aspects that may not work so well within the Irish campuses and training centres. The tour guides and facilitators were extremely welcoming and friendly, and the trip was thoroughly enjoyable.



Yonder in Tilburg- An Erasmus Study Trip



Garreth writes:

Reflecting on my Erasmus trip to Tilburg and Yonder college campus, I can say it was an enriching and informative experience. Yonder college campus had a very welcoming atmosphere, and the diverse college community made us feel at home.

One of the highlights was visiting MindLab's, where we explored innovative interactive technology. This experience was eye-opening, highlighting the use digital innovation and its potential applications. Particularly interesting was the way teaching staff are given direct time within Mindlab to explore technology and look at how it can be introduced in their teaching.

Another memorable part of the trip was the visit to the aviation engineering department. Seeing the workshop where the aircraft mechanics train was impressive, covering the the areas of engineering, production, and construction.



Time for City of Dublin FET College to take to the air?

The sports department also left an impression. This department covers courses in the field of sports and exercise, for example becoming a sports instruction in fitness, recovery, and training etc. Students participate in various sports activities and have an understanding on physical well-being. The facilities available at the college were also very impressive. It highlighted the importance of modern, up- to- date facilities and equipment being available to learners.

Meeting with the student council was equally impactful. Engaging with student leaders gave me a deeper insight into, and understanding of, the college's governance and the active role students play in shaping their college educational environment. The Dutch Student Council and student rep

Yonder in Tilburg- An Erasmus Study Trip

system seems more formal than ours in City of Dublin FET College. The Dutch model incorporates guidance at a national level and a strong link with college management and input into college finance and spending. I think a lot could be learned from this model, and vice versa, particularly how our FET councils interact with students on a day-to-day basis.

Overall, the Erasmus trip to Tilburg and Yonder college campus was a great learning experience. It taught me the importance of these exchange, the learning that can take place and a fantastic opportunity to meet and learn with fellow ETB colleagues from different fields.



Jamie McCarthy writes:

One of the biggest shocks for me was that the age range of students in Yonder which is from 16 to 25, no matter the course. When visiting the Aircraft Mechanics labs during a tour we met with a handful of first year students, some of whom had just turned 16 and were already working towards the trade and career that they wanted.

It was amazing to me that students of an age with some of my own, were working with aircraft engines and would be interning in airports and with the Royal Dutch Army in as little as two years. This really opened my eyes to just how able learners are when they are working on something that they have a real interest in.

This is one of the biggest realisations that I am trying to bring back to my home centre of Crumlin Youthreach so that I can adapt and expand my course to focus on topics that each of my class are truly interested in, rather than sticking just to the prescribed topics.

Another aspect of our visit to Yonder that has lit a fire in me is their Student Council. By using a tiered system, the Student Council of Yonder has been able to create an efficient method of sharing student feedback not just with their teachers and school heads, but also the Board of Directors of the entire campus. Even in my time in TU Dublin (née DIT) regular members of the Students Union struggled to bend the ear of the board of directors to effect even small change without the need to go through a long list of other people.

As I look now to take the reins of our local council in Crumlin, I hope that I am able to encourage our learners to take pride in their education and their centre, to feel comfortable to share their thoughts on every aspect of the centre, from the building itself to the topics we cover in class. I also hope to make sure that learners can have their voice heard even at higher levels, and to give them a 'behind the scenes' view of how our centre operates and how they and their classmates might bring about change.

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!

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).

As there will be no issue in January, deadline for receipt of submissions for the next issue is

Tuesday 5 February 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](#)
- Click here for [Issue 3](#)
 - Included attachment (1): [Sports and Cultural Calendar](#)
 - Included attachment (2): [Eva's Interview Part 1](#)
 - Included attachment (3): [Eva's Interview Part 2](#)
 - Included attachment (4): [Eva's Interview Part 3](#)
 - Included attachment (5): [Eva's Interview Part 4](#)
 - Included attachment (6): [Eva's Interview Part 5](#)

The Archive

- **Volume 2**

- Click here for [Issue 4](#)
- Included attachment (1): [Emmanuel Kulu Jr \(Youtube link\)](#)
- [Included attachment \(2\): Morgan Bullock \(Youtube link\)](#)
- [Included attachment \(3\): AsIAm Visual Link Guide](#)
- [Included attachment \(4\):](#)
- [Click here for Issue 5](#)
- [Included attachment \(1\): Noels](#)