



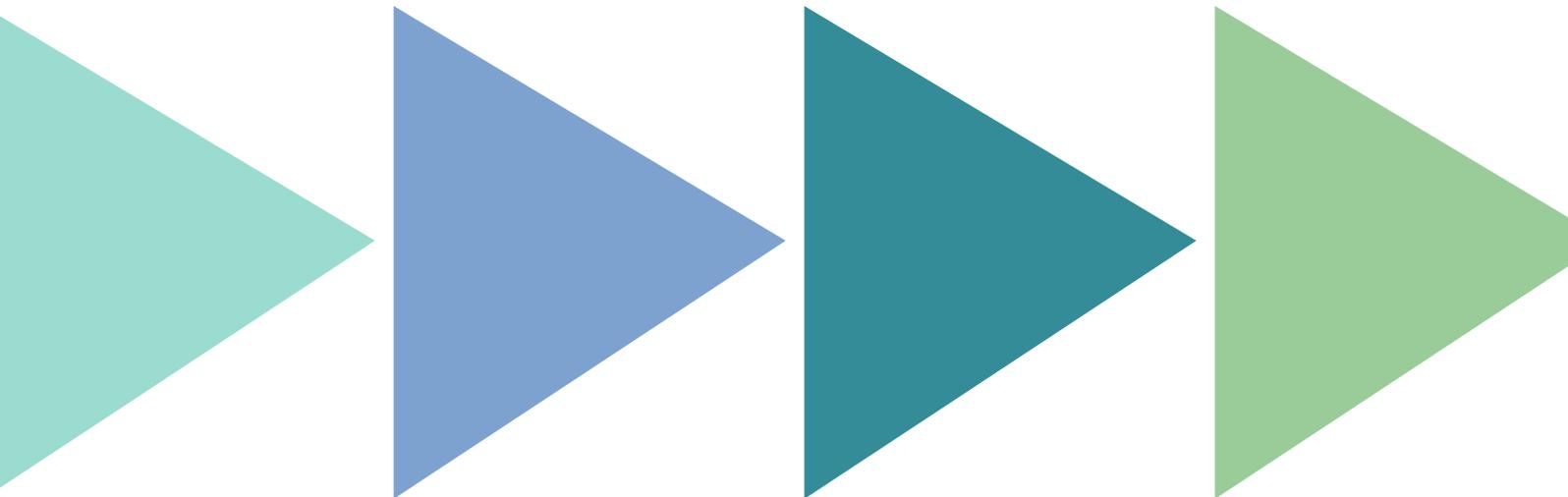
**etbi**

Education and Training  
Boards Ireland

*Boird Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Éireann*

## **Education and Training Boards Further Education and Training**

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**A Study of the role,  
contribution and impact  
of Education and Training  
Board (ETB) Further  
Education and Training  
(FET) Services on Active  
Inclusion in Ireland**



# **Sandra Roe Research**

## **Acknowledgements**

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Finally, thanks to all staff, learners and other stakeholders who participated in interviews and surveys or who helped in other ways.

**November 2021**



***'A Study of the role, contribution and impact  
of Education and Training Board (ETB) Further  
Education and Training (FET) Services on Active  
Inclusion in Ireland'***

Education and Training Boards Further Education and Training

**November 2021**



## CONTENTS

Acronyms .....	5
Executive Summary .....	8
Section 1: Introduction .....	10
Section 2: Research Methodology .....	18
Section 3: Findings of a Survey of ETB Staff .....	22
Section 4: Findings of a Survey of ETB Learners .....	35
Section 5: Case Studies .....	55
Section 6: Conclusion .....	78

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Respondents' level of satisfaction with the definition of Active Inclusion .....	23
Figure 2: Gender of respondents .....	35
Figure 3: Age of respondents .....	35
Figure 4: Respondents from urban/rural areas .....	37
Figure 5: Respondents with a disability .....	37
Figure 6: Type of course attended by respondents .....	41
Figure 7: Delivery of courses .....	41
Figure 8: Benefits and outcomes of participation in ETB courses .....	44
Figure 9: Are learners from different backgrounds accepted and made feel welcome? .....	45
Figure 10: Is the environment in which ETB courses take place accessible and inclusive? .....	46
Figure 11: Would respondents recommend taking part in an ETB course to others? .....	47

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Surveys and responses .....	20
Table 2: Focus groups and number of participants .....	20
Table 3: Number of respondents from each ETB .....	22
Table 4: Background of learners benefitting from Active Inclusion in the ETB FET .....	26
Table 5: Background of learners most challenging to engage in ETB FET courses .....	27
Table 6: Benefits and Outcomes for Learners related to Active Inclusion .....	29
Table 7: Geographical location of respondents .....	36
Table 8: Ethnic and Cultural Background of Respondents .....	38
Table 9: Religion of Respondents .....	38
Table 10: Sexuality of respondents .....	39
Table 11: Background of Respondents .....	39
Table 12: Education, training and employment status of respondents .....	40
Table 13: Highest Education Level of Learners .....	40
Table 14: Types of supports received by respondents .....	42

## APPENDICES

Appendix A: ETB Staff Survey .....	80
Appendix B: ETB Learner's Survey .....	84
Appendix C: ETB Staff Focus Group Questions .....	89
Appendix D: Focus Group Questions for Learners .....	90

## ACRONYMS

<b>AEO</b>	–	Adult Education Officer
<b>AEOA</b>	–	Adult Education Officers Association
<b>AGA</b>	–	Adult Guidance Association
<b>ALO</b>	–	Adult Literacy Organiser
<b>ALOA</b>	–	Adult Literacy Organisers' Association
<b>BTEI</b>	–	Back to Education Initiative
<b>BTEC</b>	–	Business and Technology Education Council
<b>CE Scheme</b>	–	Community Employment Scheme
<b>CEF</b>	–	Community Education Facilitator
<b>CEFA</b>	–	Community Education Facilitators' Association
<b>CTC</b>	–	Community Training Centre
<b>ESOL</b>	–	English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>ETBs</b>	–	Education and Training Boards
<b>ETBI</b>	–	Education and Training Boards Ireland
<b>EU</b>	–	European Union
<b>FET</b>	–	Further Education and Training
<b>LGBTI+</b>	–	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex
<b>NALA</b>	–	National Adult Literacy Agency
<b>NEETs</b>	–	Not in Employment Education or Training
<b>NFQ</b>	–	National Framework of Qualifications
<b>PLC</b>	–	Post Leaving Certificate
<b>QA</b>	–	Quality Assurance
<b>SOLAS</b>	–	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna, lit. 'Further Education and Skills Service'
<b>STEM</b>	–	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
<b>SUSI</b>	–	Student Universal Support Ireland
<b>TEL</b>	–	Technology Enhanced Learning
<b>VESD</b>	–	Vocational Education Skills Development
<b>VTOS</b>	–	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
<b>UN</b>	–	United Nations
<b>QQI</b>	–	Quality and Qualifications Ireland



## FOREWORD



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Education and Training Boards Ireland is delighted to present 'A Study of the role, contribution and impact of Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training (FET) Services on Active Inclusion in Ireland'. Active inclusion has always been a central tenet of the work of ETB and FET providers. The FET Strategy 'Future FET: Transforming Learning 2020-2024' identifies Fostering Inclusion as a Strategic Priority; understanding inclusiveness within FET as unconditional positive regard for all people. FET must be readily available to all and accessible by all, regardless of their location, culture, language, disadvantage, or disability.

This study was commissioned as a means of further embedding Active Inclusion across ETB FET provision, informed by national policy and practice. The study documents ETB Active Inclusion initiatives using case studies and models of practice that demonstrate the creativity, commitment, and hard work of ETB staff. The paper further outlines the impact of Active Inclusion services and supports on the inclusion of all learners in FET and on the learner's personal, social, economic and cultural development.

This position paper is particularly timely with the recent launch of 'Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) - A 10-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy', which aims to ensure that everyone has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully participate in society and realise their potential. This study complements the ALL strategy in striving to ensure that ETB FET provision responds to the issues faced by the most marginalised groups in society and remains rooted in principles of equality and social inclusion.

I would like to acknowledge Sandra Roe, Sandra Roe Research Consultancy for her expertise in conducting this study, ETB Chief Executives and Directors of FET and the ETBI advisory group for their contribution and support to the development of this comprehensive study.

*Paddy Lavelle*

**Paddy Lavelle**

General Secretary  
Education and Training Boards Ireland



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Research aim

The aim of this research was to develop a Position Paper on Active Inclusion within the Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training (FET) sector.

### Research objectives

The objectives of this research were:

- To define Active Inclusion in the context of the ETB FET sector.
- To contextualise the purpose and role of ETB FET services in active inclusion in terms of relevant national and EU policies and strategies.
- To review and confirm areas of active inclusion which are encompassed within ETB FET services.
- To quantify the contribution of ETB FET services to active inclusion.
- To demonstrate the variety of the ETB contribution using case studies and examples of good practice.
- To assess the impact of ETB FET services on active inclusion in Ireland.

### About ETBI

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is the representative body of the sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in Ireland. ETBs are statutory education authorities with responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions ([www.etbi.ie](http://www.etbi.ie)).

### Definition of Active Inclusion

A definition of Active Inclusion is set out in the SOLAS FET Strategy (2014-2019)<sup>1</sup> :

*“Active inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society including having a job.”*

### Research methodology

The key research methods used were online surveys, focus groups and case studies. There were 198 responses to the ETB staff survey and 1,496 responses to the ETB learners’ survey. A total of 14 focus groups were conducted with 116 respondents who were ETB staff, learners and tutors. Case studies were also developed based on the focus group data.

### Key Findings from the ETB Staff Survey

Overall, 81.1% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the SOLAS FET Strategy definition of active inclusion. The most commonly suggested change to the definition of active inclusion was to remove the word “job”.

The group of learners considered to benefit most from active inclusion were people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges (89.2%), early school leavers (84.6%), people with mental health issues (83.1%), people who are unemployed (82.1%) and people experiencing, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion (79.5%).

The groups of learners ETBs find most challenging to engage in FET were members of the Traveller Community (28.3%), people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges (25.3%), members of the Roma Community (21%), people experiencing homelessness (19.6%) and people with substance misuse issues (18%).

<sup>1</sup> SOLAS (2014) *SOLAS FET Strategy 2014-2019*. Available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/publications/policy-reports/further-education-and-training-strategy-2014-2019.pdf>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Cont.)

The most common issues, experiences and situations ETB staff are seeking to address were engaging and re-engaging learners to access education, literacy and numeracy issues, personal development, increased self-confidence and self-esteem, progression to employment and mental health and well-being issues.

The most commonly identified benefits and outcomes for ETB learners were personal benefits and outcomes, e.g., increase self-confidence and self-esteem (97%), social benefits and outcomes (84.3%), education benefits and outcomes (83.8%), employment benefits and outcomes (76.3%) and community benefits and outcomes (63.6%).

Learners supports were considered to be what is working best about active inclusion within the ETB FET sector. Areas of active inclusion most commonly identified to be prioritised in the future in the ETB FET sector were learner supports, additional resources and funding and training and CPD for staff.

### Key findings from the ETB learner survey

The vast majority (94.3%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that people from different backgrounds were accepted and made feel welcome, 4.1% were unsure, 0.9% disagreed and 0.7% strongly disagreed. 88% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed the environment in which ETB courses take place are accessible and inclusive to people with all abilities and from all backgrounds, 9.1% were unsure, 2.4% disagreed and 0.5% strongly disagreed.

Almost all (96.6%) respondents said they would recommend taking part in an ETB course to others, 0.8% said they would not recommend taking part in an ETB course and 2.6% were unsure. The majority of respondents felt ETBs were currently very inclusive for learners. The most common type of learner supports received by respondents were digital skills support (60.2%), loan of equipment/device, e.g., computer (58.6%), guidance/counselling (50%) and literacy/numeracy support (43.2%).

The main barriers for learners taking part in ETB FET courses identified by respondents were barriers related to online learning, time, cost and transport. The most common benefits and outcomes of taking part in courses identified by respondents were personal benefits and outcomes (76.3%), education benefits and outcomes (67.1%), social benefits and outcomes (65.2%), employment benefits and outcomes (32.8%) and community benefits and outcomes (30.5%).

Suggestions made by respondents as to how ETBs could be more inclusive included a wider range of promotion and advertisement of ETB courses, e.g., online, social media; develop links with the Department of Social Protection; promotion of active inclusion with ETBs, e.g., active inclusion days, posters, opportunities and spaces for learners to share experiences; training of ETB tutors and learners in active inclusion; supports for learners, i.e. supports for learners with disabilities; inclusive facilities, administration and language; and collaboration with support groups and services.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the research found that the ETB FET sector has made a significant contribution to active inclusion in Ireland and has had a very positive impact on learners from diverse backgrounds. The research found the benefits and outcomes of FET are wide ranging and go beyond the current definition of active inclusion which focuses on employment. Therefore, future definitions of active inclusion should focus on the broader benefits and outcomes of engagement in FET such as personal, social and community benefits and outcomes.

# 1 SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

## Research aim

The aim of this research was to develop a Position Paper on Active Inclusion within the Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training (FET) sector on behalf of Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI).

## About ETBI

Under the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, ETBI is defined as:

*'An association established to collectively represent education and training boards and promote their interests, which is recognised by the Minister for the purposes of this Act.'*

The mission of ETBI is to act as a central resource for the ETB sector, providing, procuring, and coordinating a range of support services which are most appropriately and efficiently delivered at national level. ETBI's vision is to be an effective organisation that represents and promotes the development of the ETB sector by providing innovative and quality support services to meet the needs of ETBs and other stakeholders in the rapidly changing world of Irish public-sector education and training ([www.etbi.ie](http://www.etbi.ie)).

## About ETBs

ETBs are statutory local education authorities governed by the Education and Training Boards Act 2013. Sixteen ETBs across Ireland have responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs have responsibility for second-level schools, further education colleges, community national schools and a range of further education and training centres delivering education and training provision. ETBs plan, provide, coordinate, and review the provision of education and training, including education and training for the purpose of employment, and services ancillary in their functional area. ETBs also support the provision, coordination, administration, and assessment of youth work services in their functional area. The ETB sector is the leading provider of education and training in the state, active in local communities through the direct provision of training and education programmes in training centres, colleges and other training and educational settings. ETBs seek to make a real difference to the lives of the people they serve and continue to respond in a proactive and dynamic way to the needs of the communities that it serves.

## Background

Active Inclusion is a central tenet of the work of ETBs who are the largest provider of FET services in Ireland, with an extensive reach into and across local communities. FET balances the needs of skills for work with the equally essential skills for life, through provision that supports citizenship and the development of social capital while also prioritizing economic prosperity.

## Definition of Active Inclusion

A definition of Active Inclusion is set out in the SOLAS FET Strategy (2014-2019)<sup>2</sup>:

*"Active inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society including having a job."*

<sup>2</sup> SOLAS (2014) SOLAS FET Strategy 2014-2019. Available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/publications/policy-reports/further-education-and-training-strategy-2014-2019.pdf>

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Social inclusion is embedded within the definition of Active Inclusion. The European Union (EU)<sup>3</sup> defines social inclusion as:

*“a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights”*

### Active inclusion policies and strategies

The Irish Government, EU and United Nations (UN) prioritise active inclusion as a means of enabling every person to fully participate in society. Active inclusion, through FET opportunities, is underpinned by a range of policies and strategies.

The delivery of FET opportunities in Ireland is guided by SOLAS, the Further Education & Training Authority, which has responsibility for the funding, planning and co-ordination of services. The **Further Education and Training Strategy 2014- 2019** seeks to increase levels of active inclusion in the FET sector through the provision of high-quality, more accessible and flexible education and training programmes, with supports suited to the identified needs of the individual.

**Future FET: Transforming Learning- The National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024**<sup>4</sup> is a new strategy based around the three core pillars of building skills, fostering inclusion, and facilitating pathways. The Strategy proposes to ensure that a strong inclusive ethos will continue to underpin all FET services through four key actions:

- Consistent Learner Support
- Rooting FET in the Community
- Targeting Priority Cohorts
- Literacy and Numeracy Supports

**The National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland’s Future**<sup>5</sup>, was developed to ensure a more dynamic, responsive and high quality system that provides all learners with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society and the economy. The Strategy provides a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland’s growth both economically and societally over the next decade.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2010) *The European Social Fund and Social Inclusion*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/esf/docs/sf\\_social\\_inclusion\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/sf_social_inclusion_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> SOLAS (2020) *Future FET: Transforming Learning- The National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024*. Available at: [https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas\\_fet\\_strategy\\_web.pdf](https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Department of Education and Skills (2021) *Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025: Ireland’s Future*. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/69fd2-irelands-national-skills-strategy-2025-irelands-future/>

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The **Programme for Government 2021**<sup>6</sup> discusses the development of a new Anti-poverty, Social Inclusion and Community Development Action Plan framed around the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, underpinning sound community development practices, and reflecting a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on poverty and social inclusion.

Other relevant policies and strategies include:

- The National Strategy for Women and Girls<sup>7</sup>
- The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy<sup>8</sup>
- The Migration Integration Strategy<sup>9</sup>
- The National Disability Inclusion Strategy<sup>10</sup>
- The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities<sup>11</sup>
- The National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019- 2021<sup>12</sup>

### FET learners

Adult Learners are not a homogenous group and learner diversity covers a range of dimensions including previous education, personal disposition, current circumstances and cultural heritage. FET policies and strategies strive to ensure programmes and services are accessible to all learners and ETB FET services include provision of customised learning supports on an individual/group basis, literacy and numeracy support, language support and supportive learning technologies to accommodate learners with disabilities.

Adult Guidance and Information services provide guidance and information to learners and prospective learners on local and national courses available as well as career guidance and progressions opportunities. ETB FET programme delivery offers certification at NFQ Level 1-6, as well as an extensive range of vendor-certified and other accredited programmes, to a spectrum of socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged groups, including those facing literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges, early school leavers, low skills workers, people who are unemployed, people in employment, Travellers, lone parents, migrants, people suffering from rural isolation and people with disabilities.

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<sup>6</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2020) *Programme for Government: Our Shared Future*. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>

<sup>7</sup> Department of Justice and Equality (2017) *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 – 2020: Creating a better society for all*. Available at: [http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Women\\_and\\_Girls\\_2017\\_-\\_2020.pdf/Files/National\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Women\\_and\\_Girls\\_2017\\_-\\_2020.pdf](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf/Files/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Department of Justice and Equality (2017) *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021*. Available at: <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf/Files/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Department of Justice and Equality (2017) *The Migration Integration Strategy*. Available at: [http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Migrant\\_Integration\\_Strategy\\_English.pdf/Files/Migrant\\_Integration\\_Strategy\\_English.pdf](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Migrant_Integration_Strategy_English.pdf/Files/Migrant_Integration_Strategy_English.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Department of Children, Equality, Integration, Equality and Youth (2020) *National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021*. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8072c0-national-disability-inclusion-strategy-2017-2021/>

<sup>11</sup> Department of Children, Equality, Integration, Equality and Youth (2020) *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015 - 2024*. Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/18906/1120bc6ad254489db9571c74e8572f44.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Government of Ireland (2019) *National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019- 2021*. Available at: [http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/LGBTI+Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_2019-2021.pdf/Files/LGBTI+Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_2019-2021.pdf](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/LGBTI+Inclusion_Strategy_2019-2021.pdf/Files/LGBTI+Inclusion_Strategy_2019-2021.pdf)

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

ETBs are committed to their public sector duty in eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and treatment and to protecting the human rights of those to whom they provide services, as specified in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014<sup>13</sup>.

### PROFILE OF ETB FET LEARNERS

#### **Types of courses**

A total of 179,058 learners enrolled in ETB FET courses in 2019<sup>14</sup>. Of these enrolments, 131,097 learners partially or fully completed course(s). Of the 131,097 learner completions, 86,847 of these learner completions were certified. The majority of enrolments were part-time courses (56.2%), followed by full-time courses (43%), and online courses (0.9%).

#### **Gender**

In 2019, 60.2% of learner enrolments were female and 39.8% were male.

#### **Age**

In terms of age, almost one third (32.5%) of FET learners were aged under 25 years, 19.8% were aged 55 – 64+ years, 17.6% were aged 35 – 44 years, 15.4% were aged 25 – 34 years and 14.7% were aged 45 -54 years.

#### **Education**

As regards the education levels of FET learners on enrolment, 30.8% had a lower secondary, 34.7% had an upper secondary education, 19.4% had a post-secondary non-tertiary education, 2.2% had a short-cycle tertiary education and 12.9% had a third level degree education. The highest concentration of lower secondary, upper secondary, and post-secondary non-tertiary levels of education prior to enrolment was among learners under 25 years of age. The highest concentration of learners with primary and below education was among the 55-64+ age group.

#### **Socio-economic status**

In relation to the socio-economic status of learners, almost one third (31.3%) of learners were unemployed prior to enrolment, 26% were employed and 42.7% of learners were not in the labour market. Of the learners who were unemployed, 40% were long-term unemployed.

#### **Nationality**

According to SOLAS (2019), there were 190 different nationalities enrolled in FET. As regards nationality, the vast majority (91.8%) were from Europe, 3.3% were from Africa, 3.3% were from Asia, 1.5% were from the Americas and 0.1% were from Oceania. Over three quarters (78.1%) of learners were from Ireland, 10.2% were from EU Europe, 9.4% were from non-EU Europe and 2.3% were from the UK.

#### **Learners from the Traveller Community**

A total of 1,527 learners who enrolled in FET in 2019 were from the Traveller Community (SOLAS, 2019). Of

<sup>13</sup> Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. Available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/enacted/en/html>

<sup>14</sup> SOLAS (2019) *This is FET Facts and Figures 2019*. Available at: [https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/1ba83e5971/15429\\_solas\\_facts\\_report\\_2019\\_web.pdf](https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/1ba83e5971/15429_solas_facts_report_2019_web.pdf)

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

these learners 43% were male and 57% were female. The majority (59%) of learners from the Traveller Community were aged under 25 years. In terms of completion rates, 88% of Traveller learners partially or fully completed a course in 2019 and the certification rate for completed certified courses was 60%. In terms of economic status, 45.6% of Traveller learners were unemployed, 7.5% were employed, 30.4% were inactive for other reasons, 10.5% were student trainees, 4.3% were engaged in home duties and 1.7% were retired.

### **Key issues affecting ETB FET Learners**

A recent Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues conducted by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board<sup>15</sup> identified key issues related to the nine grounds under equality legislation:

- Gender (including gender identity),
- Civil status,
- Family status (including lone parents, carers),
- Age,
- Sexual orientation,
- Disability,
- Race (including nationality, skin colour, and ethnicity),
- Religion,
- Membership of the Traveller community;
- and those at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

### **Gender:**

- Young women are more likely than young men (13.9% of women (15-29) vs. 11.9% of men in 2017) to be neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)<sup>16</sup>.
- Subject and course choices (available to and pushed towards females and males) can reinforce gender stereotypes.<sup>17</sup>
- Women are prevalent in minimum wage jobs.<sup>18</sup>
- There is significant gender imbalance on STEM courses, and apprenticeship (with very low levels of women participating).<sup>19</sup>
- Nearly half of transgender people in one Irish study, said they would feel unsafe or very unsafe to express their gender identity in public,<sup>20</sup> and transgender people face many barriers in coming out in the workplace.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (2021) *Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues*. Limerick: LCETB.

<sup>16</sup> The '[National Strategy for Women and Girls: Creating a Better Society for All, 2017-2020](#)'

<sup>17</sup> Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (January 2017). Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women: Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Dublin.

<sup>18</sup> The IHREC (2017) [Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports](#)

<sup>19</sup> The '[National Strategy for Women and Girls: Creating a Better Society for All, 2017-2020](#)'

<sup>20</sup> GLEN and BeLonGTo (2016). LGBTI Ireland report- national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in Ireland.

<sup>21</sup> The '[LGBTI National Youth Strategy 2018-2020](#)'

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### **Age**

- In 2019, 8.1% of children in Ireland were living in consistent poverty.<sup>22</sup>
- Approximately 25% of children have special educational needs.<sup>23</sup>
- The population aged over 65 has increased by 19% since 2011.<sup>24</sup>
- The share of adult learners (aged 40+) in Ireland is one of the lowest in the EU.<sup>25</sup>

### **Race:**

- Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers face particular barriers to accessing education or training, including: uncertainty or short-term nature of their visa or residential status; lack of recognition of their existing qualifications; and the limited availability of English language classes.<sup>26</sup>
- Difficulties in obtaining recognition of foreign educational qualifications pose a barrier to labour market integration and may lead non-Irish nationals to situations of under-employment and over-qualification.<sup>27</sup>
- Many Roma adults have low levels of literacy (in their mother language) which is a compounding barrier when they are trying to access supports, information and services through English.<sup>28</sup>
- 79% of Roma in Ireland have experienced discrimination in seeking employment.<sup>29</sup>
- Black (non-Irish) people are five times more likely to experience discrimination when seeking employment in Ireland when compared to White Irish people, and they are over two and a half times more likely to experience discrimination when in employment.<sup>30</sup>
- Discrimination is high in multiple domains (employment, service provision) for minority ethnic groups (Black, Asian and especially Irish Travellers), and people with minority religions.<sup>31</sup>

### **Travellers:**

- The unemployment rate for Travellers (80%) is six times that of the general population. 11% of Travellers indicated they were unable to work due to a disability; nearly three times the equivalent rate for the general population.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> CSO 2019

<sup>23</sup> The [Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020](#)

<sup>24</sup> Census 2016

<sup>25</sup> The [National Positive Ageing Strategy](#)

<sup>26</sup> Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (October 2019). Ireland and the Convention on Racial Discrimination, Submission to the United Nations Committee on Racial Discrimination on Ireland's Combined Fifth to Ninth Periodic Report. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Dublin.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (2018). The National Roma Needs Assessment. Pavee Point and Department of Justice and Equality.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (April 2019) [Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council - Second Cycle Mid-Term Review](#)

<sup>31</sup> IHREC and ESRI (2017) [Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland](#).

<sup>32</sup> Census 2016 data.

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- The ERSI have noted that taking educational attainment into account, Travellers are still much more likely (9 times more likely) than the general population to experience unemployment. They conclude that discrimination and prejudice is the reason for this significant difference.<sup>33</sup>
- 33% of Traveller women recorded their principal economic status as looking after the home and family (the corresponding figure for non-Travellers was 17.5%).<sup>34</sup>
- Just 13% of Travellers complete second-level education (compared with 92% of the settled community). 57% of Traveller men are educated to at most Primary level (compared to 13.6% of non-Travellers). Just 1% of Travellers progress to third-level education.<sup>35</sup>
- The suicide rate is almost seven times higher among Traveller males than in the general population.<sup>36</sup>

### **Disability:**

- Approximately 13.5% of the population identify as having a disability.<sup>37</sup>
- People with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and to be outside the workforce, than non-disabled people.<sup>38</sup>
- Male unemployment exceeded female unemployment for all disability types.<sup>39</sup>
- Economic independence, social inclusion and personal fulfilment are at issue where a person with disability does not have a job.<sup>40</sup>
- The level of education completed by disabled people is substantially lower than the general population. Disabled persons aged 15 to 50: 14% had completed no higher than primary level education, compared with 4% of the general population; and 37% (of same age group) were educated to third level, compared with 53% of the general population.
- People with disabilities may need certain aids or devices to participate fully in employment. Unmet needs in this regard were found to be a particular barrier for people with a mobility and dexterity disability and those with pain disability.<sup>41</sup>
- Students with disabilities are more likely (than non-disabled students) to face barriers in education and report disliking school and are at risk of poorer academic outcomes.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Watson, D., Kenny, O., and F McGinnity (2017). *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland*. ESRI Research Series No 56.

<sup>34</sup> Census 2011 data.

<sup>35</sup> *The National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy (2017-2021)*. Department of Justice and Equality. [‘National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021’](#)

<sup>36</sup> [‘National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021’](#)

<sup>37</sup> Census 2016

<sup>38</sup> Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). *Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014*. ESRI.

<sup>39</sup> Census 2016

<sup>40</sup> The [‘Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024’](#)

<sup>41</sup> Watson, D., Banks, J., and Lyons, S. (May 2015). *Educational and Employment Experiences of People with a Disability in Ireland: an analysis of the National Disability Survey*.

<sup>42</sup> Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). *Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014*. ESRI.

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### **Family status:**

- Women are more likely than men to shoulder more responsibility for caring (45% of women, 29% of men provide care on a daily basis). The gendered allocation of unpaid work has been identified as a significant source of gender inequalities in employment, pay, poverty and lifetime income.<sup>43</sup>
- Over half of those carrying out unpaid care work are employed, juggling the two. In this regard there is a gap between women and men – with women doing up to 15 hours more unpaid caring work per week.
- Pregnant students can be prevented from continuing their education during pregnancy.<sup>44</sup>
- Lone parents are one of the groups found to be at higher risk of experiencing disadvantage across multiple housing dimensions (discrimination in accessing accommodation, quality of accommodation (including for example over-crowding), and risk of becoming homeless).<sup>45</sup>

### **Sexual orientation:**

- Many LGBTI young people are at risk of leaving school early due to identity-based bullying and harassment.<sup>46</sup>
- 73% of LGBTI+ students felt unsafe at school (47% because of their sexual orientation and 27% because of their gender expression); 48% of LGBTI+ students reported hearing a homophobic remark from a teacher or staff member, and 55% of LGBTI+ students reported hearing a transphobic remark from a teacher or staff member. 3 in 10 LGBTI+ students missed at least one day school in the previous month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.<sup>47</sup>
- 60% of LGBTI people in one study, said they had seriously thought of ending their own life, with approximately 45% having thought of doing so within the past year. 60% reported that their suicidal thoughts were at least somewhat related to their LGBTI identity and their struggle to be accepted.<sup>48</sup>
- People who are educationally disadvantaged, and unemployed individuals, are more likely to experience discrimination in access to housing. There is also a strong association between socioeconomic background, and housing deprivation and over-crowding.<sup>49</sup>
- A lack of affordable childcare provision is a key employment barrier for all groups.<sup>50</sup>
- The Habitual Residence Condition can act as a barrier to migrants accessing state-funded services including social welfare payments. This is particular barrier for migrants living in poverty.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Economic and Social Research Institute (2019). *Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland*. The ESRI and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland* June 2018 Raffaele Grotti, Helen Russell, Éamonn Fahey, Bertrand Maitre.

<sup>46</sup> Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (2016) '*Being LGBT in School: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying, and Support LGBT Students*'

<sup>47</sup> BeLonGTo (2019) *The 2019 School Climate Study*. (involving 788 LGBT students)

<sup>48</sup> GLEN and BeLonGTo (2016). *LGBTI Ireland report- national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in Ireland*.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> OECD Face of Joblessness in Ireland - A People-centred perspective on employment barriers and policies (2018)

<sup>51</sup> IHREC (2015). [Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)

**Research objectives**

- The objectives of this research were:
- To define Active Inclusion in the context of the ETB FET sector.
- To contextualise the purpose and role of ETB FET services in active inclusion in terms of relevant national and EU policies and strategies.
- To review and confirm areas of active inclusion which are encompassed within ETB FET services.
- To quantify the contribution of ETB FET services to active inclusion.
- To demonstrate the variety of the ETB contribution using case studies and examples of good practice.
- To assess the impact of ETB FET services on active inclusion in Ireland.

**Directors of FET Forum**

The Active Inclusion position paper was commissioned by ETBI on behalf of the Directors of FET Forum and the overall process was guided by them throughout. A number of meetings and consultations were conducted between the researcher and the Directors throughout the research process.

**Active Inclusion Research Working Group**

An Active Inclusion Research Working Group was formed to help steer the research process. The function of the Working Group was to bring together individuals possessing the relevant knowledge and skills who would act collectively to undertake assigned tasks and activities in order to achieve the project's objectives. Working Group members included ETB staff in the following roles: Active Inclusion Officers, Adult Education Officers, Adult Guidance Counsellors, Community Education Facilitators and Adult Literacy Organisers.

Representatives from the following ETBs were involved in Working Group:

- Cavan and Monaghan ETB
- City of Dublin ETB
- Cork ETB
- Donegal ETB
- Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB
- Galway and Roscommon ETB
- Kerry ETB
- Kildare and Wicklow ETB
- Kilkenny and Carlow ETB
- Laois and Offaly ETB
- Limerick and Clare ETB
- Louth and Meath ETB
- Longford and Westmeath ETB
- Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB
- Tipperary ETB
- Waterford and Wexford ETB

## SECTION 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher met with the Working Group regularly throughout the research process. Key activities of the Working Group included providing assistance with:

- Development of the surveys, e.g., questions, language etc.
- Dissemination and promotion of surveys.
- Organisation of focus groups.

### **Methodology**

A mixed methods approach was taken in terms of the research methodology. The key research methods used were online surveys, focus groups and case studies.

### **Online surveys**

Two separate online surveys were developed as part of the research using online survey technology (Survey Monkey). One survey was aimed at ETB staff and another survey was aimed at ETB learners.

### **ETB staff survey:**

As can be seen from table 1 below, there were 198 responses to the survey of ETB staff. Those consulted in the ETB staff survey included the following roles in various ETBs around Ireland:

- Adult Education Officer
- Adult Guidance Coordinator
- Adult Literacy Organiser
- BTEI Coordinator
- Centre Coordinator
- Centre Manager
- Community Education Facilitator
- Community Training Officer
- Course Director
- Director of FET
- ESOL Development Officer
- FET Manager
- FET Coordinator
- Guidance Counsellor
- PLC Teacher
- PLC Assistant Principal
- PLC Principal
- Principal/Deputy Principal (Further Education College)
- Professional Development Coordinator
- Quality Assurance (QA) Coordinator
- Resource Worker
- SUSI Coordinator
- Teacher/Supervising Teacher

## SECTION 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Coordinator
- Tutor/Support Tutor
- Training Officer
- Training Services Manager
- Training Services Assistant Manager
- VTOS Coordinator
- Youth Officer
- Youthreach Coordinator

### **ETB learner survey:**

There was a total of 1,496 responses to the survey of ETB learners. Due to the varying abilities of ETB learners, respondents were also given the option to complete a hard copy version of the survey. Some respondents completed the hardcopy version of the survey with support from their tutors. Of the total survey responses to the ETB learner survey (1,496), 1,401 (93.6%) responses were completed online and 95 (6.4%) responses were completed in hardcopy.

**Table 1: Surveys and responses**

Survey	Number of responses
Survey of ETB Staff	198
Survey of ETB Learners	1,496
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,694</b>

### **Focus groups:**

As table 2 below shows, a total of 14 focus groups were conducted with 116 participants as part of the research. Focus groups were conducted with the Active Inclusion Working Group, the Active Inclusion Strategy Group, staff working in the ETB, ETB tutors and ETB learners.

**Table 2: Focus groups and number of participants**

	Focus Group	Number of participants
1	Active Inclusion Working Group	15
2	Active Inclusion Strategy Group	7
3	Adult Education Officers Association (AEOA)/ Adult Literacy Organisers' Association (ALOA)	3
4	Adult Guidance Association (AGA)/ Community Education Facilitators' Association (CEFA)	5
5	ALOA/PLC Principals	10
6	NAYV/NAVC	6
7	Prison education centres tutors	11
8	Full time level 5/ level 6 learners	10
9	Youthreach learners	11
10	Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) learners	5
11	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners	7
12	Literacy group	4
13	Rural women's group	9
14	Refugee Resettlement Programme learners	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>

## SECTION 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### **Case studies**

A number of case studies were developed based on qualitative data gathered from focus groups. Case studies focus on one, or just a few instances, of particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance.<sup>52</sup>

### **Data analysis**

A descriptive analysis took place on the quantitative data and appropriate methods for summarising information and displaying data were employed depending on the nature of the data. Qualitative data was digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed according to the key emerging themes.

### **Ethical considerations**

All due consideration was given to ethical issues arising at every stage of the research process. However, the main ethical issues which were addressed in this research were:

- child protection and well-being;
- informed consent;
- confidentiality and anonymity; and
- record keeping including data protection and security.

The research was conducted in accordance with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs<sup>53</sup>. In terms of consent, informed written parental/guardian consent was sought for young people under 18 years of age participating in the research. Informed written assent was also sought from young people themselves. No personal information was collected on the people involved in the research and data was stored in a safe and secure manner.

In order to protect anonymity, the names of respondents or the ETBs in which they are staff members or learners are not mentioned in the report, e.g., in quotes and case studies. Only the roles of ETB staff members are mentioned in quotes.

### **Study limitations**

In terms of study limitations, it should be noted that this research was undertaken between March and June 2021 when government social distancing restrictions were in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, research methods used included online surveys and focus groups conducted online using online video conferencing technology. The pandemic also had an impact on the way ETB further education and training learners were engaging with learning. The majority of learners were reflecting on their experience of online learning in relation to further education and training. This should be kept in mind in relation to the research findings and outcomes.

In addition, it should be noted that the period when the research was undertaken, which was at the end of the academic year and during inaugural reviews, was the busiest time of year for ETBs which may have impacted on the response rate from some ETBs in the staff survey. Finally, in relation to study limitations related to learners, the voice of learners who dropped out of ETB courses due to the pandemic or other reasons were not captured through this research.

<sup>52</sup> Denscombe, M. (2010) *The Good Research Guide for small-scale social research projects*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

<sup>53</sup> Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2011) *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*. Dublin: The Stationary Office.

# 3

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

### Introduction

This section of the report details the findings of a survey of ETB staff. There was a total of 198 responses to the online survey.

### Respondent profiles

As can be seen from table 3 below, respondents were from almost all ETBs in Ireland. The most responses to the survey were from City of Dublin ETB (13%), followed by Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB (11.2%), Tipperary ETB (11.2%), Donegal ETB (9.5%), Louth and Meath ETB (9.5%), Galway and Roscommon ETB (8.9%), Longford and Westmeath ETB (7.7%), Waterford and Wexford ETB (7.7%), Laois and Offaly ETB (7.1%), Kilkenny and Carlow ETB (5.3%), Limerick and Clare ETB (5.3%), Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB (1.8%), Cavan and Monaghan ETB (1.2%) and Kildare and Wicklow ETB (0.6%).

**Table 3: Number of respondents from each ETB**

ETB	No. of respondents	%
Cavan and Monaghan ETB	2	1.2%
City of Dublin ETB	22	13%
Cork ETB	0	0%
Donegal ETB	16	9.5%
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB	3	1.8%
Galway and Roscommon ETB	15	8.9%
Kerry ETB	0	0%
Kildare and Wicklow ETB	1	0.6%
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	9	5.3%
Laois and Offaly ETB	12	7.1%
Limerick and Clare ETB	9	5.3%
Louth and Meath ETB	16	9.5%
Longford and Westmeath ETB	13	7.7%
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB	19	11.2%
Tipperary ETB	19	11.2%
Waterford and Wexford ETB	13	7.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Level of satisfaction with the definition of Active Inclusion

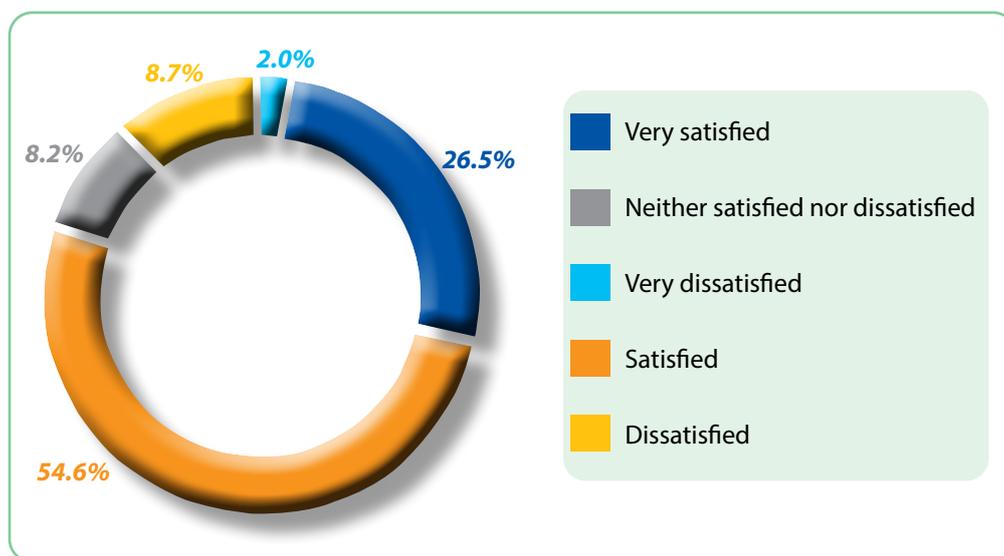
Respondents were asked to state their level of satisfaction with the definition of Active Inclusion as set out in the SOLAS FET Strategy below:

***“Active inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society including having a job”***

As can be seen from figure 1 below, over half of respondents (54.6%) to the survey stated they were satisfied with the definition of Active Inclusion, 26.5% stated they were very satisfied, 8.7% were dissatisfied, 2% were very dissatisfied and 8.2% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

**Figure 1: Respondents' level of satisfaction with the definition of Active Inclusion**



### ***Suggested changes to the definition of Active Inclusion***

Almost four out of ten (39%) survey respondents said there was nothing they would change or add to the definition of Active Inclusion. However, many respondents made suggestions in terms of what they would change or add to the definition.

### ***Inclusion of 'having a job' in the definition:***

The most common change suggested related to the inclusion of the word "job". Many respondents suggested removing the word "job" describing it as "ambiguous", "reductive", "superfluous", "unnecessary" and "narrow in outlook". While having a job was recognised as being important, respondents felt including it in the definition of Active Inclusion placed too strong an emphasis on employment as an outcome of participation in further education and training. Some respondents felt it also prioritised training over education. Respondents felt the definition should recognise the wider benefits of further education and training, not just getting a job, such as engagement in education, active participation in the community, engagement in social, civic and political life, personal and family benefits.

***"I agree that having a job is important, and someone's ability to access a job is a sign of their inclusion in society. However other things are also important such as engagement in education, recognition in wider society, involvement in the community. Maybe those things could also be included in the definition?"*** [Adult Literacy Organiser]

Also, the inclusion of getting a job in the definition doesn't take into account learners who might not be in a position to get a job, e.g., homemakers, older or retired people, and the contribution people who do not have a job make to society such as voluntary work.

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

***“Lack of recognition that plenty of people can fully participate in and positively contribute to society even if they do not have a job. A lot of the most disadvantaged groups that need to be included in community education programmes for example are not currently, or will not be in a position, to take up employment in the future. Active inclusion should not just be about labour market activation measures.”*** [Community Education Facilitator]

Other suggestions included changing “getting a job” to “getting a career” and “equality of opportunity to get a job”.

### ***Inclusion of ‘education’ in the definition:***

The next most common suggestion related to the inclusion of the word ‘education’ in the definition on Active Inclusion, i.e. *“Active inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society including getting an education and having a job.”*

Some respondents suggested including the phrases “educational opportunity”, “active participation in education”, “second chance education” and “lifelong learning”.

***“More of an emphasis on education in the definition as opposed to the sole focus being getting a job.”*** [Adult Education Officer]

### ***Inclusion of ‘citizen’ in the definition:***

Some respondents raised concerns about the inclusion of “citizen” in the definition as it is a legal term related to nationality and status which is not inclusive of all people living in Ireland such as asylum seekers, refugees, people living in Direct Provision Centres. Use of the word citizen was described as “exclusionary”. Additions to the word “citizen” included “every citizen, young and old” and “every citizen and resident”.

***“Is the word citizen inclusive of all disadvantaged people living in Ireland e.g., Direct Provision/Refugees?”*** [BTEI Coordinator]

### ***Inclusion of ‘notably the most disadvantaged’ in the definition:***

Reference to “notably the most disadvantaged” in the definition of Active Inclusion was debated by some respondents. It was suggested that the term “notably the most disadvantaged” should be removed or explained further as it could be open to interpretation. For example, disadvantaged could include a wide range of people including older people, non-English speaking people, those without access to technology etc. Some felt the term could be perceived as “derogatory”. Inclusion of the terms “people who are marginalised” and “the most underrepresented” as well as “the most disadvantaged” were put forward.

***“I would either explain what is meant by ‘notably the most disadvantaged’ or remove that phrase. Traditionally the most disadvantaged are meant to include economic, social and educational disadvantage. In today’s world I think that more and wider groups run the risk of being disadvantaged by no or poor access to technology particularly during periods such as Covid lockdowns.”***

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

### ***Inclusion of ‘fully participate in society’ in the definition:***

Suggestions made by respondents related to the inclusion of “fully participate in society” in the definition included changing it to “actively participate in society” and “fully participate at their own pace” as well as expanding the phrase to include “fully participate in society in a way that increases and improves their overall health, happiness and wellbeing to promote self-esteem and self-confidence”.

*“Fully participate in society in a way that increases and improves their overall health, happiness and wellbeing’ would be my preference.” [Community Education Facilitator]*

*“Active inclusion should include health and well-being, poverty elimination, access to services - e.g., adequate housing not just having a job.” [Centre Coordinator]*

### ***Inclusion of “supporting” in the definition:***

Inclusion of the “supporting” in the definition of Active Inclusion to replace “enabling” was suggested by some respondents. Respondents discussed the inclusion of additional quality supports for adult learners in the definition, for example supports to assist learners secure employment, childcare support for learners who are parents, supports for learners for whom English is not their first language. Learners access to quality services to support them was also mentioned.

*“Active inclusion means enabling every citizen access to quality supports to allow them to actively participate equally in society.” [Adult Literacy Organiser]*

### ***Groups benefitting from Active Inclusion***

Respondents were asked what groups are currently benefitting from active inclusion in the ETB FET sector. As can be seen from table 4 below, the most commonly identified group of learners who were considered to benefit most from active inclusion were people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges (89.2%), followed by early school leavers (84.6%), people with mental health issues (83.1%), people who are unemployed (82.1%), people experiencing, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion (79.5%), people with disabilities (77.9%), lone parents (77.4%), women (72.8%), people from ethnic minorities (72.8%), members of the Traveller community (72.8%), low skilled workers (71.8%), LGBTI+ people (64.1%), people with substance misuse issues (64.1%), older people (59%), people not in education or training (59%), people experiencing homelessness (54.9%), people from religious minorities (52.8%), carers (50.8%), people experiencing from rural isolation (50.8%), people in prison/ex-prisoners (44.6%), members of the Roma Community (40%) and others (13.9%).

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

**Table 4: Background of learners benefitting from Active Inclusion in the ETB FET**

Background of Learners	No. of responses	%
People with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges	174	89.2%
Early school leavers	165	84.6%
People with mental health issues	162	83.1%
People who are unemployed	160	82.1%
People experiencing, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion	155	79.5%
People with disabilities	152	77.9%
Lone parents	151	77.4%
Women	142	72.8%
People from ethnic minorities	142	72.8%
Members of the Traveller Community	142	72.8%
Low skilled workers	140	71.8%
LGBTI+ people	125	64.1%
People with substance misuse issues	125	64.1%
Older people	115	59%
People not in education or training	115	59%
People experiencing homelessness	107	54.9%
People from religious minorities	103	52.8%
Carers	99	50.8%
People experiencing from rural isolation	99	50.8%
People in prison/ex-prisoners	87	44.6%
Members of the Roma Community	78	40%
Other	27	13.9%

### ***Learners most challenging to engage in ETB FET courses***

Respondents were also asked to rank the top five groups of learners which they consider to be most challenging to engage in ETB FET courses. As can be seen from table 5 below, members of the Traveller Community were identified as the group most challenging to engage in FET (28.3%). The next most commonly identified group who were considered to be most challenging to engage in FET were people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges (25.3%), followed by members of the Roma Community (21%), people experiencing homelessness (19.6%), people with substance misuse issues (18%), people with mental health issues (15.7%), people not in education or training (13.7%), early school leavers (9.9%), people who are unemployed (9.6%), people experiencing from rural isolation (9.1%), people experiencing, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion (8.5%), carers (6%), people from ethnic minorities (5.6%), low skilled workers (4.7%), people in prison/ex-prisoners (4.5%), people with disabilities (3.5%), women (2.2%), older people (2%), lone parents (1.7%), LGBTI+ people (0%) and people from religious minorities (0%).

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

**Table 5: Background of learners most challenging to engage in ETB FET courses**

Learners most challenging to engage in ETB courses	%
Members of the Traveller Community	28.3%
People with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges	25.3%
Members of the Roma Community	21%
People experiencing homelessness	19.6%
People with substance misuse issues	18%
People with mental health issues	15.7%
People not in education or training	13.7%
Early school leavers	9.9%
People who are unemployed	9.6%
People experiencing from rural isolation	9.1%
People experiencing, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion	8.5%
Carers	6%
People from ethnic minorities	5.6%
Low skilled workers	4.7%
People in prison/ex-prisoners	4.5%
People with disabilities	3.5%
Women	2.2%
Older people	2%
Lone parents	1.7%
LGBTI+ people	0%
People from religious minorities	0%

### ***Active Inclusion issues, experiences and situations being addressed***

ETB staff were asked to identify the particular issues, experiences and situations they are seeking to address with the groups they work with in terms of Active Inclusion. The following issues, experiences and situations, from the most to the least commonly identified, were identified by respondents:

- Engaging and re-engaging learners to access education, i.e. learners with previous negative experiences of education
- Literacy and numeracy issues
- Personal development, increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- Progression to employment, e.g., job skills, upskilling
- Mental health and well-being issues
- Digital literacy/skills
- Rural isolation issues, including access to transport
- Social inclusion/exclusion
- Language issues, e.g., learning English as a second language

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

- Disadvantage, e.g., educational disadvantage, economic disadvantage
- Childcare issues
- Career guidance
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Access to internet/broadband
- Substance misuse issues
- Issues related to Covid-19
- Disability issues
- Homelessness
- Issues related to carers
- Women returning to work

The following quotes are related to the particular issues, experiences and situations that staff are seeking to address with the groups they work with in terms of Active Inclusion

*"Many people come into adult education with previous negative experiences of education. They need to be encouraged and supported in their education journey."* [Adult Education Officer]

*"Access to education and training, literacy difficulties and appropriate counselling services."* [BTEI Coordinator]

*"Life skills like cooking, languages, and personal development have proved give adults the opportunity to build their skills and increase their confidence to participate more in their community and gain skills for employment."* [Community Education Facilitator]

*"Lack of confidence in their ability to learn and perform in a workplace. The social/soft skills necessary for the workforce The lack of recent relevant work."* [VTOS Coordinator]

### **Key benefits and outcomes related to Active Inclusion**

Respondents were asked to identify the key benefits and outcomes related to active inclusion for learners in the ETB FET sector. As can be seen from table 6 below, the most commonly identified benefits and outcomes were personal benefits and outcomes, e.g., increase self-confidence and self-esteem (97%), followed by social benefits and outcomes (84.3%), education benefits and outcomes (83.8%), employment benefits and outcomes (76.3%), community benefits and outcomes (63.6%) and other benefits and outcomes (22.2%). The most frequently mentioned other benefit was family benefits, e.g., breaking the cycle of intergenerational educational disadvantage. Other benefits highlighted included mental health benefits, reduced isolation, critical thinking, increased civic engagement and increased social capital.

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

**Table 6: Benefits and Outcomes for Learners related to Active Inclusion**

Benefits and outcomes	No.	%
Personal benefits and outcomes	192	97%
Social benefits and outcomes	167	84.3%
Education and training benefits and outcomes	166	83.8%
Employment benefits and outcomes	151	76.3%
Community benefits and outcomes	126	63.6%
Other benefits or outcomes	44	22.2%

### **What is working well in terms of active inclusion**

Respondents were asked what they think is working well in terms of active inclusion within the ETB FET sector, e.g., in policy, practice, nationally, in their work. Overall, learner supports were considered to be what is working best in the area of active inclusion in the ETB FET sector.

*"Learners are assessed and offered support at the level they present at."* [Adult Literacy Organiser]

*"Learner support services such as access to counselling, providing IT device on loan to learners."*  
[VTOS Co-ordinator]

Other areas highlighted which are working well included:

- Local community-based approach
- Tutors
- The FET strategy
- Accessibility of ETB FET courses
- Interagency collaboration
- Reaching target groups of learners
- Funding
- Small class sizes

*"The ability to facilitate people locally is very important in engaging people."* [FET Co-ordinator]

*"Strong local networks that provide appropriate services to meet each individual's needs. Interagency work is excellent where it works but it is not universal."* [Adult Literacy Organiser]

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

*"A policy which advocates active inclusion is one which allows services to align with the needs of the community and the individuals it serves. This in turn supports ETB services in their efforts to personalise services to meet community needs as opposed to prescribing programmes for communities. In my work this has allowed for innovative practices and also for a solution focused approach to community engagement in education and training."* [Senior Support Tutor]

*"Most notably in the past year is the availability of funding and resources to provide IT support to permit disadvantaged learners to work remotely. Traditionally, the funding available to provide supports for learners with Special Educational Needs has been very beneficial in enabling engagement."* [Deputy Principal, Vocational School]

*"Small classes, well trained and experienced tutors/teachers, social element to the learning (coffee mornings, presentations, trips etc.)"* [Adult Literacy Organiser]

### **Examples of good practice**

Respondents were asked to provide examples of good practice in terms of the ETB FET contribution to active inclusion in their ETB locally or nationally. The following examples of good practice were highlighted by respondents.

#### **Adult Guidance Service:**

*"Adult Guidance Service, guidance counselling and information service working with a wide range of learners/potential learners - pre-entry, on course and exit/progression. Guidance Counsellors work with a range of groups including marginalised groups. The service has developed to include other active inclusion supports including counselling and Educational Psychological assessments."* [Adult Education Officer]

#### **Mental health:**

*"In partnership with the Recovery College and funding through Healthy Ireland we hosted Mental Health Awareness and Training workshops to:*

- 1. Support tutors to take inclusive and creative approaches to working with students previously marginalised because of emotional or mental health stress.*
- 2. This programme worked collaboratively with community partners to work to improve mental health and wellbeing of people, empowering and strengthen communities to meet their own identified needs.*
- 3. It built capacity across our areas through training mental health advocates and strengthened the referral network currently in place locally."*

[Adult Education Officer]

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

### Older learners:

*"We offer on-site digital literacy classes to older people who live in a retirement community in Connemara. They learn about banking and shopping online, staying in touch with family and friends, staying safe online, etc. When Covid hit these skills were invaluable to the older people who had to cocoon. The classes continued online and they were supported in ordering groceries, video calling family, engaging in hobbies, attending religious ceremonies, etc. Their new-found digital skills provided them with the confidence and independence to stay active and connected throughout lockdown."* [Adult Literacy Organiser]



Digital literacy learners

### ESOL learners:

*"ESOL is a prime example of where many hundreds of people from all over the world come to our classes each year and avail of a great opportunity to improve their learn English or improve their English and move on to the next level. It improves their work opportunities and their personal lives as they can now communicate with everyone regardless of whether they were born in this country or not."* [Adult Education Officer]



Learners who participated in a Family Learning Programmes, organised through an ETB Adult Learning (Literacy) Service. Learners are outside a local book shop, which had displayed the group's 'Story'

### refugee resettlement programmes:

*"Working with Refugee Resettlement Programmes in Mosney and ensuring progression for these ethnic minorities being included into local society when they are resettled in Meath."* [Adult Literacy Organiser]

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

### **Learners with intellectual disabilities:**

*“ALS Dundalk have delivered a pilot programme for learners with intellectual disability as well as those who were ‘stuck’ in one-to-one sessions and didn’t feel confident to join the group. Programme has run for 5 weeks. As a result of it, a number of learners have moved to accredited provision and one is now completing L2 and progressing to L3 programme.”*

[Adult Literacy Organiser]



A diverse group of ETB Learners

### **Learners experiencing homelessness:**

*“Foundations Homelessness Service is a CDETB project offering education in Technology, Health & Fitness, Social Care, Photography and English Language to people experiencing homelessness. This project also runs an afterschool children’s project for children in North Inner City Dublin who are experiencing homelessness.”* [Adult Education Officer]

### **Early school leavers:**

*“Here in Youthreach our learners are all early school leavers. The reasons for this are varied and often complicated and also often very sad. Many are attracted to our Centre because we run LCA. They aspire to completing their Leaving Certificate and the prestige associated with this accomplishment. When they have been offered a place on the programme we carry out a range of testing. When a learner is identified as having low levels of numeracy or literacy they are immediately offered additional one to one support and a specific programme devised with runs concurrent to their LCA programme. We feel that this additional support is enabling them achieve their long term goal. Without it the learner would possibly leave the programme or struggle through finishing a less independent or confident learner than the one who began”* [Youthreach Coordinator]

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

### **Projects targeting men:**

*“Projects targeting men based around their common interests (Men’s Shed Education). They learn what is of benefit and interest to them and become valuable ambassadors for lifelong learning and community spirit.” [Adult Literacy Officer]*



***Upcycling Programme with rural community group***

### **Active Inclusive: Areas of action for the future**

Respondents were asked, in terms of active inclusion, what areas of action should be prioritised in the future within the ETB FET sector. The following areas of action were identified from the most to the commonly mentioned:

- Learner supports, e.g., literacy and numeracy supports, disability supports, mental health supports, career guidance, language supports, childcare supports
- Additional resources and funding, e.g., facilities
- Training/continuous professional development for staff
- Access to courses for learners from all backgrounds
- Progression pathways for learners
- Digital literacy/skills
- Apprenticeships
- Traveller/Roma programmes
- Disability programmes
- Early school leaver programmes
- Blended learning, e.g., face to face and online learning
- ESOL
- Rural isolation
- Transport

## SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF

The following quotes relate to areas of prioritisation for active inclusion in the future:

*"Additional supports for low level learners, e.g., childcare supports, mental health supports."*

[Youthreach Coordinator]

*"Training for staff - all levels of staffing need to be able to empathise and know what it's like to be a person with literacy difficulties, with a disability, be homeless, be from a different ethnic group or speak a different language."*

[Adult Literacy Organiser]

*"Support pathways for learners from active inclusion type courses."*

[Adult Education Officer]

*"Traineeship/apprenticeship programmes for minority groups who are faced with long term unemployment, low skilled employees and those with literacy/IT needs."*

[Adult Literacy Organiser]

*"Programmes for Travellers/minority groups that build on culture and traditions."*

[Adult Education Officer]

*"I would like to see active inclusion look beyond the normal 'target groups'. I believe there is a significant issue in terms of rural isolation and that there are vulnerable cohorts which can be overlooked or not prioritised e.g., older Irish single men living in rural communities."*

[Youth Officer]

### **Summary of findings of a survey of ETB staff**

This section of the report found the majority (81%) of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the FET Strategy definition of active inclusion. The most commonly suggested change to the definition of active inclusion was to remove the word "job".

Overall, people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges were considered to benefit most from active inclusion, however, they were also identified as the second most common group of learners which ETBs find challenging to engage in FET. Members of the Traveller Community were identified as the group of learners ETBs find most challenging to engage in FET. However, this group was considered to be tenth most common group of learners to benefit from active inclusion. The most common issues, experiences and situations ETB staff are seeking to address were engaging and re-engaging learners to access education followed by literacy and numeracy issues and personal development.

Overall, respondents agreed that the most commonly identified benefits and outcomes for ETB learners were personal benefits and outcomes such as increased self-confidence and self-esteem. The next most commonly highlighted benefits and outcomes for learners were social benefit and outcomes followed education benefits and outcomes.

Learners supports were considered to be what is working best about active inclusion within the ETB FET sector. Areas of active inclusion recognised as requiring prioritisation in the future in the ETB FET sector were learner supports, additional resources and funding and training and CPD for staff.

# 4

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### Introduction

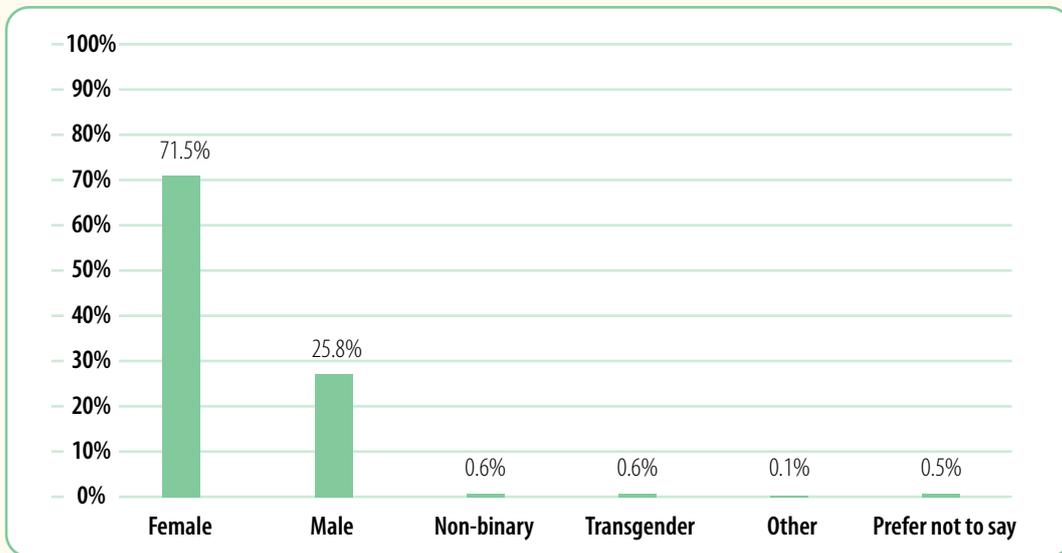
This section of the report details the finding of a survey of ETB learners on Active Inclusion. There was a total of 1,496 responses to the survey.

### PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

#### Gender

As regards the gender of respondents, 71.5% were female, 26.8% were male, 0.6% were non-binary, 0.3% were transgender female, 0.3% were transgender male, 0.1% identified as other and 0.5% preferred not to say (see figure 2 below).

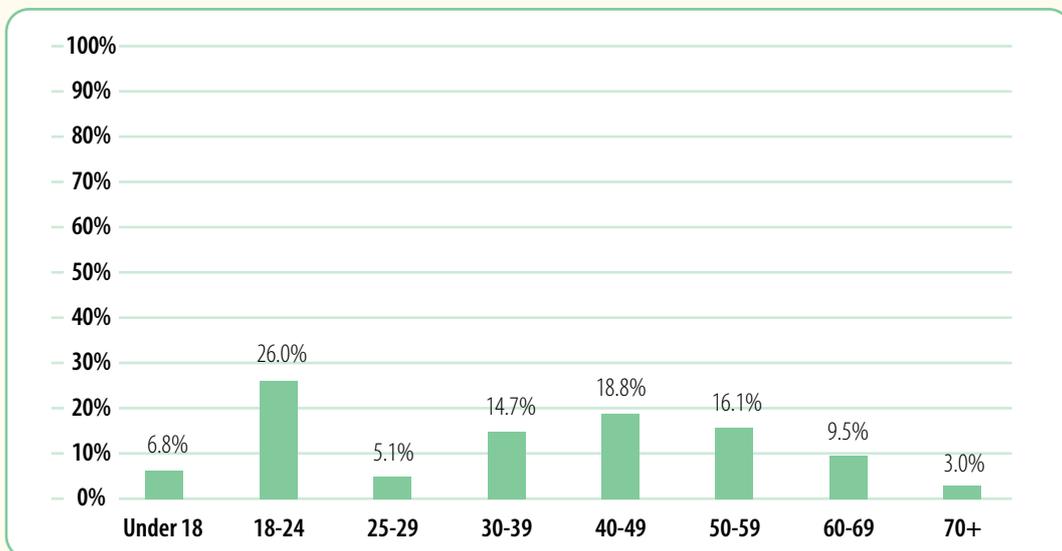
Figure 2: Gender of respondents



#### Age

In terms of the age of respondents, 6.8% were aged under 18 years of age, 26% were 18 – 24 years, 5.1% were 25 – 29 years, 14.7% were aged 30 – 39 years, 18.8% were aged 40 – 49 years, 16.1% were aged 50 – 59 years, 9.5% were aged 60 – 69 years and 3% were aged 70 years or more (see figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Age of respondents



## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Geographical location of respondents**

As can be seen from table 7 below, respondents from a wide range of counties in Ireland responded to the survey. The counties with the highest number of responses were Kilkenny (12.2%), followed by Carlow (11.6%), Cavan (9.2%), Cork (8.7%), Dublin (7.5%), Tipperary (7.2%), Laois (5.6%), Donegal (4.9%), Sligo (4.2%), Waterford (4.2%), Mayo (3.9%), Meath (3.5%), Wexford (3.2%) and Limerick (3%).

**Table 7: Geographical location of respondents**

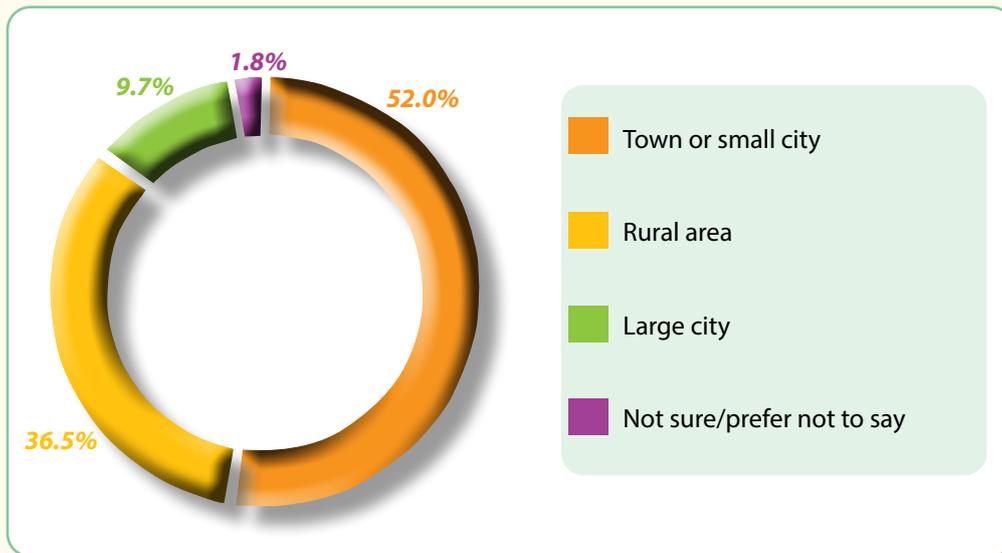
County	No. of respondents	%
Carlow	161	11.6%
Cavan	128	9.2%
Clare	27	1.9%
Cork	121	8.7%
Donegal	68	4.9%
Dublin	104	7.5%
Galway	25	1.8%
Kerry	0	0%
Kildare	0	0%
Kilkenny	170	12.2%
Laois	78	5.6%
Leitrim	14	1%
Limerick	42	3%
Longford	3	0.2%
Louth	35	2.5%
Mayo	54	3.9%
Meath	49	3.5%
Monaghan	10	0.7%
Offaly	15	1.1%
Roscommon	6	0.4%
Sligo	59	4.2%
Tipperary	100	7.2%
Waterford	58	4.2%
Westmeath	21	1.5%
Wexford	44	3.2%
Wicklow	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,392</b>	<b>100%</b>

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Respondents from urban/rural areas**

Just over half (52%) of respondents were living in a town or small city, 36.5% were living in rural areas, 9.7% were living in a large city and 1.8% were not sure or preferred not to say (see figure 4 below).

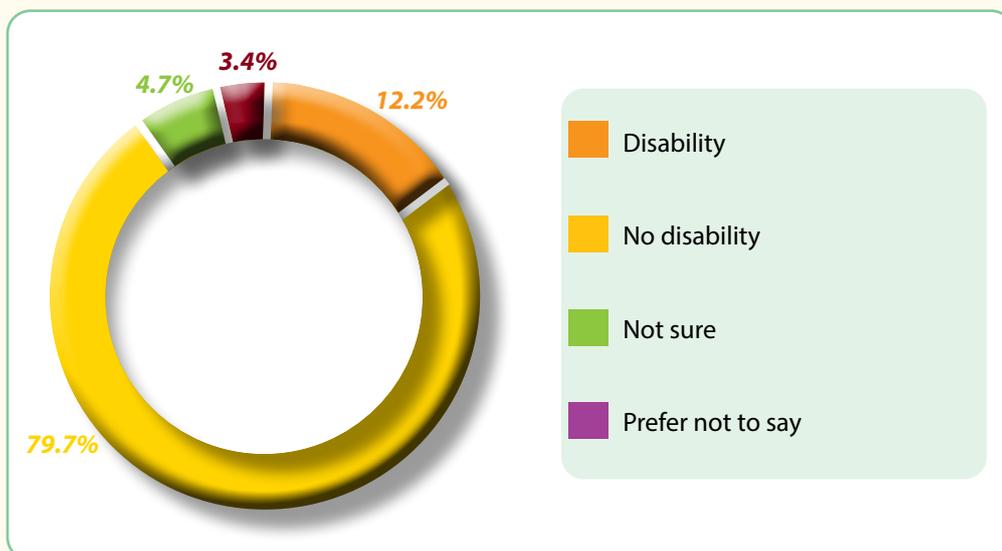
**Figure 4: Respondents from urban/rural areas**



### **Disability**

Overall, 12.2% of respondents stated they have a disability, 79.7% stated they do not have a disability, 4.7% were not sure and 3.4% preferred not to say (see figure 5 below).

**Figure 5: Respondents with a disability**



## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### ***Ethnic and cultural background***

As can be seen from table 8 below, the majority (72.6%) of respondents identified as White Irish, followed by Other white background (13%), Other including mixed background (3.3%), Black or Black Irish – African (2.8%), Any other Asian background (1.8%), Irish Traveller (1.6%), Any other Black background (1%), Asian or Asian Irish-Chinese (1%) and Roma (0.3%).

**Table 8: Ethnic and Cultural Background of Respondents**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
White Irish	1,075	72.6%
Irish Traveller	23	1.6%
Other white background	193	13%
Black or Black Irish - African	41	2.8%
Any other Black background	15	1%
Asian or Asian Irish- Chinese	15	1%
Any other Asian background	26	1.8%
Roma	4	0.3%
Other, including mixed background	49	3.3%
Prefer not to say	39	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,480</b>	<b>100%</b>

### ***Religion***

As table 9 shows below, as regards religion, over two thirds (67.3%) of respondents identified as Catholic, 15.5% stated they have no religion, 5.8% preferred not to say, 5.1% were other religions, 3.1% were Muslim, 2.2% were Church of Ireland, 0.5% were Methodist and 0.4% were Presbyterian. Other religions of respondents included Christian, Protestant, Orthodox, Buddhist, Jehovah Witness, Hindu, Lutheran and Baptist.

**Table 9: Religion of Respondents**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Catholic	993	67.3%
Church of Ireland	33	2.2%
Presbyterian	6	0.4%
Methodist	7	0.5%
Islam	45	3.1%
No religion	229	15.5%
Prefer not to say	86	5.8%
Other	76	5.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,475</b>	<b>100%</b>

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Sexuality**

In relation to sexuality, just over three quarters (76.2%) of respondents identified as heterosexual, 4.8% identified as bisexual, 2.6% identified as other, 1.6% identified as a gay man, 1.4% identified as a gay woman and 13.4% preferred not to say (see table 10 below).

**Table 10: Sexuality of respondents**

Sexual orientation	No. of respondents	%
Heterosexual	1,118	76.2%
Bisexual	71	4.8%
Gay man	24	1.6%
Gay woman	20	1.4%
Other	39	2.6%
Prefer not to say	197	13.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,468</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Background of respondents**

As can be seen from table 11 below, 10.5% of respondents identified parents in a one parent household, 8.8% as dependents in a one parent household, 3.4% as carers, 1.5% as refugees, 0.7% as living in Direct Provision, 0.5% as substance misusers, 0.3% as asylum seekers, 0.2% as ex-offenders and 0.1% were experiencing homelessness. Almost three quarters (74%) of respondents did not identify as being from any of the backgrounds mentioned above.

**Table 11: Background of Respondents**

Background of Respondents	No. of respondents	%
Parent in a one parent household	155	10.5%
Dependant in a one parent household	129	8.8%
Carer	50	3.4%
Refugee	22	1.5%
Living in Direct Provision	11	0.7%
Substance misuser	7	0.5%
Asylum seeker	5	0.3%
Ex-offender	3	0.2%
Experiencing homelessness	1	0.1%
None of the above	1,089	74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,472</b>	<b>100%</b>

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Education, training and employment status of respondents**

As can be seen in table 12 below, just over one third (34.6%) of respondents were in education or training, 20.7% were unemployed, 20.1% were employed, 8.5% were engaged in home duties, 7.9% were retired, 3.8% identified as other, 2.3% as a carer and 2.1% as self-employed.

**Table 12: Education, training and employment status of respondents**

Status	No. of respondents	%
In education or training	510	34.6%
Employed	296	20.1%
Self-employed	31	2.1%
Unemployed	305	20.7%
Engaged in home duties	125	8.5%
A carer	34	2.3%
Retired	116	7.9%
Other	56	3.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,473</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Level of education of respondents**

Table 13 below details the highest level of education of respondents before starting their courses. The most common level of education among learners was the Leaving Cert; A Levels, or Applied Leaving Cert (31.5%), followed by the Junior Cert; Inter Cert; Group Cert; GCSEs; O Levels; or NFQ Level 3 (Full/Major Award) (16.9%), Certificate NFQ Level 5 (Full/Major Award) (10.2%) and Primary Education (7.7%).

**Table 13: Highest Education Level of Learners**

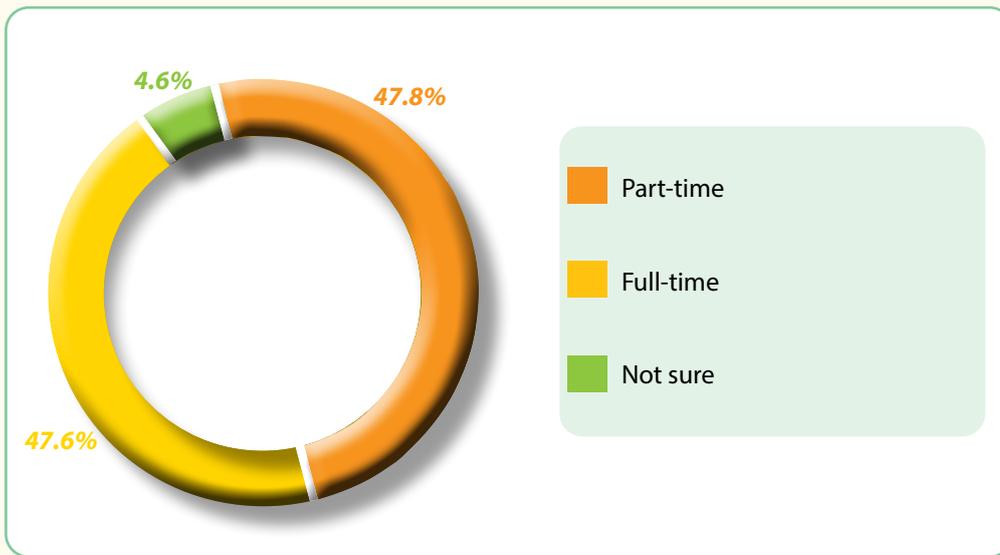
Highest Education Level of Learners	No.	%
No formal education or training	43	3%
Primary Education	113	7.7%
Certificate NFQ Level 1 or 2 (Full/Major Award)	28	1.9%
Junior Cert; Inter Cert; Group Cert; GCSEs; O Levels; or NFQ Level 3 (Full/Major Award)	246	16.9%
Transition Year	46	3.2%
Leaving Cert; A Levels, or Applied Leaving Cert	460	31.5%
Certificate NFQ Level 4 (Full/Major Award)	60	4.1%
Certificate NFQ Level 5 (Full/Major Award)	149	10.2%
Advanced Certificate NFQ Level 6 (Full/Major Award)	53	3.6%
Other non-NFQ aligned FET	16	1.1%
Higher Certificate NFQ Level 6	37	2.5%
Ordinary Bachelor Degree; Diploma NFQ Level	72	4.9%
Honours Bachelor Degree	69	4.7%
Professional (NFQ 8+)	31	2.1%
Post-graduate	38	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,461</b>	<b>100%</b>

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Type of courses attended**

As can be seen from figure 6 below, 47.8% of respondents attended a part-time course, 47.6% attended a full-time course and 4.6% were not sure.

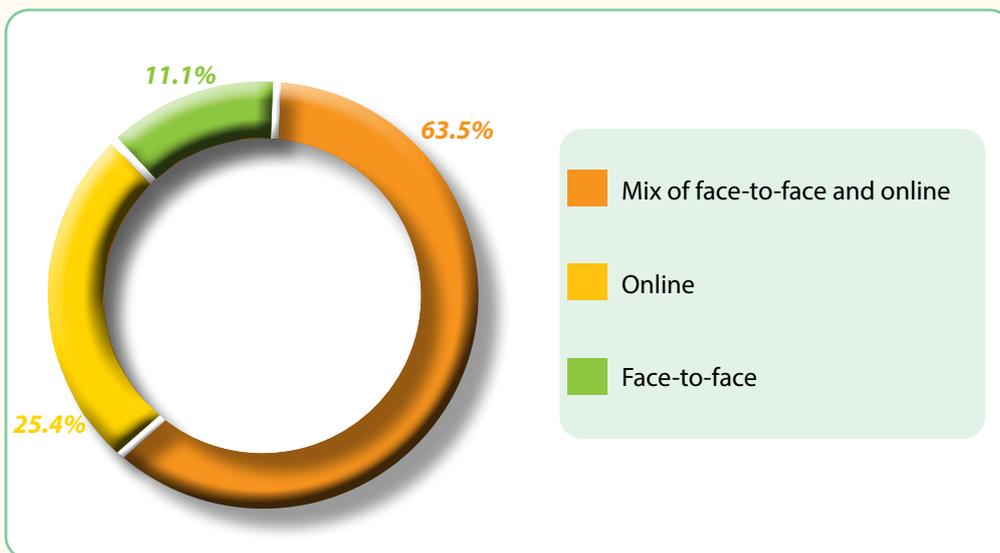
**Figure 6: Type of course attended by respondents**



### **Delivery of courses**

Overall, 63.5% of courses attended by respondents were delivered through a mix of face-to-face and online learning, 25.4% of courses were delivered online and 11.1% were delivered face-to-face (see figure 7 below).

**Figure 7: Delivery of courses**



## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### Learner supports

As table 14 below outlines, the most common type of learner supports received by respondents was digital skills (Computer) support (60.2%), followed by loan of equipment/device, e.g., computer (58.6%), guidance counselling (50%), literacy/numeracy support (43.2%), mentoring/key worker supports (31.9%), extra tuition/extra time in exams (27.8%), support with meals (26.7%), financial support (26.8%), support with transport (21.3%), psychological counselling (21.1%), support with disability (18.2%) and support with childcare (8.9%).

**Table 14: Types of Support received by Respondents**

Type of Support	No. of respondents	%
Digital Skills (Computer) Support	808	60.2%
Loan of Equipment/Device, e.g., computer	773	58.6%
Guidance Counselling	652	50%
Literacy / Numeracy Support	556	43.2%
Mentoring/ Key Worker Supports	389	31.9%
Extra tuition/ Extra time in exams	340	27.8%
Support with Meals	328	26.7%
Financial Support	325	26.8%
Support with Transport	261	21.3%
Psychological Counselling	256	21.1%
Support with Disability	217	18.2%
Support with Childcare	106	8.9%

*"We got equivalent to Jobseeker's. I also had help with childcare costs. Mentoring- The tutors were extremely helpful and patient throughout the course. We were given a laptop and mouse to help with our online learning. Transport, the option of a bus to and from the centre was available. If needed we got extensions on assignments and projects."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

### Other supports that would have helped learners

Respondents were asked if there were any other supports that would have helped them while doing their course. Just over three quarters (76.2%) of respondents said there were no other supports that would have helped them.

Other supports suggested by respondents included:

- More support with learning online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, e.g., computer supports, how to use technology, better broadband etc.
- More time to complete courses and assignments.
- More financial supports.
- More childcare supports.
- More face-to-face supports.
- Supports related to transport.
- More support with books.

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Barriers to participation for learners**

Respondents were asked to identify what are the main barriers for learners taking part in ETB FET courses. The main barriers, from the most to the least commonly identified, are outlined below:

- Barriers related to online learning, e.g., lack of computer skills, access to internet, lack of space.
- Barriers related to time, e.g., lack of time to attend courses due to work, family etc.
- Barriers related to cost, e.g., cost of travel, technology, childcare etc.
- Barriers related to transport, e.g., lack of transport to attend courses.
- Barriers related to childcare.
- Barriers related to confidence, e.g., lack of confidence to attend courses.
- Barriers related to language, e.g., English as a second language.
- Barriers related to mental health issues, e.g., anxiety.
- Barriers related to lack of information, e.g., lack of information and advertisement of courses.

The following quotes from respondents highlight some of the barriers to participation in courses mentioned above:

*"Lack of study space in Direct Provision, and I had to struggle with having a conducive space for online classes and studies."* [Full-time PLC learner]

*"Making sure you have the time and space to focus on the coursework, worrying about money coming in for bills and costs while studying, transportation to and from the site, not feeling like you can do it or that you won't get it or succeed at it."* [Full-time community education learner]

*"Working part-time on certain days limits one's availability to take part in courses. The financial cost has always been a huge barrier for me personally."* [Part-time VESD learner]

*"English being my second language is the barrier."* [Part-time ESOL learner]

*"Personal mental health and outlook on learning after already leaving the education system."*  
[Part-time community education Level 4 learner]

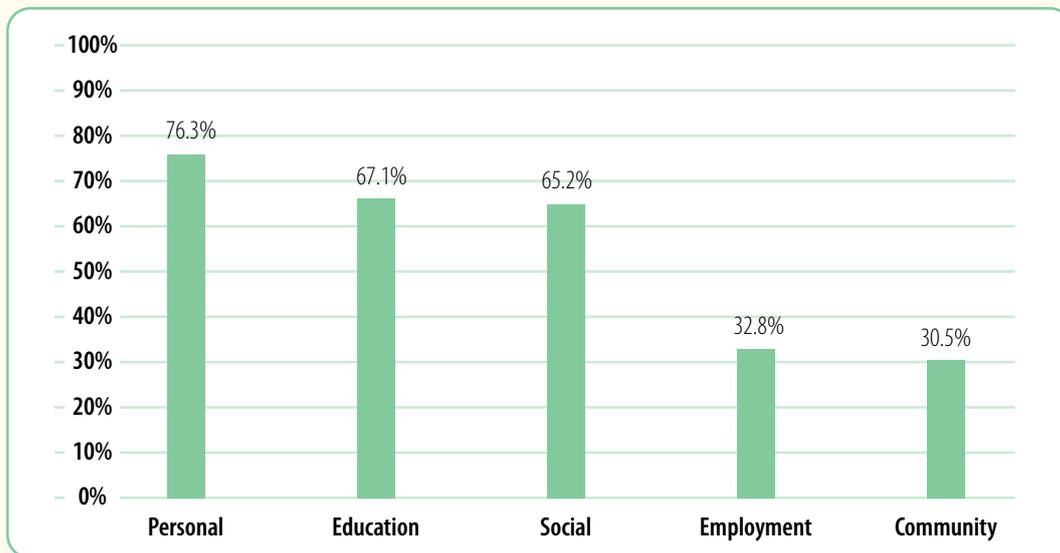
*"Knowing how to access information about the course."* [VTOS learner]

### **Benefits and outcomes for learners**

As figure 8 below shows, the most common benefits and outcomes of taking part in ETB courses identified by respondents were personal benefits and outcomes, e.g., increased self-confidence and self-esteem, which were identified by over three quarters (76.3%) of respondents. The next most commonly identified benefits and outcomes were education benefits and outcomes (67.1%), followed by social benefits and outcomes, e.g., increased social skills and meeting new people (65.2%), employment benefits and outcomes (32.8%), community benefits and outcomes, e.g., getting involved in community groups/activities (30.5%) and other benefits and outcomes (6.8%).

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

**Figure 8: Benefits and outcomes of participation in ETB courses**



Other benefits and outcomes identified by respondents included mental health benefits, health benefits, e.g., fitness from exercise classes, help to progress to further education, e.g., qualify for a PLC course, help with starting their own business and providing a structure for respondents.

Many respondents talked about the benefits and outcomes of participating in courses during the Covid-19 pandemic while there were social restrictions in place. Respondents felt taking part in courses during this time had many benefits and outcomes, particularly mental health and social benefits and outcomes.

The following quotes from respondents highlighted the different benefits and outcomes of participating in their courses.

### **Personal benefits and outcomes:**

*"My creative writing class has helped me grow in confidence as a writer and has been instrumental in building up my confidence and my decision making."* [Part-time community education learner]

*"Retirement due to depressive illness, course here has opened new doors for potential part time work, more importantly has helped so much in helping with self-esteem, confidence social anxiety."* [Full-time Level 5 learner]

### **Social benefits and outcomes:**

*"Building a network of friends."* [Part-time community education learner]

*"Having a social outlet weekly each Tuesday. Meeting class member and our tutor by zoom. Exchanging ideas and helping each other. Having our cuppa and a chat. Making plans for the following Tuesday. Having the next class to look forward to."*

[Part-time community education learner]

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### Education benefits and outcomes:

*"I learned so much. Every day I enjoyed immensely and contributed to class discussions at all times. I am so glad to be learning again and I gave everyday 100% to each class and module. It has opened my knowledge and given me the confidence to learn and look for job opportunities in this area."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

*"As someone who needed to upskill for a career change, all my needs and hopes have been fulfilled and the difficulties I encountered have served to make me more competent and confident in using my new ICT skills and PE skills."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

### Employment benefits and outcomes:

*"Getting experience in the working world, preparation for third level and future work opportunities and making lifelong friends."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

*"I think it will help me to get a job in the future."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

### Mental health benefits and outcomes:

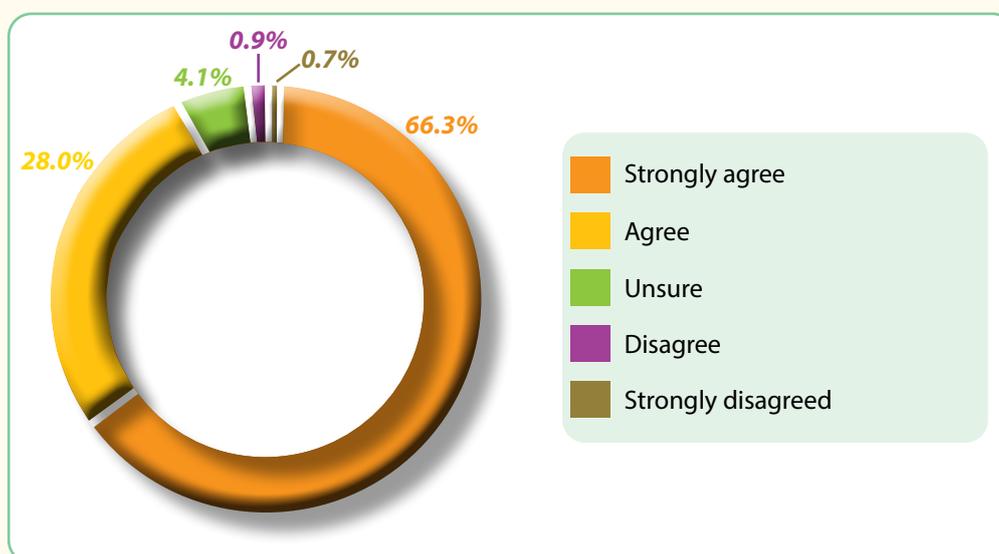
*"Great for mental health, also gives you an aim every day."* [Full-time work-based learner]

*"Helped to keep me sane through lockdown."* [Part-time community education learner]

### Are learners from different backgrounds accepted and made feel welcome?

Respondents were asked, in their experience, were people from different backgrounds accepted and made feel welcome in ETB courses. Two thirds (66.3%) of respondents strongly agreed that people from different backgrounds were accepted and made feel welcome, 28% agreed, 4.1% were unsure, 0.9% disagreed and 0.7% strongly disagreed (see figure 9 below).

**Figure 9: Are learners from different backgrounds accepted and made feel welcome?**



## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

The following quotes are from learners relating to their experiences of being accepted and made feel welcome:

*"I am a black woman and I was very well welcome."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

*"I, as a transgender, am accepted by everyone here and my partner is Polish and also is accepted fully."* [Part-time BTEI learner]

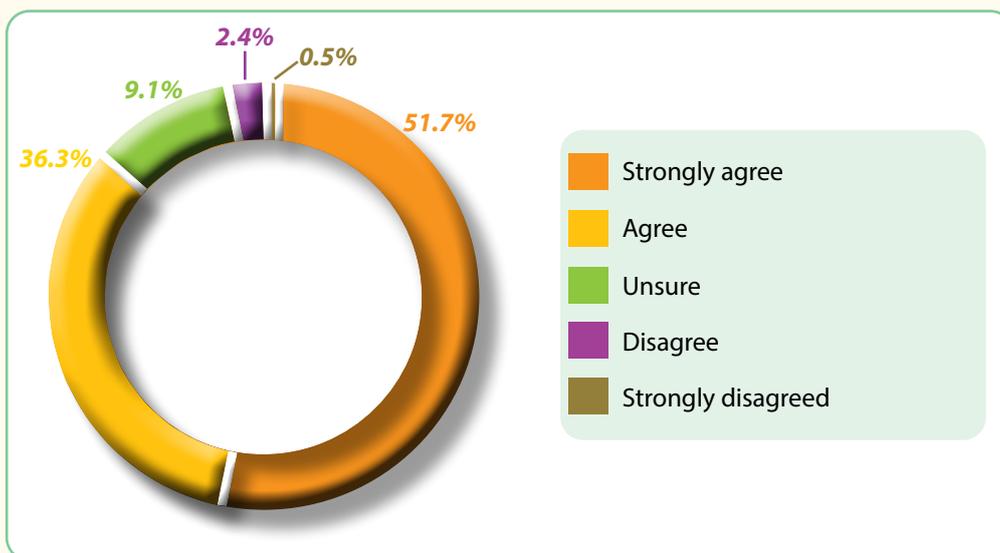
*"I am 54 and all of my classmates were between 18 and 23 years old and I never once was made to feel anything only welcome and included."* [Full-time PLC learner]

*"All of my class were white, I was the only non-Irish person, but there was never any tolerance of any form of discrimination or bigotry (always dealt with quickly and kindly); the college itself did promote the diversity of its student body in a YouTube stream that made me realise how diverse they rest of the college is."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

### **Accessibility and inclusivity of environment**

The survey asked respondents if they thought the environment in which ETB courses take place are accessible and inclusive to people with all abilities and from all backgrounds, e.g., buildings, classrooms, toilets. Over half (51.7%) of respondents strongly agreed the environment in which courses take place are accessible and inclusive to people with all abilities and from all backgrounds, 36.3% agreed, 9.1% were unsure, 2.4% disagreed and 0.5% strongly disagreed (see figure 10 below).

**Figure 10: Is the environment in which ETB courses take place accessible and inclusive?**



The majority of respondents felt the environment in which ETB courses take place are accessible and inclusive to people with all abilities and from all backgrounds, as is reflected in the following quotes:

*"Everything that anyone doing the course would need, such as classrooms and toilets are all accessible to them, they are either all on the ground floor, or there is an elevator bringing you to them, so they are inclusive and accessible to everyone in that way."* [Full-time PLC learner]

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

*"The halls are wide enough for wheelchairs along with specific bathrooms and elevators. There is enough equipment and help provided for anyone seeking extra help, support, guidance etc. Very open and inclusive staff."* [Full-time PLC learner]

Of those who disagreed that the environment in which ETB courses take place are accessible and inclusive to people with all abilities and from all backgrounds, the main issue highlighted was buildings not being accessible to learners with limited mobility, particularly wheelchair users. This included older buildings, stairs, no ramps, no lifts etc.

*"If someone who relied on a wheelchair or crutches attended this centre there would be no way for come upstairs and there are no disabled toilets."* [Full-time Youthreach learner]

*"The centre my course took place in could only be accessed by climbing steep stairs, which was sometimes a slight issue for me because of a health issue, but would be a much bigger problem for someone with a more severe mobility issue."* [Full-time LTI learner]

Other issues raised by respondents related to accessibility and inclusivity included the need for gender neutral toilets and for facilities to be autism friendly, e.g., bright lighting.

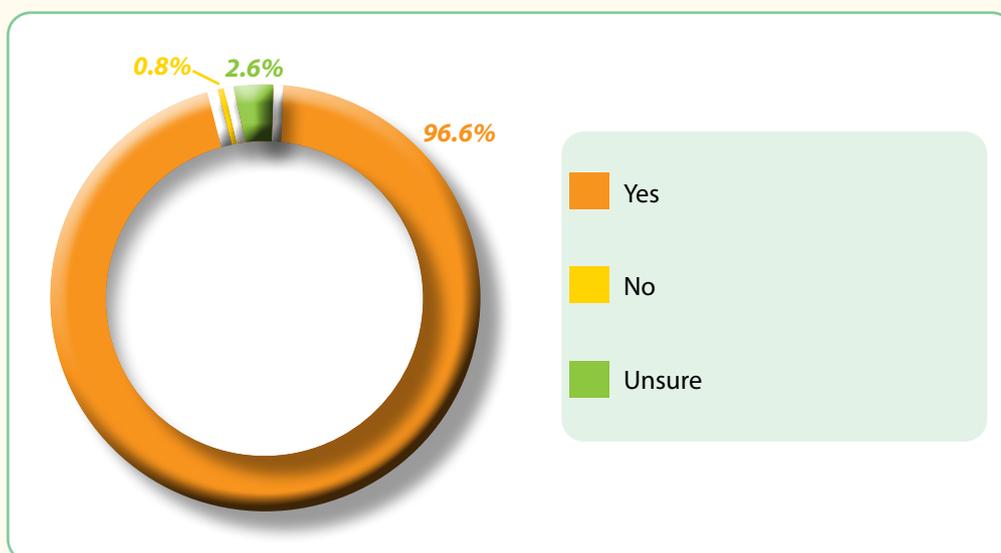
*"I agree but from what I am aware there are no unisex bathrooms in the building even though it newly built and could have easily been added and still could."*  
[Full-time community education learner]

*"Lighting is very harsh and not autism friendly."* [Full-time Youthreach learner]

### **Would respondents recommend taking part in ETB courses?**

Respondents were asked would they recommend taking part in an ETB course to other people. As can be seen in figure 11 below, the vast majority (96.6%) of respondents said they would recommend taking part in an ETB course to others, 0.8% said they would not recommend taking part in an ETB course and 2.6% were unsure.

**Figure 11: Would respondents recommend taking part in an ETB course to others?**



## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

The following quotes from respondents highlighted the reasons why they would recommend taking part in an ETB course to other people:

*"It is good opportunity to increase your language skills, self-confidence and your skills, to meet people from various parts of the world."* [Part-time ESOL learner]

*"Yes, taking part in an ETB course is beneficial because it can be a great opportunity to meet new people and learn new skills. It can be seen as a good way of preparing for third level education. It is also a good pathway of achieving a university course if the desired course hasn't been achieved through the Leaving Certificate."* [Full-time PLC learner]

*"I have benefitted enormously from this course. It has given me a second chance to explore areas outside of my previous working life which I couldn't pursue in my earlier life due to financial needs. I can now compete for employment in those areas."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

*"I would highly recommend it. It is the best decision I ever made. It was very daunting returning to study at my age but I'm so glad that I did, it has given me a chance to upskill and re-train in an area where now I have a recognised qualification."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

*"Yes. I was made redundant, a single mother and I am grateful for the opportunity that I had in attending a course by the ETB. I would highly recommend the ETB to anyone interested in bettering themselves, upskilling or starting an employment or education journey."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

### **How could ETBs be more inclusive?**

Finally, respondents were asked if they had suggestions as to how ETBs could be more inclusive. Overall, the majority of respondents felt ETBs were currently very inclusive.

*"The centre where I am doing my course is very inclusive. There are many different people there from different cultures and groups and from what I've seen everyone is treated fairly and with respect."* [Part-time BTEI learner]

*"I think all attending are treated equally regardless of age race experience etcetera and think that says a lot about the people involved in running and teaches the courses."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

However, respondents also made the following suggestions with regard to how ETBs could be made more inclusive:

### **Promotion and advertisement of courses**

- Better promotion and advertisement of ETB courses, locally and nationally, e.g., radio, TV, newspapers.
- Advertise ETB courses locally in churches, supermarkets, post offices, doctors surgeries, dentists, maternity clinics etc.
- Advertise the benefits of participation in ETB courses.
- Use people from diverse backgrounds to advertise the inclusiveness of ETB courses, e.g., same sex couples, people from diverse ethnicities.

*"Using same sex families and those from other ethnic families on your advertising and posters so it is inclusive of all."* [Part-time community education learner]

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Online promotion and advertisement of courses**

- Use social media to promote and advertise ETB courses, e.g., Facebook.
- Create videos with learners from different backgrounds and post them on social media platforms to promote the inclusivity of the ETB.
- Ensure ETB websites are easy for learners to navigate.
- Websites should provide information individual colleges.
- Use email campaigns to promote and advertise ETB course.
- Online application forms for ETB courses should be more user friendly.

*"A lot of people don't know about the ETB, so I would look at advertising so people can take advantage of courses. I found course when an add popped up on Facebook."* [Full-time level 5 learner]

*"I think by advertising more letting people know just how inclusive they (ETBs) are. Doing short interviews with the students showing the different ages, cultures, backgrounds of the students and posting them on a social media platform."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

### **Promotion and advertisement to young people**

- Promote and advertise ETB courses to young people through local youth services.
- Promote and share information on ETB courses with second level students, e.g., PLC courses.
- Work with the Department of Education and Skills to promote and advertise ETB courses.
- Provide information to secondary school students and early school leavers on Youthreach.
- ETB learners from minority backgrounds should give talks to students in schools and colleges to promote the inclusiveness of ETB courses.

*"There is not enough information on Youthreach. They need to show that Youthreach is there for people who struggle in secondary school and to show that there is second chance of schooling."* [Full-time Youthreach learner]

### **Develop links with the Department of Social Protection**

- Develop links with the Department of Social Protection to promote and advertise ETB courses.
- Promote and advertise ETB courses in Job Centres.
- Link attending ETB courses with social welfare payments, e.g., for those on Jobseeker's allowance, disability benefit.

*"Link in more with the Department of Social Protection, particularly when people are on job seekers allowance, they should tell you about this option...my friend was attending VTOS otherwise I never would have heard about VTOS and this would have been a missed opportunity."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Promotion of active inclusion within ETBs**

- Have 'active inclusion days' or 'culture days' in ETBs that celebrate inclusivity, different cultures, backgrounds etc.
- Give presentations in ETBs on different backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, religions, sexualities etc.
- Put up posters promoting active inclusion in ETBs.
- Create spaces and opportunities for learners from different backgrounds to share their experiences of the ETB courses they are participating in.
- Have extra-curricular activities, clubs and societies in ETBs for learners so they can get to know each other better to help promote inclusion.

*"Cultural Appreciation Day, where stalls of different cultures and countries are set up and shown the clothing food and activities that each individual learns."* [Full-time PLC learner]

*"I think it would be good if students of all ages and background could have a space within the college to come together and speak about their experiences and the courses they are participating in. Also it would be good to be able to drop in and have a cuppa."* [Part-time community education learner]

### **Training of ETB tutors in Active Inclusion**

- Train ETB tutors in the area of active inclusion, e.g., how to work with learners with different abilities and with learners from diverse backgrounds.
- Train tutors in the area of disability, e.g., Autism, ADHD.
- Train tutors in the area of mental health to ensure there is a greater understanding of learners with mental health issues.
- ETB tutors should be from diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure tutors are well-informed and available as supports for learners.
- Ensure there is consistency with tutors to minimise disruptions to vulnerable students.

*"More disability supports and staff training (especially for things like ADHD and autism). More flexibility in courses."* [Part-time community education learner]

### **Active inclusion for ETB learners**

- Educate all ETB learners on active inclusion, e.g., how to be more inclusive with other learners.
- Run cultural events for ETB learners to educate them on different cultures, religions, ethnicities, genders, sexuality etc.
- Have policies and procedures in place for learners to make complaints about other learners who engage in behaviour that is discriminatory, racist, sexist, homophobic etc.
- Operate a zero-tolerance policy with learners who engage in behaviour that is discriminatory, racist, sexist, homophobic etc.
- ETB learners should be consulted during courses, not at the end, to make sure they are happy with the way they are being treated in terms of inclusion, e.g., learner surveys.
- Listen to the voice of ETB learners and involve them in decision-making on issues such as curriculum, courses, policies etc.

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

*“Resources should be in place for class members to speak to someone should they feel there is any bias being shown towards them. The ETB themselves could be 100% inclusive but if another student is prejudiced towards another the proper channels and policies need to be in place to deal with this and if a student continually cannot accept others for who they are and make life difficult then should ultimately be removed from the course.”* [Part-time level 5 learner]

### Supports for learners

- Consider creating a role of ‘student support teacher’ in ETBs who could provide additional supports to learners, e.g., supports with assignments, IT etc. A student support teacher would ideally be a former ETB learner who is familiar with the system.
- Ensure learners are aware of the supports and resources available to them from ETBs.
- Have pre-course assessments for learners to determine their support requirements.
- Provide more learning supports for learners, e.g., supports with assignments, referencing etc.
- Offer more childcare support for learners.
- More financial supports for learners.
- Personalised supports for learners experiencing difficulties, e.g., phone calls, texts.

*“If the pandemic was to return a phone call, text message, or email asking how we are coping. As a mature student with children (3) home schooling them as long with full-time college was extremely difficult at times.”* [Full-time family learning learner]

### Technology supports

- More supports for learners on how to use computers and online technology before starting courses, e.g., Office 365, Microsoft Teams etc.
- Ensure all learners have access to the same technology, computers, devices, broadband etc.

*“I think the ETB would benefit from having a student support teacher aside from their main teachers. This would allow for extra support that maybe the teacher doesn’t have the time to give, but could support with proof reading of assignments, especially if they have a learning difficulty or different first language. A student support who could help with the likes of spellings, research advice, computer and IT guidance.”* [Full-time VTOS learner]

*“Everyone having access to same technology kit is surely a part of larger inclusivity issues....as it’s not just gender and politics, it’s also poverty and resources.”* [Full-time BTEC learner]

### Guidance counselling

- Access to more guidance counselling for learners.
- Provide information to ETB learners on jobs that are available to them specific to their course.

*“More frequent and attentive guidance counselling.”* [Full-time Youthreach learner]

### Transport

- Provide transport for learners in ETBs courses, particularly in rural areas.
- Increase the travel allowance for learners.

*“Run a mini bus service for those who live in rural areas.”* [Part-time adult further education learner]

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **Supports for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties**

- ETBs should have employees trained in disability awareness, not just disability rights, who can help assess the needs of learners with disabilities.
- More supports for learners with disabilities, e.g., personal assistants.
- Provide more learning and assessment options for learners with disabilities, e.g., to make videos as an option rather than written assignments.
- Tutors should be mindful of learners capacity for learning, e.g., providing numerous explanations, written and verbal information etc.

*“Give people the choice to make videos about log books, essays etc. not everybody can write a thousand page essay making it impossible for them to do good in the course, it is unfair to people with learning disabilities such as myself, I lost out on marks because I had to write a log book instead of making a short video log, there were a few assignments that I was able to do a video log for and I got really good marks for those assignments. Case and point don’t judge a fishes ability to climb a tree.”* [Full-time PLC learner]



### **Supports for transgender learners**

- Ensure tutors and staff are trained on transgender issues so they can communicate appropriately with transgender learners.
- Ensure there are gender neutral toilets in ETB buildings.

*“Informing staff more on how to communicate with those who are transgender, especially when it comes to finding out what pronouns to use.”* [Full-time PLC learner]

### **Supports for ESOL learners**

- More supports for learners for whom English is not their first language, e.g., translators.
- More conversation classes for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Employ tutors with more than one language to teach ESOL.
- Work with local communities with high populations of non-English speaking people to run courses in English with learning supports that will help learners gain employment.

*“Promote and advertise these ESOL courses in please where staff interact with clients with no English background, for example, homeless service and social welfare office.”* [Part-time ESOL learner]

### **Supports for older learners**

- Provide computer skills and IT supports specific to older learners.
- Give older learners the option to write instead of type assignments and exams.

*“Older people being able to write exams and assignment’s instead of type. Not everyone grew up with technology.”* [Full-time BTEI learner]

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### **ETB courses**

- Have a wider variety and diversity of course subjects as options for learners to study.
- Have more diverse course options which would link in with different career areas.
- More ETB courses aimed at specific groups, e.g., older/retired people, stay at home mothers/fathers.
- More course options for learners who have literacy and numeracy difficulties.
- Ensure ETB courses are aimed at learners who are of similar educational backgrounds.
- Continue to provide ETB courses online.
- Have a mix of online and face-to-face courses.
- Run more courses in the evening time.
- Have more courses for social and leisure purposes rather than for certification.

*"After the pandemic is over, some aspects could stay online or distance-learning. While it's easier when in the classroom, it may allow some people who can't arrange childcare to avail of the courses."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

*"More diverse course options in different career areas that would appeal to more people and encourage/inspire them to do a course with an ETB. Personally, it would be nice to have more language courses available."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

### **Inclusive administration and language**

- Learner forms should be shorter and easier to understand.
- Learner information gathered for administrative purposes should be minimal and as non-intrusive as possible.
- Ensure language used to gather information on learners is inclusive and non-offensive to minority groups, e.g., transsexual rather than transgender man and transgender woman.

*"I don't think the large form should be given to attendees, e.g., medical details, social welfare etc. for community education."* [Part-time community education learner]

### **Collaboration with support groups and services**

- ETBs should collaborate with support groups and services to ensure active inclusion, e.g., disability support services, Traveller organisations, refugee and asylum seekers groups.
- ETBs should promote and advertise courses through homeless services.
- ETBs should recruit learners from different backgrounds through outreach work.

*"Maybe reach out to the Travelling community and the churches that the ethnic communities go to so that they are encouraged to participate."* [Full-time apprenticeship learner]

*"I feel more collaboration is needed between support services and ETBs to ensure inclusiveness, i.e. liaising with asylum support groups, disability support services to create courses to bridge the gap between formal accredited courses that pre-exist and where people that wish to participate are at now in their personal lives."* [Part-time VTOS learner]

## SECTION 4: FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF ETB LEARNERS

### Facilities

- Ensure ETB facilities are accessible to learners of all abilities, particularly wheelchair users.
- Ensure toilets are accessible to learners with disabilities.
- Ensure there are gender neutral toilets in ETB facilities.

*"More accessibility in centres for people with mobility issues."* [Full-time VTOS learner]

### Summary of findings of a survey of ETB Learners

Overall, the vast majority (94.3%) of learners either agreed or strongly agreed that people from different backgrounds were accepted and made feel welcome in ETBs. The majority (88%) of learners also agreed or strongly agreed the environment in which ETB courses take place are accessible and inclusive to people with all abilities and from all backgrounds. Almost all (96.6%) of respondents said they would recommend taking part in an ETB course to others. The majority of respondents felt ETBs were currently very inclusive for learners.



The main barriers for learners taking part in ETB FET courses identified by respondents were barriers related to online learning, time, cost and transport. However, in terms of learner supports, the most common type of supports received by respondents were digital skills support (60.2%) followed by loan of equipment/device, e.g., computer (58.6%). Other common supports received by learners included Guidance Counselling (50%) and literacy/numeracy support (43.2%). The most common benefits and outcomes of taking part in courses identified by respondents were personal benefits and outcomes (76.3%) followed by education benefits and outcomes (67.1%), social benefits and outcomes (65.2%), employment benefits and outcomes (32.8%) and community benefits and outcomes (30.5%).

The most common suggestions made by respondents as to how ETBs could be more inclusive included better promotion and advertisement of ETB courses, e.g., online, social media, through social welfare systems, promotion of active inclusion within ETBs, e.g., active inclusion days, training of ETB tutors and learners in active inclusion, supports for learners, inclusive facilities, admin and language and collaboration with support groups and services.

**Introduction**

This section of the report features a number of case studies which are drawn from focus groups that were conducted with learners and tutors of ETB further education and training.

**CASE STUDY 1: RURAL WOMEN LEARNERS – COMMUNITY EDUCATION****Introduction**

A focus group was conducted with nine women aged between 50 and 80 years of age from a rural women's group. The group has been in existence for over 20 years and has run numerous classes in conjunction with their local ETB. They have a very positive relationship with the local ETB co-ordinator and classes are run based on the women's interests. Some of the classes run in the past include photography, drama, computers, personal development, DIY and flower arranging.

**Community located**

Classes are run in the local community, which the women felt is very important as they are living in a rural area where the nearest town is around 20 miles away and there is limited public transport. The women said they would be less likely to travel a distance to attend classes.

*"Everyone lives within around five miles of the centre. People would be much more slow to travel somewhere for classes. There is only one rural link bus once a week and none in the evenings. Some people would be 20 miles from the nearest town so it's very important we have it here the classes here in the area."*

**Key benefits**

The women identified a number of benefits of participation in ETB further education and training, including personal, social, community, educational and employment benefits.

**Personal benefits**

Personal benefits identified by the group included increased self-confidence which has benefited them in their personal lives, helped them to communicate better, to pursue further education and in their jobs.

*"I think they (classes) took me out of my comfort zone and helped me a lot. It has given me more confidence to talk to people and help people and see where people are coming from. I work in a shop and I can communicate more with people. I feel more confident in talking to people and helping people."*

Some of the women felt every course they have taken part has helped them further increase their confidence and enabled them to advance and progress in terms of their interests and personal development.

*"The courses were a very enabling thing for the group and helped us to advance. They say knowledge is power so every course we did helped us progress. The courses have helped us build up our confidence and build up our interests."*

## SECTION 5: CASE STUDIES

# 1



### **Social benefits**

All the women talked about the social benefits of taking part in further education and training courses. This included meeting people and making new friends. Some women talked about the importance of the classes in terms of socialising in a rural area where some can experience social isolation.

*"I live up the mountain and I didn't really know anyone and then I got to know people through the courses and you get to know lots of new people. I think I would be nowhere without the courses, to be honest, I think it would be lost without it."*

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the women's group ran courses in Zoom online conferencing technology. Many of the women said it helped them stay connected socially with family and friends during the pandemic. Learning how to use technology also enabled them to participate in online classes during the pandemic which helped alleviate social isolation.

*"I only did the Zoom course this year and I found that absolutely fantastic. It gave me great confidence and that's why I really enjoyed it. I was terrified starting it but I made myself do it. I am now on an exercise class on Zoom because of it and I was also in a well-being group. Those two things kept me sane and to meet new people was absolutely wonderful. I have no children so I am depending on strangers to tell me what buttons to press and I am working on my mobile phone."*



## SECTION 5: CASE STUDIES

# 1

### **Community benefits**

Many community benefits were highlighted by the women's group in relation to how classes have helped them. Community benefits included giving them the skills to put on plays in their area, run photography exhibitions, produce books on their local area, run sports days for children in the area and run social events for older people in the area. The group have also run many fundraising events over the years for various causes.

*"The skills that each of us learned have been important for the whole group. We have organised so many fundraisers over the years and I don't think that would have happened without the classes. We have a fundraiser every year to raise money for the classes. We have many fundraisers, and did one for a defibrillator, and do one every year to maintain it."*

### **Educational benefits**

Many of the women talked about the educational benefits of participation in further education and training including increasing their knowledge and skillsets in various areas, for example in photography and computers. One woman documented how taking part in an ETB computer course had been the beginning of her educational journey which led to her gaining a Ph.D. and lecturing in a third level institution.

*"The computer course was the beginning of everything for me. I got a job through it and now I've just got my Ph.D. Those computer classes were a kick off that gave me confidence and skills. I realised we all have power... I went on to college and lecture now in English literature."*

### **Employment benefits**

A number of the women discussed the employment benefits of taking part in further education and training. This included gaining skills and qualifications to help with gaining employment as well as increased self-confidence which has benefited them in their jobs.

*"One girl that did photography classes with us went on to get a job with the paper as a photographer."*

### **Integration**

A number of women from the group have moved to the local area from other parts of Ireland and from other countries. These women said taking part in the classes has helped them integrate into the local community. For example, the women's group have run drama classes where they write, act and produce their own original plays which has facilitated people from different backgrounds to get to know each other well and integrate into the community.

*"I am a recent blow in from England and I have been here five years and I did the drama and the photography. The drama was great and I met everyone and feel part of the community...It's just been really good meeting new people and doing interesting things together. It is something I haven't experienced before in England, people are more private. Coming into a new community it has been fantastically welcoming and that was very refreshing for us. To such extent I was out five nights a week at classes so my husband hardly ever saw me!"*

The group is very welcoming of new people and one woman felt the classes and activities being run in the community has even contributed to some people moving to the area.

*"Some people have moved to the area and bought houses based on what is going on here. We welcome everyone in the group from all the different nationalities. Everyone joins the group and is welcome. A lot of people that coming into the community have great skills."*

**CASE STUDY 2: LEARNERS FROM A REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT GROUP****Introduction**

A focus group was conducted with 13 adults from a refugee resettlement programme who are engaged in further education and training with the local ETB. The refugees arrived in Ireland three years ago from Syria. Courses which the learners have engaged in are primarily English as a Second Language (ESOL) as well as classes such as computers.

**Learners feel welcome**

The learners said they have been made feel very welcome in the further education and training courses they have attended.

*"The people in the ETB are so nice. All the people are welcoming in the class."*

**Key benefits for learners**

The main benefits identified by learners included personal benefits, communication benefits, social benefits and integration benefits.

**Personal benefits**

Learners said learning English has helped them personally by allowing them to express themselves and understand what people are saying to them. One of the refugees spoke about the frustration and upset of not knowing the language when she arrived in Ireland first.

*"Imagine you are in a country and you have no English, the language you are living in. When I came here first I used to cry because people would talk to me and I didn't know what they were saying."*

**Communication benefits**

One of the main benefits identified by the learners was the communication benefits of learning the English language and how this has helped them in their day to day lives. For example, learners said learning English has helped them communicate better when they are shopping, going to the doctor, going to the pharmacy and going to hospital appointments. Some learners said they no longer need an interpreter to communicate which they are going to medical appointments.

*"It helps me because when I have some doctors' appointments, and when I am doing the shopping. It means I don't need an interpreter which means I am happy."*

**Social benefits**

The learners from the refugee programme spoke about the social benefits of participating in further education and training in terms of meeting new people and making new friends in their classes. However, learning English has also had other social benefits including enabling learners to interact with neighbours and parents of their children in school and make new friends.

*“It helps me to talk to other people. It helps me talk to friends of my son’s mothers and fathers outside the school.”*

*“When we came here first I was in school but I didn’t learn much English and I didn’t have many friends. Thank God now I have more friends and am learning English.”*

**Integration benefits**

Finally, a number of the learners said that taking part in the ETB course had helped them integrate into the local community. This included learning about Irish culture and having the language skills to communicate with people in their local area.

*“When I came first I didn’t have any English words and I had a good teacher who helped us with English and learning Irish culture and things like that.”*



*Attending a local Camogie match*



## CASE STUDY 3: LEARNERS IN PRISONS

**Introduction**

A focus group was conducted with 11 tutors from three prisons providing further education and training in Ireland. Prison education in Ireland is delivered in partnership between the Irish Prison Service and Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). ETBs provide education services to prisons within their remit. The aim of the Prison Education Service is to deliver a high quality, broad, flexible programme of education that helps people in custody cope with their sentence, achieve personal development, prepare for life after release and establish an appetite and capacity for life-long learning. As one tutor stated:

*"Our main aim is to raise the achievements of all learners in the prisons. We are focusing on personalised learning in the prison and focus on getting prisoners back into society."*

**Background of learners in prisons**

According to the tutors, the majority of learners in prisons are early school leavers with literacy and numeracy issues. However, some learners in prisons have completed higher levels of education. Learners in prisons are from various different ethnic backgrounds including members of the Traveller Community, Roma Community and foreign nationals. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is also taught in prisons.

*"In general, the vast majority of learners are early school leavers. A large majority are from Traveller backgrounds and would have literacy and numeracy issues. There is a huge demand for the practical classes but engaging them in reading and writing can be difficult. Specifically, Travellers have engaged in very little school so you have to start from the beginning."*

**Barriers to active inclusion for learners in prisons**

Learners in prisons often have negative past experiences of education which can act as a barrier to engagement. According to the tutors, engagement in further education and training in the prison service is often learners first positive engagement with education. The need for additional learning supports for prisoners with learning difficulties, e.g. resource teachers, was emphasised.

*"For a lot of the prisoners it is the first time they have a positive interaction in the education system. They develop trusting relationships with the teachers."*

Many learners in prisons also have substance misuse issues which can act as a barrier to engagement with education. Waiting lists for addiction counselling can be long which can affect prisoners accessing education.

*"Addiction issues and there are huge waiting lists for counselling for addiction and that can be a barrier to accessing education."*

**Peer-to-peer support**

Peer-to-peer support between learners in prisons was identified as a common theme by the tutors. Both informal and formal peer-to-peer support between learners was discussed. Informally, many learners in prison help and mentor each other in the various classes and programmes they are involved in, for example learners participating in the Gaisce award.

*“The Gaisce award is run in the prisons as well and it is run over three years so it gives them a reward at the end. The peer to peer support works well in this and other prisoners help each other when they are starting the award.”*

There is also formal peer-to-peer support through various programmes run in the prisons. For example, one programme trained learners as literacy advocates to encourage other learners to attend classes and as tutors to other learners. Tutors felt the programme had a positive impact on both the learners trained as advocates/tutors and the new learners in prisons they worked with.

*“Seeing the lads helping each other in an informal peer to peer learning, we said we would get NALA and Waterford IT involved and we trained a small group of learners in Level 6 tutor training. We ran courses with NALA, also trainer learners are literacy advocates to encourage other learners to attend courses. They also worked in conjunction with the tutors in the classes It is working really well. It has been transformative for the learners in the course.”*

### **Key benefits of FET for learners in prisons**

The tutors identified a number of benefits of further education and training for learners in prisons. Benefits included personal benefits, mental health benefits, social benefits and coping with prison.

#### **Personal benefits**

The tutors spoke about the personal benefits for learners in prisons engaging in further education and training. These included increased self-confidence and self-esteem among learners in prisons through learning to read and write, learning new skills, gaining qualifications and engaging in events such as concerts through music education.

*“We put on gigs together and it is a huge thing for their confidence. That presenting to their peers is a difficult thing and they band together to do it and it great for their morale. There may be 15 fellas on the stage and they take turns to do their piece and it’s a great chance for them to shine and they might not have had the chance before.”*

#### **Mental health benefits**

The mental health benefits of learners in prisons engaging in further education and training was frequently highlighted by tutors. This includes learners in prisons getting mental health benefits from participating in classes, talking to teachers, learning new skills etc.

*“There is a therapeutic aspect of it in terms of talking to teachers, there are mental health benefits.”*

There are also specific programmes run in the prisons which benefit the prisoners' mental health. For example, The Red Cross run a Community Based Health and First Aid programme in partnership with the Irish Prison Service and ETBs. The programme trains prisoners as volunteers and peer-to-peer educators. According to the tutors consulted, the programme has had a very positive impact on prisoner's mental health and well-being.

*"The Red Cross would run programmes where the lads are trained and run programmes on smoking cessation, health and diet on the landings in conjunction with the school here. It gives them agency and has mental health benefits. They train lads as listeners and if someone is having a bad night they are referred to the listener on each landing and they are very successful programmes."*

### **Coping with prison sentences**

According to the tutors, further education and training in prison can help learners cope with their sentences. Engaging in classes can be a form of escapism for learners in prisons who may have many issues to deal with.

*"I have heard students say they forget they are in prison when they are in classes and they think they are at home again in the cookery classes. A guy said to me yesterday it was the first time he had a laugh since he went to prison. Some prisoners have a lot of issues going on at home, issues with the guards so it is an escape for them. Education helps them use their energy in a positive way."*

Education in prisons can also help learners keep in contact with their families. For example, literacy classes often help learners in prisons write letters to their family members which they might not have been able to do previously.

*"Some learners can come to classes once a week and they just want to write a letter home to their wife but the outcomes wouldn't be recorded in the system. For anyone to achieve something they haven't achieved before it can be quite emotional for them. Working with people you develop a level of trust and it is quite special. You don't always see the end result but you see they have sent the letter and you can see the impact."*

Story Books Dads was highlighted as a project which helps learners in prison keeping in contact with their children. The Story Books Dads project is run in prisons to help maintain the emotional bond between prisoners and their children by helping prisoners to record bedtime stories on CDs and DVDs.

*"I was asking prisoners what made the most difference to them in prison education and they all said the Story Book Dads Programme was just such a beautiful way to keep in contact with their families that their children could hear their voices at night reading a story to them and it has such a positive impact."*

**Soft skills**

Another key benefit of further education and training in prisons highlighted was the development of personal, interpersonal or 'soft skills' which benefit the learner both in prison and when they are released from prison. Soft skills training is often the first step for learners in prisons before they engage in literacy and numeracy education and QQI level qualifications.

*"The soft skills are fantastic like to be able to sit in a room with other people and talk to them, skills we would take for granted. To be able to have a conversation with other people and take turns without interrupting."*

**Educational benefits**

Many learners in prisons gain formal qualifications such as QQI qualifications with some learners progressing to the Leaving Certificate, third level degrees and even Ph.Ds.

*"There is a lad that is now doing a Ph.D. and he would say his first introduction to education was in prison."*

Tutors also felt learners in prisons gaining qualifications which are independent of the prison was very important.

*"When they are presented with their certificates it doesn't have Midlands Prison printed on it and it is a big deal for them."*

**Family educational benefits**

Tutors talked about the family benefits of learners in prisons engaging in further education and training. This included the knock-on educational benefits for families of learners in prisons such as changing their mindset in relation to education, encouraging and supporting their children to engage and remain in education and breaking the cycle of educational disadvantage.

*"If you have someone who is benefitting from formal or informal education in prison they want better for their children and it seeps out into their family. You hear guys who were tearaways themselves and you hear them on the phone given out to their teenage children saying, 'you better study', and they want them to stay in school and go on to further education."*

Some prisons also run educational projects for relatives of prisoners. This includes educational and training courses for wives and girlfriends of prisoners and summer camps for their children. According to tutors involved in the project, the educational benefits of the project are intergenerational for the women who engage and their children. The whole family approach to education is considered to work well. The project also provides emotional and social supports for the female relatives of prisoners who have similar life experiences.

*"We have a project which provides educational opportunities for female relatives of prisoners. It is a general learning project for wives and girlfriends of prisoners and they do various level programmes like computers and cooking. Then we provide them with progression and guidance to progress to PLC courses. What is really emerging from the project is it is intergenerational and the women are really seeing the advantage of education and they are instilling it into their children. The projects is intergenerational and we need to support that."*

### CASE STUDY 4: ETB LANGUAGE SCHEME – COMMUNITY EDUCATION

#### ***About the scheme***

This ETB Language Scheme allows for the provision of services through the Irish language. The Language Scheme falls under the Official Languages Act 2003. The ETB developed the scheme using Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media guidelines and also undertook a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The Education and Training Board providing the scheme is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

- the underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language,
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of such services, and
- the resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the body concerned to develop or access the necessary language capability.

Recent developments in the provision of Irish services in the current ETB Language Scheme (2020-2032) include:

- An Irish Language Officer has been employed on a part-time basis since 2015;
- An Irish Language Steering Committee has been established to direct the Irish Language Officer's work. The committee meets four times annually to monitor progress.
- The ETB has developed an Irish language Policy and a Vision for the Irish Language which is published on their website;
- A Further Education and Training Centre opened in 2017. This is a centre which is operating in a Gaeltacht area and which affords the ETB more opportunities to provide services to the Gaeltacht community in the county;
- The ETB is co-funding Irish language courses in conjunction with a local development co-operative and the local County Council;
- The ETB is co-funding an Irish Education Officer role in partnership with Údarás na Gaeltachta;
- The ETB is supporting efforts to source funding for two Youth Officer roles in the county;
- The ETB is a member of the local Gaeltacht Taskforce, which aims to tackle the population decline in that area through providing a higher level of services to the communities there;
- The ETB provides a range of creative projects for children and teenagers through Irish;
- The ETB has been named as the Lead Organisation for writing a local town Language Plan. This town has been named a Gaeltacht Service Town and work on the Plan has recently begun.

## CASE STUDY 5: YOUTHREACH LEARNERS

**Introduction**

A focus group was conducted with 13 young people aged 16 to 21 years from three different Youthreach centres. The Youthreach programme provides two years integrated education, training and work experience for unemployed early school leavers without any qualifications or vocational training who are between 15 and 20 years of age. There are almost 6,000 places available nationwide under the Youthreach umbrella. Almost 3,700 of these places are provided by ETBs in just over 100 Youthreach centres.

**How young people got involved with Youthreach**

The learners heard about Youthreach from various sources including from friends, family and schools. One young person's mother was doing an ETB course in the same centre. Another young person said they were looking for a school as no other school would take them.

*"I learned about Youthreach because my mum was doing a course up in the centre. I had never heard of it before."*

**Welcome and accepting environment**

All of the young people said they were made feel welcome and accepted in Youthreach. The teachers and staff in Youthreach were described as welcoming, kind and generous.

*"I found the (Youthreach) staff to be some of the most welcoming and kindest and generous people you could ever meet. They don't discriminate one bit. I honestly feel I have learned more from Youthreach than from my entire education in school."*

A young person who came to Ireland from another country said they were made feel particularly welcome.

*"When I first came to the country Youthreach was very welcoming and helpful to understand things in this country. I originally came from South Africa. When it came to talking and communicating they were very helpful because I couldn't speak perfect English. They were very welcoming to talk to in the centre and even putting a heater on for me when it was cold. All the schools said I was too old to go to them. I was very happy to go to Youthreach. I was ecstatic. I am here two years now."*

**Differences between Youthreach and mainstream school**

All of the young people highlighted the differences between Youthreach and mainstream school. The relationship between young people and their teachers was identified as being particularly positive and young people felt they were treated with more respect and as adults and individuals compared to school. Young people liked being able to call teachers by their first names and felt they could talk to them more freely. Young people preferred the atmosphere in Youthreach compared to school, e.g., less strict, more relaxed, no uniforms, allowed to wear own clothes and have piercings etc. Young people also preferred different learning approach in Youthreach, e.g., smaller class sizes, less time in the classroom, module based learning and no homework.

*"It's not as strict as school and it is more relaxed and not as intense as a normal day in school. A normal school would put more pressure on you so it's a lot happier here. It makes it a lot easier and it doesn't put as much pressure on you. You can talk to the teachers more like an adult."*

## SECTION 5: CASE STUDIES

# 5

The extra-curricular activities in Youthreach are also very appealing to young people. For example, sports facilities, summer activities and trips.

*"My Youthreach is going kayaking, fishing, zip lines. They ask us where we would like to go on trips and it is very important because in my last school we would just go on trips and no one would want to go there."*

### Supports

According to young people, the supports available in Youthreach work very well and are very important in terms of personal development, learning difficulties and career guidance. One young person talked about being diagnosed with dyslexia through Youthreach.

*"I have dyslexia and they helped me get diagnosed for free. I am also from a different country and they are doing the best for me and I was always made feel very welcome and accepted."*

Many of the young people talked about the important role of career guidance supports in Youthreach. Some young people got career guidance supports in terms of what third level courses to apply for, apprenticeships and other careers paths such as the army. They also received supports in relation to applications and paperwork.

*"I applied to college and got a place in business studies. Youthreach helped me decide where I want to go and no pressure deciding. Being able to speak to someone and get their opinion and experience and help shape what you would like to do in the future."*



*ETB Learners at an Outdoor Education Centre. Helping one another across the stream!*

Some Youthreach centres run 'Progression Fortnight' which gives young people information on third level and other career progression options:

*"It's (Progressions Fortnight) a week where all the colleges can give presentations to Youthreach student. It was really informative and helped me to find out about the course I want to do now. It's not just courses but about apprenticeship, the army. They give you all the information and the financial support and other supports you can get in college. There were two sessions a day for two weeks just for Youthreach."*

Other important Youthreach supports mentioned by young people was having key workers, counselling and mental health supports.

*“Having a key worker to talk to is really great. There is a counsellor there as well if you need to talk...There are always things there to help with mental health and well-being. They give you tips to relaxing in the evening and student management tips.”*

### **Young people’s participation in decision-making**

Finally, young people highlighted their involvement in decision-making in Youthreach as being very positive. This youth participation in decision-making approach included consulting with young people about extra-curricular activities, trips and operational aspects of Youthreach

*“Like last year we all wanted to finish up early and the teachers discussed it with us and took way one break and we do three straight classes and we were able to go home early. So they discussed it with us and figured it out with us.”*



## CASE STUDY 6: ADULT GUIDANCE INFORMATION AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

**Introduction**

Adult Guidance Information Services are one of the key supports offered to ETB FET learners. Adult Guidance and Information Services offers impartial and confidential information, advice, guidance and counselling on the educational options that are available to learners within ETBs and with other education providers. The Adult Guidance Service is a free service. Guidance Counsellors work with a range of groups including marginalised groups working with learners from Level 1 to Level 5, including ESOL provision.

**Services provided**

Adult Guidance and Information Service provides:

- One-to-one career and educational guidance to help learners make informed choices
- Information on all local and national courses
- CV preparation and interview skills
- Guidance on applying for college
- Information and advice on education grants, rights and entitlements
- General advice and guidance on selecting the best option for learner needs
- Ongoing support while learning, help with assignments and examination preparation and study skills

*“Adult Guidance provides learners with practical guidance on programme options and progression at every level.”*

The service has developed to include other active inclusion supports including counselling and Educational Psychological assessments. Many ETBs provide psychological supports to marginalised learners experiencing difficulty to minimise disruption to their learning.

*“MSLETB is in the process of commissioning a FET wide consultation on the establishment of a FET Psychological Support Unit, with the goal of establishing such a unit to support FET learners in 2021. The aim of the learner support unit is to provide a one-stop shop for learners. A lot of these supports are already provided but this proposed model would bring all supports together for easy access for learners.”*



## CASE STUDY 7: ADULT LITERACY GROUP LEARNERS

**Introduction**

A focus group was conducted with a group of four learners aged between 47 to 60 years of age from an adult literacy group. Adult literacy offers tuition to adults who need to build strong foundation skills in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, numbers and computers. The programme offers learning that is tailored to the needs of each student.

**Where learners heard about courses**

The learners heard about the course from different places including community centres, online and from Intreo, the public employment service. Learners were from different backgrounds including having literacy and numeracy issues, low education attainment, long-term unemployment and redundancy. One learner also had addiction issues. The fact that the course was free and easy to access was very important to learners.

*"I had long term unemployment and addiction issues and the Intro office told me about it and I am at it five years now. It had been a complete game changer for me. I wasn't in a very good place five years ago."*

**Learners welcomed and accepted**

All of the learners said they felt very welcome and accepted in their course. The role of the tutors in making learners feel welcome and accepted was emphasised. Some learners talked about tutors calling them before they had started the course to make them feel welcome as well as calling them throughout the pandemic to support them.

*"The course involves a lot of interaction and communication with each other and the tutors. Everyone has been welcoming in the course. It is something I look forward to going to every week. Nothing could be done to make me feel more welcome."*

**Benefits and outcomes**

Learners identified a number of benefits and outcomes resulting from participation in the adult literacy group. This included improved literacy skills, e.g., reading and writing.

*"I wasn't really great in school. When I started I could barely read and write but now I am reading books about flowers and plants."*

**Family education benefits**

The family educational benefits of learner's participation in their courses were also identified by some respondents. By improving their own literacy and numeracy skills they were able to help their own children with their homework.

*"Now I can actually sit down with the kids and help them with their homework which I was never able to do before. Up to a few years ago their mammy had to do it. Now I can help them work out maths problems. Its brilliant. Before I wouldn't know where to start."*

**Personal benefits**

All of the learners talked about the personal benefits of participation in ETB courses. This included personal development, increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

*"I was probably in the class for two years before I opened my mouth. I have regained the confidence I had in my twenties and teenage years It has been an eye opener and made a major difference in my life. It brought me back to myself. Full credit to the team here."*

## SECTION 5: CASE STUDIES

**Social benefits**

The social benefits of participation were also universal for learners. This included meeting new people, making new friends, having a social outlet and structure. In addition, learners talked about the mental health benefits of taking part in the course with one person calling it a “life saver”.

*“It has been a life saver for many people. I was sitting at home and my husband was out wrong and I was saying what the hell am I going to do. Then I came here two days and it has really helped my mental health to get out of the house and meet people.”*

**Employment benefits**

One learner felt the course helped him get a job through a Community Employment (CE) Scheme. He spoke about the change in his qualifications, job prospects and outlook as a result of taking part in the ETB course.

*“I have got a job through a CE scheme as a gardener through this course. The fact that I had a bit of background in gardening really helped me. They saw all my certificates and they couldn’t refuse me! I don’t think I would have been considered for the job. I was turning up for every job interview unshaven and unkept a few years ago.”*



Finally, one learner who had addiction issues said the course had helped him create a positive structure in his life and provided a social outlet by attending the centre. Previously, he had only left the house once a week.

*“It gave me structure. I used to collect my dole once a week and went shopping and I didn’t leave the house otherwise. I had addiction issues. I used to work long hours at one stage but then I wasn’t doing much and you have to work yourself back into the social side of things.”*

## CASE STUDY 8: ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL) LEARNERS

**Introduction**

A focus group was conducted with seven ESOL learners aged 36 to 47 years participating in a Communications level 3 course. ESOL, or English for Speakers of Other Languages, incorporates communicative language techniques for mixed levels and uses cross-cultural approaches that recognise a learner's other languages/cultures.

**Background of learners**

Learners were from various different countries including Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova and Iran. Learners heard about the ESOL course from friends, flatmates, family, work colleagues, the tutor and through the Fáilte Isteach project. Fáilte Isteach is a community project involving volunteers welcoming migrants through conversational English classes.

*"My colleague and flatmate told me about it (ESOL course)."*

**Key benefits**

Learners identified a number of key benefits of participation in the ESOL course in. These included English language and communication skills, personal benefits, education and training benefits and employment benefits.

**English language and communication skills**

The main benefit identified by learners was improved English language and communication skills. This had a positive knock-on effect in relation to other benefits.

*"This course helps me because I need to communicate every day and I need a good job in the future and I need it for life! I need it to speak English in Ireland. I speak a lot of languages but I need English to have a good life in Ireland."*



Learning English

**Personal benefits**

Being able to communicate better resulted in personal benefits such as increased self-confidence.

*"It has helped me absolutely 100%. Before this class I didn't have any confidence for speaking English and this class helped me increase my self-confidence."*

Learners also reported feeling more comfortable communicating with other people, not needing interpreters, being able to communicate with people in shops, being able to fill in forms and communicate with medical professional such as doctors in relation to their health.

*"I feel more comfortable now because I can talk and I don't need to take people to talk in my pace. My daughter changed school and I have to fill in lots of forms. I am surprised people can talk to me now. I want to thank the teacher very much. I can't explain it, I feel now I can survive in Ireland."*

**Education and training benefits**

Education and training benefits identified by learners included gaining qualifications. For example, one learner worked as an accountant in their home country and was studying in this area to gain a qualification.

*"I am also learning bookkeeping level 5 and it is good and next I start Payroll Level 5 because I like accounting and my profession for the last many years I was doing accounting. I want to improve my future outcome in Ireland."*

**Employment benefits**

Many of the learners talked about the employment benefits of their ESOL course. They discussed benefits including being able to communicate better with work colleagues, understanding instructions in the workplace better and having more opportunities to advance in the workplace.

*"In my job, my workplace you can talk with some people about you have no English but now I can even make jokes and I understand people joking about other things too! I now understand what they want me to do in work now so it has really helped me. I work in a factory and I was only copying people before but now I understand what they want from me in work."*

**Integration benefits**

All of the learners said the ESOL course had helped them in terms of integration into their local community. This included being able to communicate with neighbours and make friends.

*"When I arrived in Ireland I didn't speak any English but now I can talk to my neighbours, talk in shops, ask questions, ask about my blood tests."*

One learner said learning English had helped him communicate with his own child who now only speaks English.

*"I need to learn to speak English because my little son doesn't understand me now. It's difficult for me and I am nervous because he doesn't understand me if I speak to him in Romanian."*

## CASE STUDY 9: BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE (BTEI) LEARNERS

**Introduction**

A focus group was conducted with five learners aged 31 to 46 years taking part in Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) courses. The learners consulted were taking part in a digital marketing and communications courses. The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides part-time courses for over 16s, aimed principally at those who have not completed Leaving Certificate (or equivalent) qualification. It gives individuals the opportunity to combine a return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Anyone who has left full-time education can take part in a course, but priority will be given to those with less than upper second level education.

**Background of learners**

Learners from BTEI courses were from a range of different backgrounds including being working in the home, on Community Employment (CE) Schemes, Jobseekers Benefit and Invalidity Pension. The learners hear about their course through friends, family, Guidance Counsellors and ETB social media pages.

*"I am working through a CE scheme and I am doing my course through that. I saw a course on the local ETB Facebook page and I was actively looking for a course like that. I was on illness benefit for a long time and I thought I wasn't eligible for it but they can be free or a very small fee. You get an exemption for most courses."*

**Accessibility of courses**

BTEI courses being free or low cost was considered to be very important in terms of accessibility and inclusiveness.

*"My work placement are paying for my course which is great. I never thought these courses would be so reasonable. Private courses cost hundreds of euros and they are not achievable if you are in lower paid work and the ETB courses are free or very affordable and that is great. The course I was doing was €1,100 in a private college and it is €75 in an ETB."*

**Learners feel welcome and accepted**

All of the learners said they felt welcome and accepted in their courses by tutors and other learners. A number of the learners were from different cultural and religious backgrounds and they also reported feeling particularly welcomed and accepted. Other learners felt they benefited from learning about different cultures and experiences from learners from different backgrounds.

*"We learned a lot about different cultures and we learned about Ramadan from the lads as they were going through it during the course so it was tough for them. We have all got on very well with each other. We have all given each other advice and you learn a lot from each other."*

**Supports**

All the learners felt they received good supports in their courses. This included tutors supporting them in their learning, technology supports and guidance counselling supports.

*"I have an appointment with the Guidance Course soon to see what I am going to do next, like am I going to do the next level. She is very nice and friendly helpful and she knows everything about the courses and all areas."*

**Comparison with school**

Many of the learners talked about the comparison between further education and training and mainstream school. According to learners, adult education is more student focused, has more one-to-one supports, smaller classes, more peer learning and is generally more positive and enjoyable.

*"Adult education is a lot easier and more fulfilling than when was in school. You have more one to one time with the teacher and everything in school went on so quickly you would have to ask people what was going on."*

**Education and training benefits**

A key benefit identified by learners was gaining formal qualifications through further education and training to help them gain future employment. Some learners talked about skills and experience in various areas from working but not having the formal qualifications.

*"I worked for around 12 years after I left school and before I had the kids and worked my way up in companies but had no formal education so when I started the courses it was to get the paperwork to back up what I had the experience in so I wanted to have the paperwork to say I can do the things I can do and it gave me confidence to put the things down on my CV that I can do and now I have the qualifications I can put them down on my CV."*

**Employment benefits**

Some of the learners said the course had already helped them use new skills in their employment and other learners felt the skills would be beneficial for them in future employment. Some learners talked about using skills in terms of setting up their own businesses.

*"I have an idea about setting up my own business. I was looking at YouTube videos online to see how to do digital marketing so it's a big step for me to get better. The digital marketing course will really help me to do this."*

**Social benefits**

All of the learners felt there were social benefits from participating in their courses. This was particularly important for learners during the Covid-19 pandemic when they were not able to socialise with other people.

*"I would say the biggest benefit is the social side especially with the lockdown there was no socialising with no one and in lockdown there was nowhere to go and nothing to do so the class really helped me so the biggest benefit was the social side."*

## CASE STUDY 10: FULL TIME LEVEL 5/ LEVEL 6 LEARNERS

**Introduction**

A focus group was conducted with ten Level 5 and Level 6 learners aged between 28 and 62 years. Learners were participating in courses included Business Administration, Arts Crafts and Design and Adventure courses.

**Where learners heard about courses**

The learners found out about their course in various ways including word of mouth, friends, family and a newspaper advert.

*"I saw an advert in the newspaper, the old fashioned route. I did level 4 and then progressed to level 5, it was fairly straightforward."*

**Background of learners**

The learners were from various different backgrounds including early school leaving, redundancy, retirement, job seekers and disability. Some learners were looking for a change of career. One early school leaver discussed her progression into further education and training through ETB courses, a route she didn't think was possible:

*"I left school in sixth year due to illness and I didn't know what options I had to progress in education. I started in Level 4 and then went on to Level 5 and it was the best decisions I ever made. In school you are never told there is a QQI route if you fall off the ladder and you can make something of yourself through a different route. There should be more visibility and go into the schools to tell students about it that there are other options."*



An ETB Learner Voices Committee

Another learner who was self-employed lost her job during the Covid-19 pandemic but felt the ETB course has given her a new direction.

*"I was over 30 years in the one job and I lost it all during Covid so that was brutally hard and I didn't know where to go but a friend told me about here. A friend told me about the course and it was only down the road so it was a game changer. It has changed things dramatically for me."*

## SECTION 5: CASE STUDIES

# 10

### Supports

The learners generally felt very supported by tutors and the ETB. All of the learners talked about the supports they have gained, particularly from tutors. Supports mentioned by learners included technology supports, a loan of computers, childcare supports and travel allowance.

*"My tutor was brilliant I wasn't getting things in the class and then she made me a little video that I could watch a few times at home They would do anything for you."*

Some learners received laptops from their ETB during the Covid-19 pandemic so they could access courses online.



ETB Learners – Learning during COVID

One learner with a disability described the supports she received from the ETB she attended:

*"I got a laptop at the start of Covid because my own was very outdated. It was offered to me straight away, it was brilliant. The one I had was stuck together with sellotape and I was afraid to install new updates. I didn't know what to buy but when it was offered to me everything I needed was on it. It has been brilliant."*

*"I have an invisible disability and I was made feel very welcome and I was accommodated very well. I suffer with back problems and we were using normal chairs we didn't have computer chair and my back was in bits and straight away they order computers chairs for me and it was great."*

### **Inclusion**

All of the learners felt welcomed in their courses and felt there was an inclusive environment. One learner who is a member of the LGBTQ community felt the ETB was an inclusive environment and had positive experiences. It was suggested that ETB should advertise that they are inclusive to the LGBTQ community and consider initiatives such as posters, stickers and gender-neutral toilets.

*"The fact that this discussion about inclusion is happening is a nice surprise. I think it would be valuable to have a statement on the ETB website to say it is an inclusive learning environment. I think they should advertise it as being inclusive. I am part of the LGBTQ community and I feel I am comfortable in my skin at this stage and I don't need to see anything but I think it's good to create inclusive and safe spaces like posters that it is a place people can be comfortable in... People want to know you have their back and all you need is a simple poster in a toilet or on a notice board. If I see the rainbow flag it can just make me feel more comfortable."*

### **Progression to further education and training**

Many of the learners talked about progression to further education and training. This included progressing from QQI Level 4, 5 and 6 as well as on to third level institutes.

*"If you fell off the ladder in school through no fault of your own you are not taught what do if you don't do your Leaving Cert you aren't told you can progress to a VTOS course. I never thought I could do this course and progress on to college which is the path I am on now."*

An older learner who had been made redundant and was on Jobseekers Benefit talked about their progression path in terms of the opportunities it has created for employment, to change career and to 'open doors'.

*"If you are in a jobseekers scenario, I accepted a redundancy and heard about the course from a friend...The benefits from it are absolutely incredible. Having the opportunity for someone slightly older to reinvent themselves. I would have never dreamed of doing sound production. I went to an open day and someone told me about the course and I said do you need to know anything and they said no and it was been incredible and opened so many doors."*

Another learner spoke about how participating in their course has led them to pursue a career in that area.

*"I am doing a course in business admin and I never thought I would be good at the course I am doing and I am looking at progressing to a digital marketing module. I discovered I have a talent of it and I never thought I would be good at it and I want to pursue a career in it now."*

### **Benefits**

Finally, earners discussed the many benefits they gained from taking part in their courses. These included personal benefits, social benefits, education and employment benefits.

*"I think it has been a big confidence booster especially after the last year. I never learned things properly. Now you feel like you aren't an idiot and you can say I can do it and I have a certificate to prove it and I never had one in my life."*

# 6

## SECTION 6: CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to develop a Position Paper on Active Inclusion within the Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training (FET) sector.

One of the key objectives of the research was to define active inclusion in the context of the ETB FET sector. The current definition of Active Inclusion focuses on “enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society including having a job”. The research findings show the benefits and outcomes of FET are broad ranging and go beyond just employment. Therefore, perhaps there should be less focus in the definition on employment as an outcome of active inclusion and a wider focus on other benefits and outcomes such as the personal, social and community benefits and outcomes of engagement in FET. For example, a new definition of active inclusion in the ETB FET sector could be:

***“Active inclusion means giving all learners the opportunities and supports to actively participate in society in a way that increases personal, social, educational, community and employment benefits and outcomes.”***

Another objective was to contextualise the purpose and role of ETB FET services in active inclusion in terms of relevant policies and strategies. The research clearly demonstrates FET services are aligned with the aims and objectives of policies and strategies in the area of active inclusion. For example, the Further Education and Training Strategy (FET) 2014-2019 aims to increase levels of active inclusion in the FET sector and meet the needs of all learners who engage with FET through individual supports. The Future FET Strategy 2020 – 2024 aims to foster inclusion through key actions including consistent learner supports, rooting FET in the community, targeting priority groups and literacy and numeracy support. Similarly, the National Skills Strategy focuses on providing learners with the knowledge and skills to fully participate in society and the economy.

The research shows the areas of active inclusion encompassed within ETB FET services are wide ranging. For instance, the ETB FET sector has been particularly beneficial to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds such as those with literacy and numeracy issues, early school leavers, those learning English as a second language, learners who are refugees, learners in prisons and learners with addiction issues.

Overall, the research found that the ETB further education and training sector has made a significant contribution to active inclusion in Ireland and has had a very positive impact on learners. The research found that the majority of learners agreed people from different backgrounds are accepted and made feel welcome in ETBs and the majority of learners agreed the environment in which ETB courses take place are generally accessible and inclusive.

The research and case studies also demonstrate the sector is working widely with learners who are early school leavers or learners who might not have previously engaged in education and training to provide them with opportunities to gain qualifications and progress to further education and training and employment.

## SECTION 6: CONCLUSION

A key factor in the success of ETB FET which is highlighted in the research is its unique learning and support based approach which is in contrast to mainstream education. One-to-one supports from tutors, smaller class sizes and a welcoming and accepting environment all contribute to supporting learners to positively engage in education and progress to further education and training and employment. The research shows the ETB career guidance service has been particularly effective in guiding learners to positive further education, training and employment outcomes.

Active inclusion services and supports are central to enabling learners to not only participate in further education and training but also to fully participate in society. These services and supports are clearly outlined in the many examples provided in the report, particularly in the case studies.

Across the case studies and examples of best practice, the theme of integration through further education and training was consistent. For example, engagement in further education and training for ESOL learners has helped them not only to gain English language and communication skills, but it has also helped them personally and socially in their everyday lives and integrate better into their local communities.

Another theme to emerge from the research was the peer-to-peer learning and support between some learners in FET. There were many examples of peer-to-peer learning at all levels in FET including among learners in prisons. The benefits of peer-to-peer learning were wide ranging, including positively engaging learners and changing attitudes towards education and learning. Therefore, the development of a peer-to-peer learning model could be a future area to be explored in ETB further education and training.

The research clearly highlights the positive impact of ETB FET services in Ireland. The most common impacts highlighted in the research in terms of active inclusion were the personal, social, educational, community and employment benefits and outcomes for learners. Another impact to emerge from the research was family educational benefits and outcomes of participation in further education and training. For many learners, engaging in further education and training has a positive impact on their family and in particular, their children. This includes changing perspectives on the importance of education and in some cases breaking family cycles of educational disadvantage.

The positive impact of ETB FET services during the Covid-19 pandemic also emerged from the research. Many respondents cited the mental health benefits as well as the social benefits of taking part in ETB courses during this challenging time. While online learning proved challenging for many learners, some aspects which worked well could possibly be maintained into the future alongside face-to-face learning.

Finally, the positive contribution and impacts of ETB FET in relation to active inclusion, which are clearly highlighted in this research, should be widely promoted and advertised by ETBI to ensure all potential learners from all backgrounds have the opportunity to engage and participate in FET and to participate fully in society.

## APPENDIX A: ETB STAFF SURVEY

### A SURVEY OF ETB STAFF ON ACTIVE INCLUSION WITHIN THE ETB FET SECTOR

The aim of this survey is to gather information to develop a Position Paper on Active Inclusion within the Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training sector on behalf of Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). Active Inclusion means making sure people from all backgrounds and with all abilities have the opportunity to take part in society, including having a job.

All data will be anonymised, treated confidentially and stored in a GDPR compliant manner. Survey respondents will not be named in the report and none of the answers provided in this survey will be attributed to them. The research is being conducted by an independent researcher, Sandra Roe. If you have any further questions in relation to this survey or the research, please contact the researcher ([info@sandraroie.ie](mailto:info@sandraroie.ie)).

1. **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **What is your role in your ETB?** \_\_\_\_\_

3. **ETB/ETBs you are linked with:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Please state your level of satisfaction with the SOLAS FET Strategy (2014-2019) definition of active inclusion below:**

*“Active inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society including having a job”*

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

5. **Is there anything you would change or add to this definition of active inclusion?**

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## APPENDIX A: ETB STAFF SURVEY

**6. What groups do you work with who benefit from active inclusion in the ETB FET sector?  
(You can tick more than one box)**

- People with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges
- Early school leavers
- People not in education or training
- People who are unemployed
- Low skilled workers
- Women
- People with disabilities
- People with mental health issues
- Members of the Traveller Community
- Members of the Roma Community
- People from ethnic minorities
- People from religious minorities
- LGBTI+ people
- Lone parents
- Older people
- Carers
- People experiencing, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion
- People experiencing from rural isolation
- People experiencing homelessness
- People in prison/ex-prisoners
- People with substance misuse issues
  
- Other (please specify)

**7. Please rank the top 5 groups from the list below which you consider to be most difficult to engage in ETB courses  
(1= most difficult to engage)**

- People with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges
- Early school leavers
- People not in education or training
- People who are unemployed
- Low skilled workers
- Women
- People with disabilities
- People with mental health issues
- Members of the Traveller Community
- Members of the Roma Community
- People from ethnic minorities
- People from religious minorities
- LGBTI+ people
- Lone parents
- Older people
- Carers
- People experiencing, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion
- People experiencing from rural isolation
- People experiencing homelessness
- People in prison/ex-prisoners
- People with substance misuse issues
  
- Other (please specify)

## APPENDIX A: ETB STAFF SURVEY

**8. What particular issues, experiences, situations etc. are you seeking to address with the groups you work with?**

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**9. In your opinion, what are the key benefits and outcomes related to active inclusion for learners in the ETB FET sector? (You can tick more than one box)**

- Personal benefits and outcomes, e.g., increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- Social benefits and outcomes, e.g., increased social skills, meeting new people
- Education and training benefits and outcomes, e.g., gaining qualifications
- Employment benefits and outcomes, e.g., getting a job
- Community benefits and outcomes, e.g., getting involved in community groups/activities
- Other benefits and outcomes (please specify)

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**10. Can you describe the contribution of ETB FET services to active inclusion in your work?**

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**11. What is working well in terms of active inclusion within the ETB FET sector, e.g., in policy, practice, nationally, in your work?**

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**12. What could be improved in terms of active inclusion within the ETB FET sector e.g., in policy, practice, nationally, in your work?**

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**13. In terms of active inclusion, what areas of action should be prioritised in the future within the ETB FET sector?**

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## APPENDIX A: ETB STAFF SURVEY

14. Can you provide any examples of good practice in terms of the ETB FET contribution to active inclusion in your ETB or nationally?

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15. Do you have any further comments on active inclusion within the ETB FET sector?

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## APPENDIX B: ETB LEARNER'S SURVEY

### A SURVEY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD (ETB) LEARNERS WITHIN THE ETB FET SECTORS

*The aim of this survey is to collect information for a report on Active Inclusion in the Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training sector on behalf of Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). Active Inclusion means making sure people from all backgrounds and with all abilities have the opportunity to take part in society, including having a job. You are being asked to complete this survey because you took part in an ETB course or course that was funded by an ETB.*

*Within the ETB FET Sector, we want to ensure that we promote equality of opportunity, protect the human rights of all our stakeholders and eliminate discrimination. In Ireland, there are 9 grounds on which discrimination is unlawful. These are:*

- *Gender: this means man, woman or transsexual*
- *Civil status: includes single, married, separated, divorced, widowed people, civil partners and former civil partners*
- *Family status: this refers to the parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability*
- *Sexual orientation: includes gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual*
- *Religion: means religious belief, background, outlook or none*
- *Age: this does not apply to a person aged under 16*
- *Disability: includes people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions*
- *Race: includes race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin*
- *Membership of the Traveller community.*

*We want to make sure that we are inclusive of all our learners, so the purpose of some of the questions in this survey is to get an understanding of the different backgrounds of learners. Please be assured that the information you give in this survey will not be shared with other people, your information will be stored in a safe way and no personal information will appear in the report.*

*The research is being conducted by an independent researcher, Sandra Roe. If you have any further questions in relation to this survey or the research, or if you need support in completing the survey, please contact the researcher ([info@sandraroie.ie](mailto:info@sandraroie.ie)).*

## APPENDIX B: ETB LEARNER'S SURVEY

### SECTION 1

16. Name of course you attended: \_\_\_\_\_

17. County in which you attended your course: \_\_\_\_\_

18. What type of course did you attend?

- Community Education
- Literacy
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)
- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)
- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC)
- Apprenticeship
- Family learning
- Work based learning
- Not sure
- Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_ say

19. Was the course you attended:

- Part-time
- Full-time
- Not sure

20. How was your course delivered?:

- Face-to-face
- Online
- A mix of face-to-face and online

21. What was your highest level of education before starting this course?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No formal education or training  | <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate NFQ Level 5 (Full/Major Award)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Education  | <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Certificate NFQ Level 6 (Full/Major Award) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate NFQ Level 1 or 2 (Full/Major Award)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other non-NFQ aligned FET                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior Cert; Inter Cert; Group Cert; GCSEs;<br>O Levels; or NFQ Level 3 (Full/Major Award) | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Certificate NFQ Level 6                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transition Year  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinary Bachelor Degree; Diploma NFQ Level         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaving Cert; A Levels, or Applied Leaving Cert  | <input type="checkbox"/> Honours Bachelor Degree                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate NFQ Level 4 (Full/Major Award)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional (NFQ 8+)                               |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Post-graduate                                       |



## APPENDIX B: ETB LEARNER'S SURVEY

### SECTION 2

**22. Are you:**

- Male
- Female
- Transgender female
- Transgender male
- Non-binary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

**23. What age are you?**

- Under 18 years
- 18 – 24 years
- 25 – 29 years
- 30 – 39 years
- 40 – 49 years
- 50 – 59 years
- 60 – 69 years
- 70+ years

**24. Are you**

- In education or training
- Employed
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Engaged in home duties
- A carer
- Retired
- Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

**25. Where do you live?**

- In a rural area (countryside)
- In a town or small city
- In a large city
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

**26. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

**27. What is your ethnic or cultural background?**

- White Irish
- Irish Traveller
- Other white background
- Black or Black Irish - African
- Any other Black background
- Asian or Asian Irish- Chinese
- Any other Asian background
- Roma
- Other, including mixed background
- Prefer not to say



## APPENDIX B: ETB LEARNER'S SURVEY

### 28. What is your religion?

- Catholic  
 Church of Ireland  
 Presbyterian  
 Methodist  
 Islam  
 No religion  
 Prefer not to say  
 Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

### 29. In terms of sexuality, do you identify as:

- Heterosexual  
 Bisexual  
 Gay man  
 Gay woman/lesbian  
 Prefer not to say  
 Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

### 30. Are you

- A parent in a one parent household  
 A dependant in a one parent household  
 A carer  
 An ex-offender  
 A substance misuser  
 Experiencing homelessness  
 Living in Direct Provision  
 A refugee  
 Asylum seeker  
 None of the above

## SECTION 3

### 31. Were you offered any of the following learner supports while doing your course?

- |  |                              |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Literacy / Numeracy Support              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Digital Skills (Computer) Support        | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Guidance Counselling                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Psychological Counselling                | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Mentoring/ Key Worker Supports           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Support with Disability                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Loan of Equipment/Device, e.g., computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Extra tuition/ Extra time in exams       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Support with Transport                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Support with Meals                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Support with Childcare                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Financial Support                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Other (please state) _____               | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |



## APPENDIX B: ETB LEARNER'S SURVEY

**32. Are there any other supports that would have helped you while doing your course?**

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**33. In your opinion, what are the main barriers to taking part in courses for learners?**

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**34. Do you think taking part in your course has had any of the following benefits and outcomes?**

- Personal benefits and outcomes, e.g., increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- Social benefits and outcomes, e.g., increased social skills, meeting new people
- Education benefits and outcomes, e.g., helped you get a qualification
- Employment benefits and outcomes, e.g., helped get a job
- Community benefits and outcomes, e.g., getting involved in community groups/activities
- Other benefits and outcomes (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please state your level of agreement with the following statements:**

**35. In my experience, people from different backgrounds are accepted and made feel welcome in ETB courses.**

- Strongly agree     Agree     Unsure     Disagree     Strongly disagree

Please comment \_\_\_\_\_

**36. In my experience, the environment in which ETB courses take place are accessible and inclusive to people with all abilities and from all backgrounds, e.g., buildings, classrooms, toilets.**

- Strongly agree     Agree     Unsure     Disagree     Strongly disagree

Please comment \_\_\_\_\_

**37. Would you recommend taking part in an ETB course to other people?**

- Yes     No     Unsure

Please comment \_\_\_\_\_

**38. Do you have any suggestions on how ETBs could be more inclusive?**

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## APPENDIX C: ETB STAFF FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

### **Introduction**

- Can everyone introduce themselves and briefly describe their role?

### **Research Aim:**

To develop a Position Paper on Active Inclusion within the Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training sector.

*“Active inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society including having a job” (SOLAS FET Strategy 2014-2019)*

### **Definition of active inclusion**

- Do you agree with the current SOLAS FET Strategy definition of active inclusion above?
- Is there anything you would change or add to this definition?
- How would you define active inclusion in the context of the ETB FET sector?

### **Key groups, areas, issues etc.**

- Who are the key groups who are currently benefitting from active inclusion in the ETB FET sector?
- Who are the key groups you work with in terms of active inclusion?
- Which groups are most difficult to engage with in terms of active inclusion?
- What particular issues, experiences, situations etc. are you seeking to address with the groups you work with?
- What are the key areas of active inclusion which are encompassed within ETB FET services?

### **Key benefits and outcomes**

- In your opinion, what are the key benefits and outcomes related to active inclusion for learners in the ETB FET sector, e.g., personal, social, educational, community benefits and outcomes?

### **What is working well?**

- What is working well in terms of active inclusion within the ETB FET sector, e.g., in policy, practice, nationally, in your work?

### **What could be improved?**

- What could be improved in terms of active inclusion within the ETB FET sector e.g., in policy, practice, nationally, in your work?
- What are the key challenges with regard to active inclusion within the ETB FET sector?

### **Contribution and impact**

- Can you describe the contribution of ETB FET services to active inclusion in Ireland?
- What has been the impact of ETB FET services on active inclusion in Ireland?

### **Examples of good practice**

- Can you describe any examples of good practice in terms of the ETB FET contribution to active inclusion, e.g., in your own work, regionally, nationally?

### **Future prioritisation**

- In terms of active inclusion, what areas of action and/or groups should be prioritised in the future within the ETB FET sector?

### **Other comments**

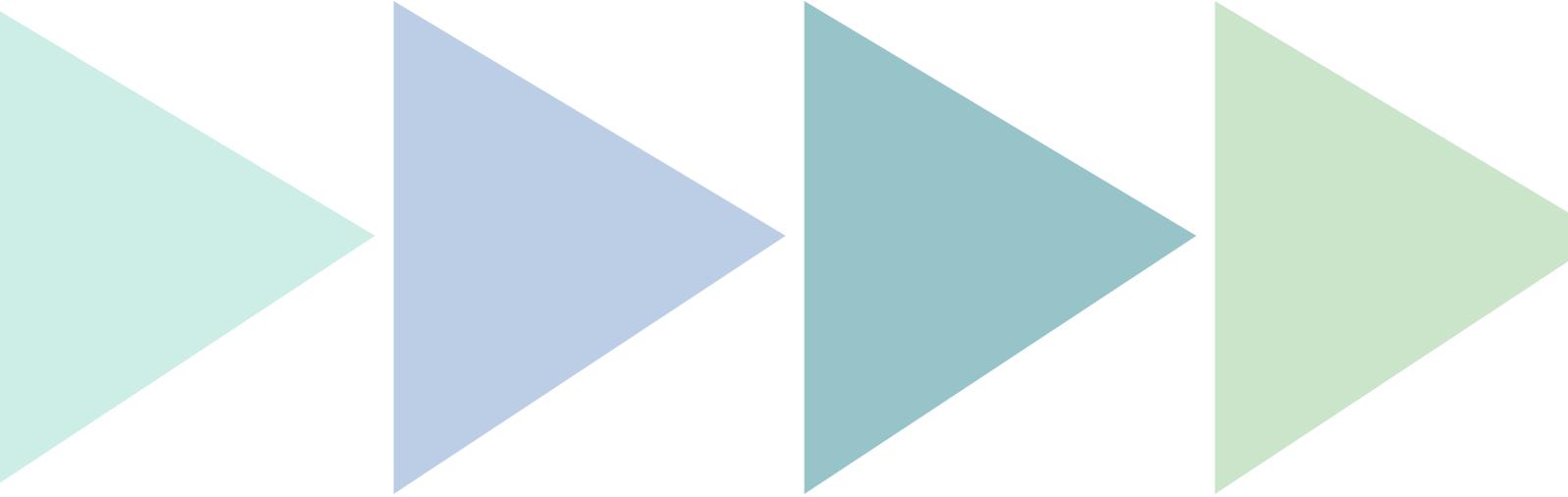
- Do you have any further comments on active inclusion within the ETB FET sector?

## APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS

- How did you get involved in your course?
- Do you think the course is well advertised?
- Have you been made feel welcome in your course?
- Do you feel accepted in your course?
- Is there anything else that would have made you feel more welcome and accepted in your course?
- Have you got any supports while doing your course, e.g., literacy/numeracy support, computer skills support, financial support, childcare support?
- Are there any other supports that would have helped you in your course?
- Do you think taking part in your course has helped you personally, e.g., increased your self-confidence?
- Do you think taking part in your course has helped you socially, e.g., meeting new people?
- Do you think taking part in your course has helped you in terms of learning, e.g., learning to read/write, getting qualifications?
- Has taking part in your course helped you get a job?
- Do you think taking part in your course has helped you get involved in your community?
- Has taking part in your course helped you in any other ways?
- Would you recommend taking part in an ETB course to other people?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about your course or your experience?







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