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Education and Training
Boards Ireland

*Boird Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Éireann*

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

▶ **Study of the Role, Contribution
and Impact of Education and
Training Board (ETB) Further
Education and Training Provision
and Support Services in
Community Education in Ireland**

Doody Facilitation and Consulting Ltd

October 2021

FOREWORD

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is delighted to present 'Study of the Role, Contribution and Impact of Education and Training Board (ETB) Further Education and Training Provision and Support Services in Community Education in Ireland'. A community-based ethos is central to the work of ETB FET providers. The FET Strategy 'Future FET: Transforming Learning 2020-2024' recognises the importance of Community Education in *'facilitating integration of our diverse population; enabling equality and cohesion to flourish in communities throughout the country'.* The strategy prioritises rooting FET in the community and the role that FET Community Education provision plays in this. This study contributes to guiding the delivery of Community Education across ETB FET provision.

The study documents ETB Community Education initiatives using case studies and models of practice that demonstrate the variety of Community Education options across ETBs, tailored to individual and community needs, which can link to longer-term pathways within FET. These initiatives further demonstrate the innovation, commitment and drive of all ETB staff in supporting participation and re-engagement in FET involving over 50,000 learners each year. This study illustrates the meaningful outcomes of Community Education for the learner's personal, social and economic development.

I would like to acknowledge Sinead Doody, Doody Facilitation and Consulting Ltd. for her expertise in researching and writing this paper, ETB Chief Executive and Directors of Further Education and Training Forum, and the ETBI advisory group for their contribution and support to the development of this comprehensive paper.

Paddy Lavelle

Paddy Lavelle

General Secretary
Education and Training Boards Ireland

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEFINITION FRAMEWORK FOR ETB FET

This Definition Framework for ETB FET Community Education sets out the values and features which underpin Community Education and the range of its diverse outcomes. The aim of the definition framework is to act as a strategic compass to guide stakeholders in the funding, design, delivery and measurement of Community Education into the future.

Values Underpinning Community Education

The overarching values of Further Education and Training (FET) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) work in harmony to provide an ambitious values framework for FET in Ireland. These are also common to Community Education which, based on its distinguishing features, introduces an additional set of complementary values. These three sets of values combine to underpin ETB FET Community Education in Ireland:

Lifelong Learning: *throughout lifetimes and careers*

Social justice: *creating a just society for all citizens*

Active citizenship: *being involved in community*

Economic prosperity: *valuing economic growth*

Inclusion: *the core philosophy of inclusion*

Intentionality: *intending to adopt and practice inclusion and UDL*

Appreciation: *of the value of a shared inclusive agenda*

Acceptance: *that practice is ever-changing and reactive to learners' needs*

Learner-led: *entrusting learners to take ownership of their learning*

Partnership: *equal partnership with the community partners*

Participation: *using facilitative approaches that are informal, interactive and dialogical*

Group-focused: *valuing collective learning and development*

Key Features of Community Education

Community Education distinguishing features position it "outside the formal education sector". They bring a uniqueness and strength to Community Education, enabling it to play a critical role in reaching out to and supporting those most distanced from learning.

> Located in communities (area-based or issue-based)

> Learner-led, with learners deciding on content and learning methodology

> Equality between the learner and tutor, with learners engaged as equal partners and mutual beneficiaries

> Provides opportunities for critical reflection for both the individual and the community

> Aims to foster empowerment, advance social justice, contribute to civic society, develop skills and support progression

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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Outside the formal education sector, with a predominance of non-accredited provision

Funded, planned, designed and delivered in collaboration with community partners

Highly participative and flexible, primarily using dialogical approaches

Group learning, emphasising community cohesion, collective action, and community development

Community Education's Diverse Outcomes

Community Education uses flexible and responsive approaches to facilitate individuals to engage in learning on their own terms. As it addresses varied, and often overlapping, individual, community and societal issues, Community Education's outcomes are diverse and manifold.

Collective Action: *Communities are enabled to take collective action on issues of shared concern*

Community Connections: *Stronger community connections, social capital and solidarity*

Disadvantage: *Disadvantaged individuals and groups are supported to engage and remain in learning*

Employment: *Provides a stepping-stone towards sustainable employment*

Empowerment: *Learners and communities are empowered to affect individual and societal change*

First Step: *Return to learning, community engagement, education and training*

Freirean Approach: *Reflection on experiences, strengths, power dynamics and action*

Health and Wellbeing: *Positive health outcomes - personal development, physical and mental health*

Pathways: *Towards personal development, further learning, qualifications and/or employment*

Reach: *Reaching those most distant from learning, education and the labour market*

Reduces Barriers: *Reduced barriers to access, participation, and outcome*

Skills: *Development of transversal (soft) skills and generic skills*

Social Justice: *Addressing social, cultural and economic inequalities*
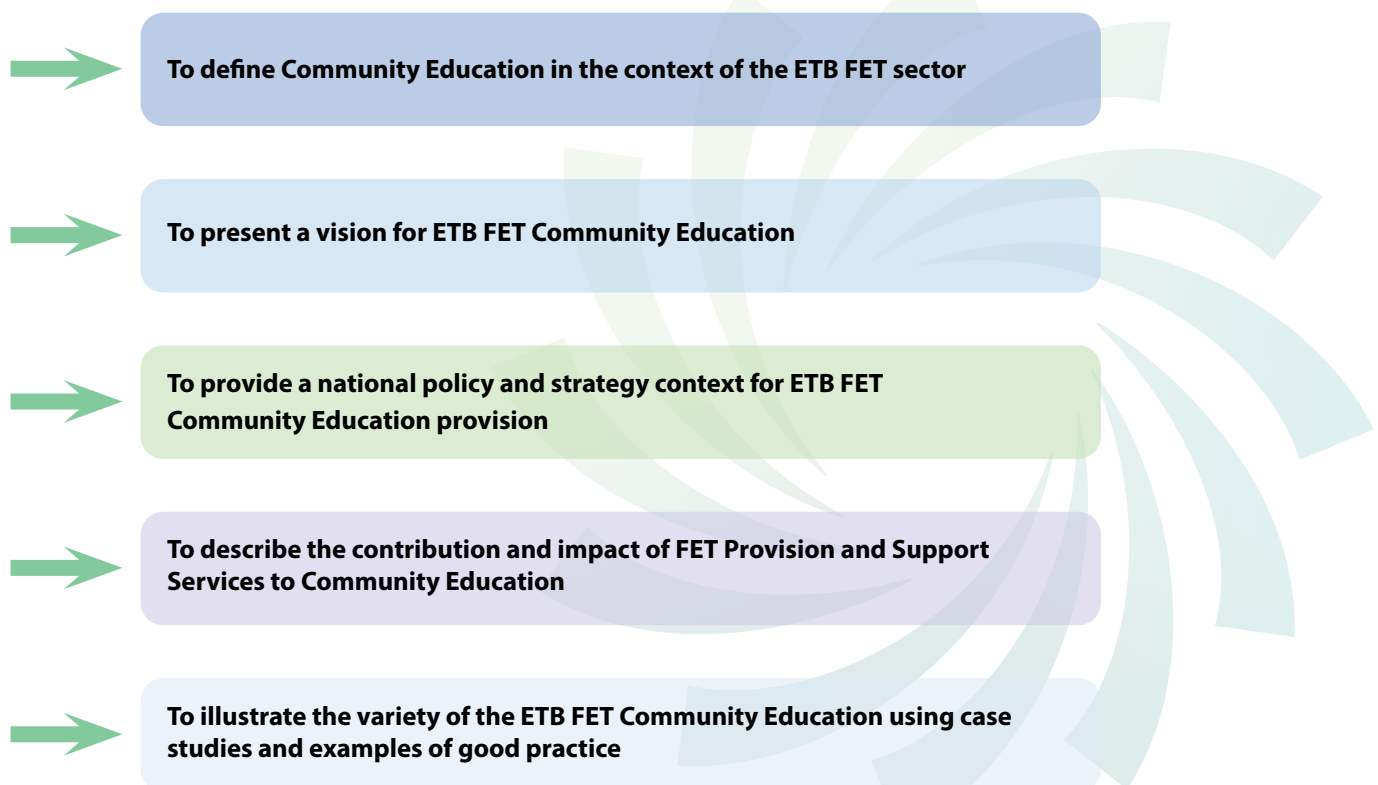
Volunteering: *A supported, vibrant and valued volunteer sector*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Further Education and Training (FET) is available in every community in Ireland and offers people, regardless of their circumstances, a pathway to meet individual hopes, needs and expectations. ETB Community Education is an integral part of FET and is described in the National FET Strategy as being a "critical" to FET provision. Community Education Facilitators are at the forefront of this provision and their role is pivotal to its successful planning and delivery in each ETB area.

The National FET strategy commits to the development of a Community Education Framework which will "provide an enhanced basis to both record and promote national and local good practice, learner achievement and progression, and the overall benefits of community education". In preparation for the development of the framework, Education and Training Boards Ireland has produced this paper to set out the position of ETBs on the role, value, delivery and future of ETB FET Community Education.

The objectives of the position paper are as follows:

To define Community Education in the context of the ETB FET sector

To present a vision for ETB FET Community Education

To provide a national policy and strategy context for ETB FET Community Education provision

To describe the contribution and impact of FET Provision and Support Services to Community Education

To illustrate the variety of the ETB FET Community Education using case studies and examples of good practice

The aim of the position paper is to showcase the quality and diversity of Community Education in ETB FET. It does not seek to evaluate its role, impact or effectiveness, nor to provide a detailed strategy for its future development. It is intended that this position paper will help to inform the development of the Community Education Framework and that the "Enabling Factors" set out in the final chapter will act as "scaffolding" upon which the framework's roadmap and recommendations will be built.

ENABLING COMMUNITY EDUCATION'S CONTINUED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

ETBs will utilise the following enabling factors to promote the continued development and growth of Community Education. By applying these enabling factors, Community Education's contribution to the strategic priorities of the National FET Strategy will be optimised. Crucially, it will also ensure that Community Education is well positioned to play a key part in supporting and advancing FET's evolving role in Ireland's social cohesion and development, as described in the national strategy.

1. UTILISING ITS CORE VALUES AS GUIDING PRINCIPLES	**ETBs will ensure that FET Community Education is underpinned by the values outlined in page 23. These values will act as principles to guide all aspects of Community Education provision**
2. SUPPORTING COMMUNITY PARTNERS	**ETBs will value and support the pivitoal role of the diverse network of community partners across the country. ETBS will work to strenghten this partnership and to support a vibrant community and voluntary sector**
3. ENSURING A ROBUST AND CONSISTENT RESOURCE FRAMEWORK	**ETBs will ensure that Community Education's funding framework enables its continued growth and development, with a view to ensuring that learners and communities benefit consistently from ETB funding and other supports.**
4. UNDERSTANDING LEARNER AND COMMUNITY NEEDS	**ETBs will collaborate with community partners to ensure best-practice approaches to engaging learners and communities. This will ensure responsive, bottom-up provision based on evidenced local need**
5. SUPPORTING LEARNERS	**ETBs will strengthen collaboration with community partners to enable integrated approaches to supporting learners by responding to intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning**
6. PROMOTING QUALITY	**ETBs will support high quality Community Education provision by embedding quality assurance systems that complement and preserve the distinguising features and approaches of Community Education**
7. FACILITATING FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS	**ETBs will ensure that Community Education's processes and systems are streamlined and efficient and that they are aligned to Community Education's values and approaches**
8. INTEGRATED PATHWAYS	**ETBs will ensure that there are integrated pathways to link learners to learning pathways within Community Education and to other FET and HE opportunities**
9. FACILITATING ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	**ETBs will ensure Community Education practitioners are equipped with the requisite skills and tools to ensure excellence in provision based on Community Education's distinct pedagogy.**
10. CAPTURING AND VALUING OUTCOMES	**ETBs will capture and highlight Community Education learner outcomes, ensuring that outcome measurement processes capture both hard and soft outcomes, reflecting the ethos and approaches of Community Education**

INTRODUCTION

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are statutory local education authorities governed by the Education and Training Boards Act 2013.

FET is delivered across the country through Ireland's 16 Education and Training Boards. The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy ("Future FET: Transforming learning") describes FET as transformative; it transforms people, communities and enterprises and makes a difference to people's lives. At an individual level FET "helps us to develop personally, learn new things, shape our choices, and create and inspire."[1] At a societal level, FET plays a key role in "enabling equality and cohesion to flourish[2]".

ETBI is the representative organisation for the 16 Education and Training Boards acting as a central resource for the ETB sector providing, procuring, and coordinating a range of support services which are more 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. ETBI maintains its focus on prioritising high-level delivery of services to people and communities, building strategic partnerships and collaborations, and developing future potential and innovations.

ETB FET Community Education is an integral part of FET and is at the heart of FET's transformational role. It is described in the National FET Strategy as being a "critical" to FET provision. The strategy commits to the development of a Community Education Framework which will "provide an enhanced basis to both record and promote national and local good practice, learner achievement and progression, and the overall benefits of community education". In preparation for the development of the framework, Education and Training Boards Ireland has produced this paper to set out the position of ETBs on the role, value, delivery and future of ETB FET Community Education.

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[1] Government of Ireland, 2019

[2] ibid

INTRODUCTION

This position paper represents the culmination of an intensive and inclusive research process with both internal and external ETB FET stakeholders. It provides a brief history of Community Education and sets it in the current national policy context. Using SOLAS data and practitioner input, the paper builds a picture of Community Education provision across the county – its learners, locations, courses, outcomes and impacts. It illustrates how ETBs, as the largest funders of Community Education in the country, work in collaboration with the community and voluntary sector to deliver Community Education in almost every community in Ireland. Using case studies, it celebrates this collaborative partnership, as well as the diversity, inclusivity and creativity of Community Education. The paper seeks to inspire a cohesive, integrated, strategic approach to FET ETB Community Education and to demonstrate its contribution to the wider FET agenda.

Following this introductory chapter and methodology, **Chapter One** focuses on enabling a shared understanding of Community Education. It provides a framework for defining Community Education through its values, distinguishing features, aims and outcomes. It describes the roots of Community Education and articulates its shared goals, principles and approaches with community development. It goes on to highlight the key role of Community Education Facilitators in managing provision in Education and Training Boards across the country.

Chapter Two provides a policy and strategy context for this position paper. It describes the depth and range of the FET sector and explores Community Education's position within it.

Chapter Three provides Community Education facts and figures, including its funding framework, learner profile and retention and completion rates.

Chapter Four describes the ETB FET approach to Community Education with a focus on the community-based nature of provision, the extensive range of supports available to learners and its quality framework.

Chapter Five focuses on the collaborative partnerships which underpin Community Education's funding, planning and delivery. It highlights the invaluable role and contribution of key stakeholders and references the symbiotic relationship between practitioners at grass-roots level.

Finally, **Chapter Six** provides a vision for the future of ETB FET Community Education and sets out the enabling factors which will support its continued growth and development within the overall FET strategic framework.

Last Aid Course

Tipperary ETB, Family Carers Ireland (FCI) and Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF)

Target Group: *Carers or other adults providing palliative or end of life care at home*

As most people want to die at home the need for palliative care and end-of-life care at home is rising. To meet this increased need, public education in basic palliative care can enable everybody to participate in support for their family members, friends, neighbours or others in need.

Based on the experiences of teaching First Aid, the concept of a Last Aid course was first introduced by an emergency medicine consultant in Germany. Family Carers Ireland and the Irish Hospice Foundation purchased the licence to deliver the 'Last Aid' training course in Ireland. In partnership with Tipperary ETB, the programme equips learners with the basic knowledge and skills relating to palliative and end of life care and will nurture compassionate communities.

The course is 4 hours in duration and is facilitated jointly by two facilitators from different professions to mirror the multi-professional cooperation in palliative care.

Partnership

Tipperary ETB: TETB worked in a pre-development capacity in partnership with FCI / IHF to develop this opportunity. TETB provided the tutor hours and hosted tutor interviews with representatives from FCI/IHF in order to engage appropriately qualified facilitators. TETB provided tutors with supports to engage in TETB administration and IT systems. TETB also advertised and promoted the course on fetchcourses.ie.

FCI and IHF: FCI, as the lead agency, proposed this partnership piece of work. Online meetings were held to support course planning & delivery. FCI and IHF nominated suitably qualified representative for the tutor interview panel. FCI provided the teaching platform and supported learner data collection on behalf of TETB. FCI also created Last Aid advertisement and played a key role in recruiting and supporting learners.

Community Education Features

✓ **Flexible and Responsive:** TETB supported the project development demonstrating a facilitative, responsive and flexible approach within FET

✓ **Needs-Based:** This course responded to a locally identified need by FCI

✓ **Reach and Inclusion:** The course supports carers who are a vulnerable cohort, often distanced from FET generally given the demands of palliative caring.

✓ **Wider Benefits of Learning:** The Last Aid course content supports the development of compassionate communities contributing to the wider benefits of learning.

Outcomes and Impacts

There are a range of outcomes and impacts associated with this course: it equips participants with the basic knowledge and skills relating to palliative and end of life care; it will nurture compassionate communities; strengthen relationships and partnership between TETB and FCI; it adds value to suite of FET Community Education opportunities. The Last Aid course is a pilot and will be evaluated with a view to further delivery within TETB catchment area.

Acorn Age Friendly Smart Programme

Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, Kilkenny Age Friendly and Kilkenny Public Participation Network

Target Group: *Older People*

This is a part-time training course for older adults in the use of age friendly technology - the Acorn tablet.

Its timing was significant - offered at a time when the country was coping with the widespread restrictions imposed on individuals, families, communities and society due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was delivered to small groups of learners who attended classroom-based tuition in their community.

Partnership

Kilkenny and Carlow ETB: The work of the Community Education Facilitator and Tutor in researching the technology, preparing the course outlines and aligning them to the needs of the learners helped to ensure that the course was of benefit to all those who participted in the programme. The Tutor's approach, expertise, commitment and understanding of the principles of community education was essential to ensuring learner engagement.

Community Partners: The programme was driven by the needs of the learners, as identified by the partner agencies, in particular Kilkenny Age Friendly, who also provided learner support throughout. Financial investment in the technology on behalf of Kilkenny Age Friendly and the Public Participation Network was essential to the project.

Community Education Features

✓ Underpinned by principles of lifelong learning, active inclusion, personal development and individual and collective empowerment.

✓ Opportunity to acquire new knowledge and develop digital skills, which may lead onto further education or training.

✓ Health and Well Being - opportunity to combat isolation and loneliness and impact positively on the individual's mental health.

✓ Personal Development - opportunity to build confidence and impact positively on the individual's personal and social development.

✓ Community and Family - opportunity to develop digital skills which would all the individual to engage with family and friends within their community and to stay connected socially.

Outcomes and Impacts

The programme enabled the learners to gain new skills and knowledge which could be used in their own daily lives. The nature of the programme was such that learners found new ways of communicating with their family, friend and their community. It also allowed them to stay connected to the wider world and to access local services, as needed. The programme supported the development of digital citizenship within local communities.

METHODOLOGY

In 2020, ETBI commissioned Doody Facilitation and Consulting Ltd. to develop a Community Education Position Paper through a comprehensive process of research and stakeholder engagement. The objectives of the process were as follows:

Figure 1: Position Paper Objectives

To define Community Education in the context of the ETB FET sector

To present a vision for ETB FET Community Education

To provide a national policy and strategy context for ETB FET Community Education provision

To describe the contribution and impact of FET Provision and Support Services to Community Education

To illustrate the variety of the ETB FET Community Education using case studies and examples of good practice

The process commenced in early 2021, led by ETBI's Active Inclusion Strategy Group. A mixed-method approach was applied to the development of the paper including primary research with a range of Community Education stakeholders and secondary research in the form of a literature review.

Figure 2: Primary Research Stakeholders

Input from Community and Voluntary Sector Partners

Input from ETB Stakeholders

Position Paper

Input from other External Stakeholders
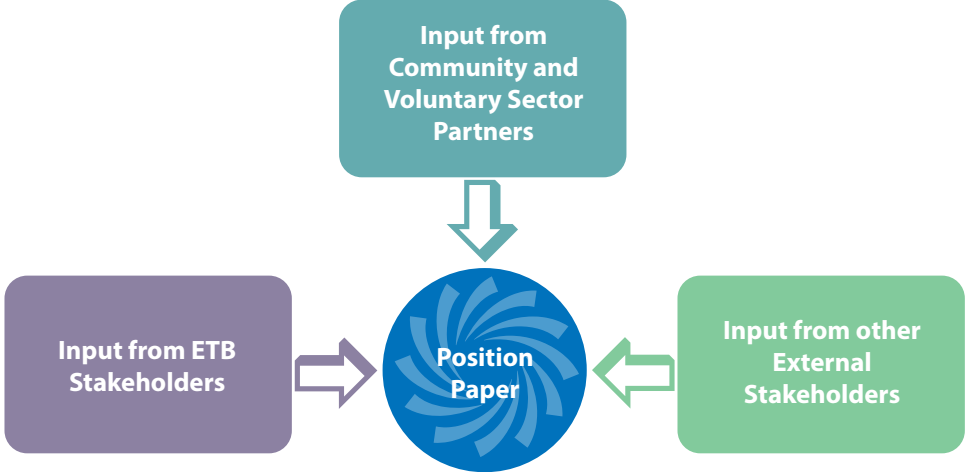
METHODOLOGY

The primary data collection process involved direct engagement with a range of stakeholders at community, county, regional and national level to build a picture of the environment, challenges and opportunities as outlined in figure 3. The process sought to capture a range of diverse views to ensure that the nuances and realities of FET, in general, and Community Education, more specifically, were reflected in the position paper. While engagement with learners was outside the scope of the process[3], a robust process of engagement was undertaken with Community Education practitioners, including those in the community and voluntary sector.

Internal ETB Stakeholders

- Staff Survey: 139 staff from across the community-based suite of provision
- 8 Online Focus Groups (40 staff)

    - FET Directors

    - Adult Education Officers

    - Community Education Facilitators

    - Adult Literacy / ESOL Officers

    - BTEI Coordinators

    - Adult Guidance Service

    - PLC Principals

    - Training Centre Managers

- 10 Semi-Structured Interviews: with targeted internal stakeholders, including Directors, Adult Education Officers, Community Education Facilitators, Quality Assurance Managers

Community and Voluntary Stakeholders

- Focus Group

    - 4 focus group with 28 community partner organisations

    - 1 focus group with Aontas and The Wheel

- Semi-structured Interviews

    2 semi-structured interviews with Aontas staff

Other Stakeholders

- SOLAS

    - Semi-structured interview

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[3] The National FET Strategy states that a Community Education framework will be developed by SOLAS, in partnership with a range of stakeholders, including learners

METHODOLOGY

Secondary research took the form of a review of literature to provide a context for the position paper and to identify key issues relating to the evolving role of FET and Community Education. The review incorporated an analysis of the following:

- Data from SOLAS Analytic Unit on participation in Community Education and on its learner profile
- Review of the National FET Strategy and SOLAS FET Services Plan
- Review of other FET strategies and policies, with a particular emphasis FET College of the Future Report, Vision for Tertiary Education, and the Conceptual Framework of Universal Design for Learning for the Irish FET Sector, Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy 10 Year Strategy for Ireland
- Review of Departmental publications relating to Community Education (2000), including Learning for Life White Paper on Adult Education and Operational Guidelines for Providers 2012
- Review of national social inclusion, community development and local development strategies interlinking with FET and community education

REPORT

The development of this position paper was underpinned by a nine-month process of research, analysis, stakeholder engagement and strategic direction. The paper is intended to act as a platform to inform the development of a Community Education Framework by setting out the position of the ETB sector on its value, role, benefits, challenges and future. This paper has been written as a user-friendly document, providing a practical narrative using case studies, data and diagrams.

Enabling A Shared Understanding Of Community Education

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

1.1   OVERVIEW

ETB FET Community Education takes place in local settings in every county in Ireland. It facilitates people to engage in learning in a manner that suits their individual needs. It fosters a range of disparate outcomes relating to personal development, community connectedness and the development of skills. It acts as a gateway for many back to learning and is a stepping stone for others on a pathway to further education and training. It is embedded in FET provision and shares values, principles and approaches with other FET opportunities in the community. It is based on a distinct pedagogy that is rooted in a process of empowerment, social justice and change.

Figure 4: Community Education Overview – Who, Where, How, What

Who ?

Learners from all walks of life engage in Community Education - men, women, younger people, older people, from urban or rural backgrounds, with varying levels of formal education, with diverse hopes, expectations and ambitions.

Where ?

Community Education takes place in every county and most communities in Ireland. It is local, accessible and community-based. Community Education is hosted by community and voluntary organisation, along with some provision taking place in ETB adult education facilities.

How ?

ETBs and community organiations work in partnership to plan, fund and deliver Community Education. Provision is based on community need, with bottom-up, learner-led approaches. An emphasis is placed on group learning, as well as individual learning, as a support for community cohesion, participation and collective action.

What ?

Community education offers a range of learning opportunities from personal development and recreation courses to literacy and skills development. It is also part of a broader democratic process of social justice and equality. While most Community Education is unaccredited, some accredited provision also takes place.

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

1.2   DEFINING ETB FET COMMUNITY EDUCATION

There is a diversity of Community Education provision across the country, with ETBs utilising a range of models and initiatives to respond to disparate needs and circumstances at local level. However, provision is grounded in key features which define the framework for a common approach to Community Education.

In this context, when we say Community Education, we mean education that is …

- located in communities, which can be area-based or issue-based, *and*

- outside the formal education sector, *and*

- planned and delivered through a collaborative partnership with the community and voluntary sector, *and*

- learner-led, with learners deciding on content and learning methodology, *and*

- based on equality between the learner and tutor, with learners engaged as equal partners and mutual beneficiaries, *and*

- highly participative and primarily uses dialogical approaches, i.e. learning takes place through dialogue between learners and tutor, *and*

- focused on group learning, emphasising community cohesion, social justice and collective action, *and*

- an opportunity for learners to participate in critical reflection for both the individual and the community, *and*

- aimed at fostering empowerment, contributing to civic society and developing skills

These features are underpinned by the core values set out below and by Community Education's distinguishing features set out figure 6, page 29. This report's Executive Summary draws these together to provide a "definition framework" for Community Education in ETB Further Education and Training.

Kayak4Dads

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and Scoil Chríost Rí, Ennis

***Target Group:** Traveller Dads*

Kayak4Dads was delivered by the ETB in partnership with the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinator in Scoil Chríost Rí, Ennis. Dads from the school participated in an Introduction to Kayaking course and progressed on to a Level 1 Certificate. The course was delivered in collaboration with the ETB's Outdoor Education and Training Centre The Burren. Dads requested to attend and teachers were encouraged to participate with a view to making it a sustainable part of the HSCL offering to parents.

Partnership

Limerick and Clare ETB: Coordination of this course was led by the ETB's Core Skills team; and the Outdoor Education and Training Centre undertook the risk assessment, provided tutors/instructors and helped to access kayaks. The ETB provided instruction to both Dads and teachers from the school through a "Train the Trainer" approach. The group applied for additional funding, which was provided through the Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund to continue the course as a Level 1 Certificate.

Community Partners: The HSCL Coordinator supported the Dads to engage in the course. Strong links between the ETB, Schools, Clare County Council, Ennis Parish and Traveller families developed through the course over its 8 weeks. The school provided a shed to store the kayaks and safety equipment. Clare County Council agreed to improve the slipway next to the school for getting into the river with boats/kayaks. The Heritage Officer with Clare County Council also went out with the group and pointed out historic sites, flora and fauna.

Community Education Features

✓ **Learner-led:** This initiative came through a grass-roots approach, with the Dads themselves requesting it through the HSCL Coordinator as a result of seeing their children doing a similar course in the school.

✓ **Collaboration:** A partnership approach was key to the success of the initiative involving Scoil Chríost Rí, the HSCL Programme, as well as the ETB's Family Learning Core Skills provision, and its Outdoor Education and Training Centre The Burren.

✓ **Lifelong Learning:** The course facilitated these learners to re-engage in learning after many years of limited engagement. Many participants have progressed on to other courses such as a mixed group of settled and Travellers Outdoor Pursuits course before the summer break 2021 and an Outdoor Pursuits and Heritage course, which started in July. Since September 2021, Dads have attended woodwork, metalwork and welding. Family members attended cookery and beauty courses before the summer and are currently attending a beauty course.

Outcomes and Impacts

The programme had a huge impact on the participants' self-esteem, sense of belonging, self-value and wellbeing. It provided positive role models for the children who showed great pride in their Dads. *"The ETB funding has not simply allowed our dads complete introductory and Level 1 kayaking courses. It has opened up a whole new world of opportunity to men who otherwise would not have engaged with any educational provider."* The initiative also resulted in the Mums engaging in beauty and cookery courses. They also completed a Kayak4Mums course before the summer and are looking forward to completing their Canoe Ireland Level 1 award shortly.

Beekeeping

Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB (MSLETB) and Mayo Beekeepers Association

For the last three years MSLETB Community Education Mayo has built a strong educational relationship with the Mayo Beekeeper Association. The Community Education Programme has facilitated "Introduction to Bee-keeping" courses and provided additional funding for "Good Practice in Bee-keeping" webinars in 2020. The programme also assisted in the production of CDs of the webinars which have been circulated nationally and internationally. The courses have been organised in local communities that have expressed an interest in the development of community hives.

Partnership

Mayo Sligo and Leitrim ETB : MSLETB provides grant aid to run this course. This partnership gives MSLETB increased reach into rural communities not currently services by the ETB. It also provides avenues to promote the Adult Guidance Service. This has the benefit of allowing the full suite of educational and training programmes to be promoted.

Mayo Beekeepers Association: MBA promotes the course within its membership and recruits learners. It also feed-in ideas for the course content and helps to identify suitable tutors. The partnership is a vehicle for the ETB to identify local needs and to feed information on these needs back to the wider ETB.

These beekeeping lectures have instilled further development and enthusiasm from our members. It allowed them to be educated by the most competent and knowledgeable beekeepers from throughout the world.

Community Education Features

✓ **Personal Wellbeing:** Bee-keeping is a relaxing process which reduces stress.

✓ **Reach:** An active learner can reach far into the community, not just the family but from the strands in the community they reside in whether its sporting, political or religious.

✓ **Inclusion:** Community Education provides a level playing field for people of all ages. It is based on the principle of the "lived experience" and this enables a welcome for people of all ages, experiences and backgrounds.

✓ **Progression:** There is an avenue for progression for people to accredited FET courses (e.g. QQI Level 5 in Beekeeping). There is also a clear career opportunity to be gained, for example by producing honey for local hotels and cafes.

✓ **Flexibility:** The course is very flexible in its delivery, with full regard for accessibility and inclusiveness

Outcomes and Impacts

Community Education is facilitative, group focused and open to innovative activities. MSLETB, in supporting the Mayo Beekeeping Association, is not just working with one organisation, the Association has membership in numerous towns and villages throughout Co Mayo. It involves a number of different communities coming together, sharing their knowledge and learning from each other. Outcomes include: enhanced education prospects for learners; strengthened communities; improved wellbeing/personal development of learners; enhanced support to families; increased confidence; increased awareness of nature and care of the environment; acquired skills and knowledge specific to beekeeping.

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

1.3   A VALUES-LED APPROACH

FET balances "the needs of skills for work with the just as critical skills for life through provision that supports citizenship and prosperity across communities and develops social capital" (National FET Strategy). The core values of FET are outlined in the national strategy as:

· **Lifelong Learning**   · **Social Justice**   · **Active Citizenship**   · **Economic Prosperity**

Community Education is embedded in FET within these broad overarching values which act as deeply ingrained principles guiding all elements of FET provision.

The core values that underpin the FET conceptual framework on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) -

· **Inclusion**   · **Intentionality**   · **Appreciation**   · **Acceptance**

These also provide guiding principles for FET, with a particular emphasis on the delivery of high-quality, relevant and inclusive provision. They require engagement from all practitioners, a greater awareness of UDL, and a preparedness to explore inclusive methods whereby everyone contributes to a sustainable UDL conceptual framework for FET.

> *On our courses we do not act as experts but rather as enablers. In Community Education we are enabling the community to self-direct their learning by allowing them to control courses they will actively take part in.*

The core values of FET and UDL are complementary and interlinked. They work in harmony to provide an ambitious values framework for FET in Ireland. Community Education operates within this framework and through a set of complementary "sub-values" that correspond to its distinguishing features. These sub-values are:

· **Learner-led**   · **Partnership**   · **Participatory**   · **Group-focused**

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Figure 5: *Core Values and Sub-Values*

Core Values and Sub-Values

NATIONAL FET STRATEGY VALUES

- **Lifelong learning: promoting and facilitating engagement throughout careers and lifetimes.**
- **Social justice: empowering learners to take an active role in creating a just society for all citizens.**
- **Active citizenship: supporting learners to be involved in their community - local, national or global.**
- **Economic prosperity: recognising the key role of FET in economic growth.**

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING VALUES

- **Inclusion: recognising that the core philosophy is one of inclusion.**
- **Intentionality: intending to adopt and practice inclusion and UDL.**
- **Appreciation: recognising the value of being interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary on a shared inclusive agenda.**
- **Acceptance: that the philosophy and practice need to be instinctive, thus believing that it is ever-changing and reactive to the audience it seeks to engage with.**

COMMUNITY EDUCATION SUB-VALUES

- **Learner-led: Learners are entrusted to take ownership of their own learning**
- **Partnership: Working in equal partnership with the community and voluntary sector and other Community Education stakeholders.**
- **Participatory: Learning that is informal, interactive and dialogical using a facilitative approach.**
- **Group-focused: Emphasising the value of collective learning and development.**

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

1.4 THE ROOTS OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Freirean Approaches

Community education has a distinct pedagogy, grounded in approaches employed by women's groups in the 1980s, where women determined "what they want to know and how they want to use that knowledge". It borrows from the theories of Paolo Freire, a Brazilian educationalist and social activist who worked with disadvantaged communities. He argued that oppression is a result of wider economic, social and political forces and that oppressed people can break out of their situation by developing a critical awareness of the world around them and their place within it. Since the 1980s, "community education" has been used in Ireland to define an approach of providing education in the community based on Freirean principles. Over the years Community Education has evolved and developed to include methodologies and approaches influenced by Maslow, Rogers, Dewey, Bourdieau, Knowles and others. Originally associated with communities with high deprivation and unemployment rates, Community Education has, in this time, broadened to include communities of interest and priority target cohorts.

Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education, 2000

In 2000, the White Paper on Adult Education set out the broad context for the development of Community Education in Ireland. It described Community Education as the process whereby marginalised groups formulate a process of user-driven, learner-centred and communal education. The White Paper identified Community Education as part of the wider adult education sector but emphasized its distinctness from adult education in terms of its ideological underpinnings. It recognised the unique and innovative contribution of the community education sector and proposed an increase in its role and funding. Significantly, it proposed the appointment of a national team of Community Education Facilitators in ETBs to support the development of Community Education at local level. This proposal was acted upon; there are now 35 Community Education Facilitators in ETBs across the Country.

Operational Guidelines

In 2011, the Department of Education and Science issued "Community Education Programme Operational Guidelines for Providers". These provided guidelines to VEC (ETB) staff on the operation of Community Education funded by the Department of Education and Skills. The guidelines describe Community Education are being "outside the formal education sector" and having the aims of enhancing learning, fostering empowerment and contributing to civic society. The guidelines covered a wide range of areas including principles, target groups, management structure, financial management, partnership, non-accredited learning, outreach and integrated service models. They are still in use today and provide a broad framework for the management and operation of Community Education in ETBs.

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

A key feature and strength of Community Education is that it is not only based in communities, but it is also "rooted in community". This is enabled by the synergy created by collaboration between ETBs and community partners, both using their local reach, connectivity, knowledge, capacity and skills to ensure that Community Education is responsive to community and learner needs.

The National FET Strategy emphasises that FET must remain rooted in communities and that Community Education "plays a critical role in this regard", with community partners playing a central role.

They have a deep knowledge and nuanced understanding of their community's everyday life, as well as its history, culture, needs, assets, challenges, strengths, hopes and fears.

They have a long-standing, mutually respectful relationships with local people and have the requisite skills, remit and time to build trust and form connections. This provides the bedrock of Community Education by enabling it to remain responsive, current and relevant.

1.5   COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The National FET Strategy recognises the common goals shared by Community Education and Community Development. It notes that active inclusion and community development have always been a central tenet of the work of ETBs and identifies community development as one of the wider benefits of FET. "As Community Development in Ireland has played a hugely important role in tackling exclusion, so Community Education has become one of the principal mechanisms used in Community Development to achieve a range of beneficial societal outcomes".

Community Development aims to bring about social change by empowering people to come together to combat social and economic inequality. Community Education is similarly underpinned by social justice principles and approaches. Crucially, Community Education provides a mechanism for communities to advance issues of inclusion and equality by bringing people together in local communities and facilitating them to be actively involved in solving issues of common concern.

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Both Community Development and Community Education are involved in transformational pursuits, sharing processes and working towards outcomes; they both seek to empower individuals and communities to address needs and gaps and also seek to support hard-to-reach people to participate in community life and society.

Community Education has a key role to play in promoting and supporting community development. Ireland's rural development policy "Our Rural Future" highlights the role of education in building capacity for community development and community leaders "with a particular focus on young people between the ages of 18 and 25". Community Education's partnership with the community and voluntary sector, as well as its commitment to bottom-up approaches and social justice, means that it is well positioned to drive and support this goal.

Personal Development

Kerry ETB and Social Health Education Project (SHEP)

Partnership

The Community Education Facilitator (CEF) and SHEP Development Worker oversees learner recruitment, organising of courses, delivery, evaluation and learner supports. SHEP tutors are committed to empowering learners, promoting inclusion, opposing unjust discrimination and facilitating reflective, inclusive spaces. The CEF is involved from the predevelopment stage to supporting groups, making funding applications, developing curricula and managing the contract with SHEP. The CEF has a clear understanding of, and dedication to, the value of informal learning opportunities being accessible to those furthest from the education system. The sustainability of the SHEP / ETB partnership is supported through a Service Level Agreement (SLA). The ETB's Adult Education Officer liaises with ETB senior management regarding progress of the SLA and the partnership outcomes.

SHEP is a values-led organisation that works with individuals and communities to develop capacities for positive change, to enhance health and well-being and to promote social justice. In partnership with Kerry ETB, SHEP delivers community-based courses which facilitate communities to participate in education and training, using primarily an experiential group-work approach. This approach starts with a learner's life experiences and supports the unique personal growth of every individual. SHEP offers a range of integrated, personal, community, environmental and international development initiatives.

"Quality education does not have to mean qualifications"

Community Education Features

✓ **Nonformal / Informal:** Learning that promotes wellbeing in a non-formal experiential way.

✓ **Needs-Based:** It is driven by the community and reflective of lived experiences. Courses are developed, planned and delivered in consultation with the group.

✓ **Flexibility:** The courses have a specific curriculum but are changed and adapted in response to the groups' needs/abilities.

✓ **Social Inclusion:** The courses are facilitative, group focused and open. It is about social inclusion in the broadest sense by creating a voice for those furthest from the education system.

✓ **Equality and Social Justice:** It aims to locate personal, individual experiences within the broader social and political context. It supports individuals and groups to address issues in their community and empowers people to have the confidence to participate as active citizens.

Outcomes and Impacts

SHEP courses are in high demand every year. Community groups in Kerry are very aware of SHEP and of the quality of their provision. Learners report that, through SHEP courses, they feel heard, have increased confidence, a sense of belonging and a sense of empowerment about their next step. A sustainable, community-based model of recovery from addiction has been developed through SHEP. This is in conjunction with Kerry ETB, HSE Mental Health, University College Cork and community stakeholders. This "Community Based Recovery Model" of education has been replicated in a number of places in Kerry.

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

1.6   COMMUNITY EDUCATION'S DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Community Education and Community-Based Education

A key role of ETBs is to ensure that, regardless of which pathway a learner chooses, there is a consistent approach to FET resourcing, delivery and supports. However, consistency does not mean homogeneity and so, each FET offering has a set of distinguishing features which define it. These features bring a uniqueness and strength to each programme and enable learners to identify how specific courses/programmes align with their individual learning needs.

Community Education is part of the suite of community-based provision offered by ETBs. Other community-based provision includes Adult Literacy, Back to Education Initiative and Local Training Initiatives. Community-based provision takes place in local community and neighbourhood settings and is aimed at providing accessible FET, particularly for people who are marginalised or more distant from learning. However, not all community-based provision can be described as Community Education. This is because Community Education has distinguishing features which position it "outside the formal education sector". These features are contextualised further below and described in Figure 6.

Some FET provision takes place in dedicated education or training settings which are not "community-based". This provision often has a training or employment skills focus, such as PLC Colleges or Community Training Centres, which often operate within more structured learning and outcomes frameworks.

Regardless of location, focus or structure, the wide array of part- and full-time provision offered by ETBs means that people have considerable choice when deciding on their learning journey. This choice is a fundamental part of ETBs' mission as it reflects learner diversity and ensures that learners' individual needs, circumstances and choices can be accommodated and supported. This learner-centred approach is at the heart of the ETB FET sector.

While all FET is characterised by learner-centred provision, Community Education has the capacity to offer learners a greater degree of flexibility through non-formal and informal approaches not provided for, or outside the requirements of, the formal education settings sector. This, in part, is due to the fact that Community Education is regarded by SOLAS as "not an active FET employment programme" (ref: SOLAS Service Plan, 2020).

In this context, Community Education's distinguishing features can be described as set out in figure 6.

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Figure 6: *Distinguishing Features of Community Education*

Community Education has an inherent flexibility. Learners have an influence on developing curricula, based on their own learning needs. In addition, flexible programme length and scheduling offers short, part-time and variable courses to suit learners' diverse requirements.

Community Education is designed, delivered and funded on a partnership basis, with the community and voluntary sector as its key strategic partner.

Community Education is group-focused learning. While valuing an individual's learning journey, it emphasises the value of collective learning as a mechanism for community cohesion, participation and action.

In Community Education, the relationship between the tutor and learner is equal. Tutors use facilitative approaches to create an informal and sociable setting and to ensure that learners' needs and views are heard, valued and understood.

Much of Community Education is offered as non-accredited provision. This enables adults to engage in learning at their own pace, with an emphasis on participation and personal development. It also facilitates learners contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of their community.

The outcomes of Community Education are varied and manifold, including skills development, confidence building, greater community involvement, social justice outcomes and progression to other FET. They are often descibed as "soft" outcomes, meaning that they are less tangible

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

1.7   COMMUNITY EDUCATION'S DIVERSE AIMS AND OUTCOMES

Community Education uses flexible and responsive approaches to facilitate individuals to engage in learning on their own terms. As it addresses varied, and often overlapping, individual, community and societal issues, Community Education can mean different things to different people:

- For some, it offers a way to get out of the house, meet neighbours, create local connections and form sustainable community relationships.

- For others, it is an opportunity to develop skills in a local, convenient setting and provides pathways to further education, training or employment.

- For more again, community education promotes social justice through critical thinking, active citizenship and social inclusion.

- Or, it may provide an opportunity for people who are vulnerable or socially excluded to engage in learning in a relaxed, non-formal environment.

Table 1 provides an overview of the key outcomes generated by Community Education at an individual, community, societal and economic level. The diversity of outcomes is recognised by ETB FET as being a key component of Community Education's strategic value. However, while the National FET Strategy recognises both "hard" outcomes - which are more readily captured, measured and understood – and "soft" outcomes - which are less tangible and more difficult to measure - it emphasises the need to develop more effective means of measuring softer outcomes, such as through a 'distance travelled' type tool.

The National Strategy goes on to note that FET brings major benefits for learners that are broadly understood, but that cannot be recognised within formal 'hard' performance metrics and notes the challenges of relying on formal certification to validate outcomes. In particular, it notes that "there will always be a place within FET for informal learning, particularly when dealing with marginalised groups in the early stages of engagement".

> *The role that personal development plays in supporting learners distanced from formal education, or from social, family, community connections cannot be overestimated. This is at the core of Community Education Provision*

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Table 1: Key Outcomes Generated by Community Education across Individual, Community and Economic Domains

Collective Action	Community Education facilitates communities to take collective action on issues of shared concern
Community Connections	Community Education builds community connections, strengthens relationships and promotes social capital and solidarity
Disadvantage	Community Education supports the most economically and socially disadvantaged groups to engage and remain in learning
Employment	Community Education acts as a stepping-stone for many towards sustainable employment
Empowerment	Community Education empowers learners and communities to affect individual and societal change by enabling them to analyse their needs and organise courses accordingly
First Step	Community Education acts as a first step back into learning, community engagement, education and training
Freirean Approach	Community Education facilitates adults to reflect on their experiences and strengths, analyse how power works, and consider what action to take
Health and Wellbeing	It supports learners to achieve positive health outcomes, including personal development, physical health and wellbeing benefits
Pathways	Community Education enables learners to follow their desired pathway towards personal development, further learning, qualifications and/or employment
Reach	Community Education is particularly effective at reaching those who are most distant from learning, education and the labour market
Reduces Barriers	Community Education approaches help to reduce barriers to access, participation, and outcome
Skills	Community Education contributes to the development of transversal (soft) skills and also contributes to the National Skills Strategy through the development of generic skills
Social Justice	Community Education provides a mechanism to facilitate social justice, by promoting respect and collective consciousness
Volunteering	Community Education encourages, enables and supports volunteering at grass roots level

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

1.8   THE CENTRAL ROLE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION FACILITATORS

The National FET Strategy notes the that "passion and expertise of FET practitioners, and their commitment to putting learners at the heart of everything they do, is one of the great strengths of the system"[4]. Indeed, this passion and expertise extends to Community Education Facilitators (CEFs) who are at the forefront of Community Education provision. Their role, which is set out in the Department of Education's Operational Guidelines, is pivotal to the successful planning and delivery of Community Education in each ETB area.

Community Education Facilitators initiate and facilitate provision, focusing particularly on supporting marginalised groups and communities. They work in partnership with community partners to ensure learner-centred provision and to assist with identifying need, planning courses and accessing resources. They also provide technical assistance in areas such as strategic planning, and programme review and evaluation.

A key focus of the CEFs role is to nurture and promote new community learning groups and partners. In this way, they promote needs-based provision, driven by local communities and reflective of lived experiences.

Within the overall sphere of community-based FET, CEFs often work hand-in-hand with other FET coordinators to ensure a coordinated approach to community-based provision. They also collaborate and coordinate with wider statutory and non-statutory organisations and stakeholders to support the development of adult education. CEFs advocate for Community Education in policy and practice, highlighting its role outside the formal education setting, with a focus on non-accredited provision and rooted in equality, justice, and empowerment.

1.9   COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND ADULT LITERACY

Community Education and Adult Literacy are synergistic. They share many principles and approaches, and both have roots in Freirean theories. ETB FET Adult Literacy offers support to people who wish to improve their basic literacy skills – reading, writing, spelling, computers, maths and study skills. Learning is tailored to the needs of each student in a supportive and friendly environment. Courses can be accredited or non-accredited. Adult Literacy and Community Education often work in tandem to meet learners needs and to support progression and development. In particular, tutors and community partners work together at grassroots level to identify learners with low literacy levels or with limited English proficiency and provide integrated supports through the Adult Literacy and ESOL services.

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[4] SOLAS, 2020

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The Irish Government's 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy, Adult Literacy for Life, emphasises the synergistic relational between Adult Literacy and Community Education. It commits to continuing to build targeted funding schemes to support the role of Community Education and community development role in addressing the digital divide and supporting people with literacy needs.

The strategy sets out that Community Education partners provide a key mechanism through which literacy supports are delivered on the ground as part of powerful support networks available in every corner of the country. It notes that ground-up initiatives delivered by community and voluntary organisations in partnership with ETBs, local authorities, Pobal and the SICAP programme assist with engaging those most at risk of marginalisation. It commits to the development of regional literacy plans which, among other things, will demonstrate how Community Education and community development organisations are involved in addressing needs, "with central funding available to support collaboration and innovation, in addition to the opportunities provided by the Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund".
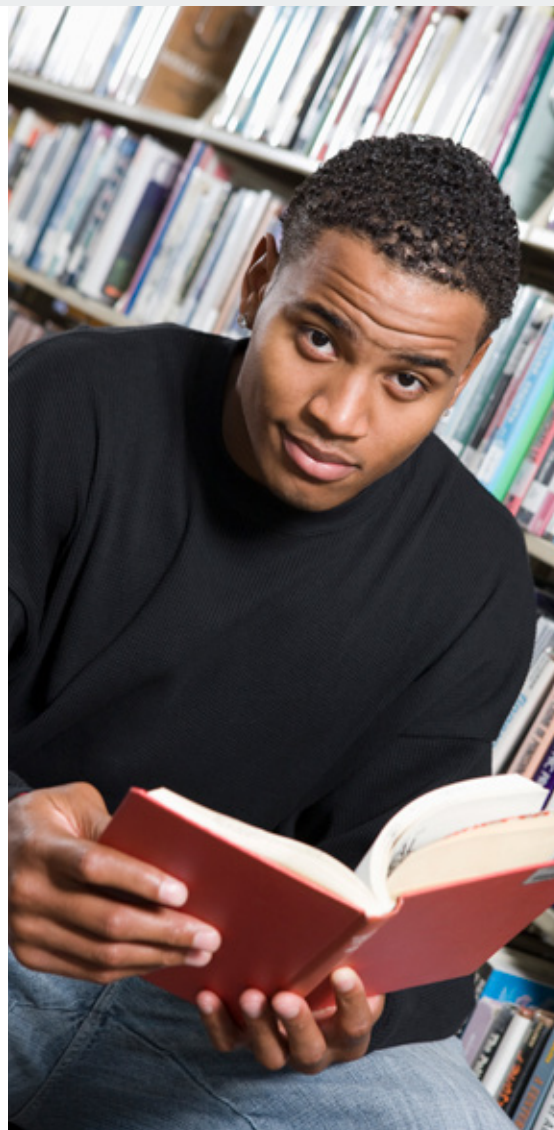
The strategy states the importance of learners having early access to an assessment of their particular learning and support needs and notes the role of Community Education partners in this regard. It commits to the development of a cross-referral process for access to standard ETB initial and ongoing assessment processes for Community Education providers and local and community services. The strategy also notes the role of Community Education partners in supporting digital competency and inclusion. It points out that many people lacking literacy and digital skills prefer informal learning rather than accredited routes and that, in this context, it is important that means are found to tap into the many different courses and supports which exist outside the formal state education sector.

1.10   THE LANGUAGE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The language of Community Education has evolved over the past 30 years. While rooted in the Freirean language of dialogue, reflection and social action, it has evolved to encompass the discourse and practice of other theorists, along with the vocabulary and terminology of FET in early 21st Century Ireland.

Figure 7: Language of Community Education

*A Policy And Strategy
Context For This Position
Paper*

CHAPTER 2 - POLICY AND STRATEGY CONTEXT

2.1   COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN THE NATIONAL FET STRATEGY

Education and Training Boards (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. The ETB sector is the leading provider of education and training services nationally, and with 32,000 staff is a key actor responding pre-emptively and strategically to emerging trends and needs, both nationally and on the international stage. As a vibrant and responsive sector, ETBs deliver Further Education and Training to over 220,000 unique FET learners annually in over 200 FET Colleges and Training Centres, Youth Education and Training Centres and in partnership with a wide range of community organisations.

SOLAS characterises FET in terms of full-time and part-time courses, as outlined in Figure 7 below. Community Education falls within the suite of part-time FET provision which facilitates more flexible access to learning. The FET Service Plan 2020 refers to Community Education as "variable-time provision", an indication of its position "outside the formal education sector[5]".

Figure 7: ETB FET Full-Time and Part-Time Courses

Full-Time Courses	Part-Time Courses
• Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Courses • Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) • Youthreach • Bridging/Foundation Courses • Specific Skills Training (SST) • Traineeship • Community Training Centres (CTCs) • Specialist Training Providers (STPs) • Local Training Initiatives (LTI) • Apprenticeship	• Back To Education Initiative • Adult Literacy • English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) • Skills for Work • Evening Courses • Blended Learning Courses • Community Education

Source: SOLAS Website

Range of FET Provision

The National FET Strategy states that FET provision can be grouped in accordance with the four headings outlined in Figure 8 below. Broadly speaking, Community Education falls within Group 1 although, in practice, some Community Education courses fall within Group 2. It should be acknowledged that Community Education cannot be defined it as being singularly in a lateral framework. In practice, learners often engage in Community Education as part of extensive learning journey, incorporating other learning experiences and pathways.

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[5] DES Operational Guidelines for Providers.

Figure 8: FET provision grouped under four headings

1. Courses focused on foundation or transversal skills, such as Community Education, Adult Literacy, ESOL or ITABE

2. Programmes which facilitate pathways to other education or training (ET) and which bridge gaps between foundational learning and vocational ET (such as Youthreach, BTEI, Skills for Work)

3. Post-Leaving Cert courses which focus on both facilitating progression to Higher Education and employment outcomes

4. Programmes focused on work-based learning and which lead directly to jobs (traineeships, apprenticeships, specific skills training)

Many FET courses are provided at levels one to six on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), which aims to meet the needs of individuals at different stages of the learning pathway - foundation skills development; bridging skills; vocational education and training opportunities. Figure 9 provides a breakdown of courses as described in the FET Strategy, with NFQ designation and approximate learner numbers.

Figure 9. FET by Broad Type of Provision, per NFQ Level and Learner Numbers

Foundation Skills

NFQ Level 1 -2

100,000 learners

Bridging Skills

NFQ Level 3 -4

40,000 learners

Vocational Skills

NFQ Level 5 -6

60,000 learners

However, the majority of Community Education is non-accredited, meaning that provision is broadly outside the NFQ.

The FET strategy recognises that Community Education forms a "critical part of provision", delivering "ground-up initiatives developed to serve the needs of particular localities, often in partnership with local organisations". It recognises Community Education's role in helping to develop core or foundational skills and goes on to describe the features, benefits and challenges of Community Education in the following ways:

CHAPTER 2 - POLICY AND STRATEGY CONTEXT

- In the Minister's Foreword, the Minister of Further and Higher Education recognises Community Education "as facilitating integration of our diverse population."

- The strategy highlights the importance of providers offering a variety of Community Education options which can link to wider learning pathways within FET and beyond.

- It also highlights the role of Community Education in targeting needs of particularly vulnerable groups or disadvantaged communities.

- It states that Community Education supports participation and re-engagement in education and training through an extensive network of community providers, using their local reach and connectivity to develop learning projects to address local needs and empower learners and communities.

- It notes that approaches to Community Education across ETBs are inconsistent which means level and focus of funding differs substantially from region to region. "While the strength of community education must remain a 'ground up' approach, FET does need to ensure that there is general support for good ideas and projects across the system, and that communities benefit in the same way from financial and other support regardless of where they are based".

- It emphasises that technology offers significant potential to build on Community Education and widen access to the most marginalised groups.

- The strategy asserts that a Community Education framework should be developed to ensure a more consistent approach and it suggests seven core principles to underpin this process. The framework will allow the unique characteristics of Community Education to be reflected in how it is supported within FET, while ensuring that it meets common FET requirements in terms of gathering basic learner data, linking to learning pathways, and offering consistent learner support. In this regard it states that progression levels through FET will increase strongly, with pathways from core skills and Community Education available to all who wish to pursue them.

CHAPTER 2 - POLICY AND STRATEGY CONTEXT

The Spectrum of Provision

ETBs strive to ensure that all provision, regardless of location, focus or structure is underpinned by a set of core features of learner-centredness, needs-based and flexibility. However, the nature of FET – with different eligibility criteria, objectives and curriculum requirements – means that these core features apply on a spectrum across provision. The adjacent diagram (figure 10) broadly illustrates the position of different provision on this spectrum, with those on the bottom offering greater flexibility and those on the top operating within more structured frameworks.

Figure 10: Spectrum of Provision

Community Training Centres Youthreach Post Leaving Cert Colleges

Back To Education Initiative, Local Training Initiatives

Community Education, Adult Literacy, ESOL

(Note: the Adult Guidance Services is available across all provision)

2.2 OTHER STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND REPORTS SHAPING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The resourcing, planning, delivery and evaluation of ETB FET Community Education takes place within the context of a range of national strategies, policies and reports. The National FET Strategy sets FET within a broad national context; its role in responding to challenges such as climate change and economic development; its commitments to wider education and skills policy; its alignment with, and contribution to, FET system targets; its relationship with "horizontal" FET strategies and initiatives which support the development of the FET sector (such as apprenticeships, professional development, technology, evaluation and improvement); its alignment with SOLAS's Overarching Planning and Funding Parameters. This strategic framework is depicted in Figure 11 overleaf.

The 2020 Programme for Government, Our Shared Future, recognises the role of Community Education and "its vital role in our communities by supporting its schemes and initiatives post COVID-19". It also commits to developing and implementing a standardised system of accreditation of prior learning, taking account of previous education, skills, work experience and engagement in society.

CHAPTER 2 - POLICY AND STRATEGY CONTEXT

Figure 11: Strategic Framework for FET (Source: National FET Strategy)

National Challenges

Cross-government policy where FET will be expected to make a key contribution, such as in Future Jobs, Climate Change, Project Ireland 2040.

Wider Education & Skills Policy

The National Skills Strategy and 3-year Action Plan for Education set out a series of commitments in relation to the FET system, while the development of a tertiary education framework promises a more co-ordinated approach between FET and HE.

FET Strategy and System Targets

A National FET Strategy is adopted every 5 years, and should be reflected in national FET system targets agreed between the Minister and SOLAS, and to be delivered over a 3-year cycle.

Horizontal FET Strategies

A range of horizontal strategies (of equal status and importance) are in place to support the development of the FET sector in particular areas - for example, apprenticeship, professional development, technology, active inclusion.

Skills/Labour Market Research Unit

The SLMRU analysis of skills needs and emerging labour market trends feeds into the work of Regional Skills Fora & National Skills Council, and ETBs to ensure FET responds to these needs.

Evaluation & Improvement

Evaluations of FET provision lead to programmes of improvement to be implemented by ETBs. Development of data now allows clearer analysis of FET outcomes and impacts.

Strategic Performance Agreements

Agreements between SOLAS and ETBs to set out FET direction and commitments over a three year period, including the ETB contribution to each of the FET system targets. The agreements show how ETBs will deliver on national policy and strategy, and they reflect the evolving social and economic needs of its region.

Annual ETB Planning/Funding

SOLAS issues Overarching Planning & Funding Parameters every year which reflect all of the elements of the framework, together with any new FET priorities. Each ETB makes a submission setting out proposed FET provision during the year, with funding then allocated following system-wide assessment.

Ronanstown Women's Community Development Project (RWCDP)

Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB

Target Group: *Women*

A social action model of education who work in partnership DDLETB, RWCDP are a community development organisation whose mission is to support the empowerment of and advocate for women who experience disadvantage and marginalisation, and to promote social justice, women's human rights and equality bringing about positive and sustainable changes to women's lives and society. RWCDP believe women's community education is a catalyst for change. It offers first steps programmes, community workshops, voter education, and access to further and higher education in a local community setting. Equality, participation and capacity building is key to their work.

Partnership

DDLETB: through the Community Education Programme provides; tutor hours, learner supports and ongoing guidance and support from the Community Education Facilitator. Supports learner progression at a local and wider level by providing guidance information, identifying pathways toward reaching individual goals.

RWCDP: has the ability to engage the most hard-to-reach learners and provides a safe welcoming "home from home" environment. It undertakes analysis of learner needs based on local knowledge, and offers wrap-around learner supports in response to these needs.

Community Education Features

✓ Encouraging women's participation with a ground-up, learner led approach, identifying needs through community consultation - by the community, for the community

✓ It is recognised that learners arrive with a wealth of knowledge and life skills, they are encouraged to critically reflect, the learning is a collaborative, shared and not a top down experience

✓ Promotes a safe welcoming environment for those who may have fear of, or previous negative experiences of education, acts as a catalyst towards changing negative views to positive

✓ Personal and social issues are explored, learners are empowered to act individually and collectively on issues that impact them, and their communities, towards social change

Outcomes and Impacts

Enhances social capital, promotes social networking, increases local volunteering and creates greater awareness on the importance of voting and its impact on communities. Plays an important role in developing a strong community voice; through imparting knowledge and skills, supporting discourse on issues affecting women, combatting racism and promoting diversity as similarities rather than differences are explored. A first step on the path to progression leading to more mobilised communities, social mobility and a better standard of living across the community. Removes barriers to participation and critically creates a positive image of education which becomes inter-generational.

Bloom HQ

Laois and Offaly ETB and Bloom HQ Mountrath

Target Group: *Local community in Mountrath, Co. Laois*

Bloom HQ is based in the former Brigidine Convent, in 2017 the Convent and its grounds were donated by the Brigidine Sisters of Mountrath to be held in trust for the long-term benefit of the local community. Bloom HQ was established to create sustainable pathways for participation opportunities for all the community.

In partnership with Bloom HQ's Operations and Community Manager, the local Home School Community Liaison Officer and LOETB's Community Education Service, Laois Offaly ETB have run many Community Education courses for parents, grandparents and the general community. In keeping with the ethos of 'a place for all', Community Education plays a role in providing courses for the local adult community. Courses have included Cooking on a Budget, Mindfulness, Mosaics, Art, Staying Connected – how to use your Smartphone and Ipad, First Aid, Introduction to Healthcare and A Bird Table Project with Laois Traveller Action Group.

Partnership

LOETB: The Community Education Service provide tutors or grant assistance for courses in BloomHQ. The LOETB Adult Guidance Service provides information and guidance to participants. The Adult Literacy Service provides some accredited courses as progression from the initial unaccredited course

Bloom HQ: Operations and Community Manager and the Home School Community Liaison Officer identify the local need and help to promote and recruit for the courses. They also offer ongoing support with refreshments and materials for the course.

Community Education Features

✓ Courses are offered with the focus on engagement and participation.

✓ Needs are identified in consultation with those working on the ground in the area – Bloom HQ Operations Manager and the HSCLO.

✓ Collaboration is key to the success of these programmes.

✓ Refreshments are always available on site promoting the importance of community and offering the participants a space to meet and share ideas.

Outcomes and Impacts

Having a community network in a local community has encouraged many adults to avail of courses. Rather than a community group applying for tuition hours the Community Education Facilitator works in partnership with the Home School Community Liaison Officer and the Operations and Community Manager to identify courses that meet the needs of the community.

Community Education
Facts And Figures

CHAPTER 3 – COMMUNITY EDUCATION FACTS AND FIGURES

3.1   FUNDING FRAMEWORK

ETBs are the largest funders of Community Education in the country. This funding forms part of multi-agency approach to provision involving a range of diverse and often interconnected stakeholders. These include Local Development Companies, the SICAP Programme, the Department of Social Protection, the Health Services Executive (HSE), the Department of Justice and the Department of Rural and Community Development. State funding of Community Education is augmented at community level through "benefit-in-kind" generated by signifcant voluntary activity, as well as through learner fees and philanthropic contributions.

SOLAS Funding of the ETB FET Sector

- In 2020, almost €800 million of funding was invested by SOLAS in FET, with €784.5m being channelled through ETBs delivering FET provision, either directly or via a network of contracted training and Community Education partners.
- Of this €784.5m, €767m was allocated to ETBs for Provision and €17.5 allocated for capital
- Almost €11.5m was allocated to Community Education in 2020

SOLAS's 2020 Services Plan sets out how the State's investment in FET is deployed across ETBs, as well as the outputs and outcomes that this investment is expected to deliver. The plan provides a detailed outline of funding allocated, with data presented under the headings of "Full-time Provision", "Part-time Provision" and "Community Education". The plan differentiates Community Education from full and part-time provision by describing it as "variable-time provision". Table 2 provides a breakdown of of the SOLAS investment in ETB FET in 2020.

Table 2. Breakdown of SOLAS investment in ETB FET, 2020

HEADING	BUDGET
Full-time Provision	€530,421,164
Part-time Provision	€98,564,883
Community Education	€11,428,777
ETB Innovation Projects	€5,145,168
ETB Provision Supports	€16,347,227
ETB FET Operational Costs, Payroll, Overheads	€101,572,741
ETB Guidance Services	€7,270,398
Total	€770,750,358

Source: SOLAS FET Services Report (pg 38)

CHAPTER 3 – COMMUNITY EDUCATION FACTS AND FIGURES

Table 3 provides an overview of SOLAS' 2020 funding allocation and estimates of provision inputs and outputs for ETBs and other FET providers.

Table 3. Overview of SOLAS' 2020 funding allocation and estimates of provision inputs and outputs for ETBs and other FET providers, 2020

<table>
<tr><td colspan="8">Overview of 2020 funding allocated and estimates of provision inputs and outputs for Education and Training Boards and other FET providers</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">FET Provision in 2020</td><td colspan="3">Estimate of Inputs in 2020</td><td>Retention</td><td>Completion</td><td>Accreditation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Number of Beneficiaries</td><td>Funding</td><td>Retention</td><td>Completion</td><td>Accreditation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Provider</td><td>Provision Type</td><td>Enrolled/ Started on 1st January 2020</td><td>Starting Courses During 2020</td><td>Total for FET Provision in 2020</td><td>Funding for FET Provision in 2020</td><td>Percentage retained on courses during 2020</td><td>Percentage scheduled (of retained) to **finish courses** in 2020</td><td>Accreditation rate for course completions in 2020</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total ETB Provision</td><td></td><td>77,458</td><td>238,644</td><td>316,102</td><td>€767,031,292</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">VSCCS [1]</td><td>Full-time [2]</td><td>992</td><td>1,254</td><td>2,246</td><td>€329,664</td><td>93%</td><td>47%</td><td>94%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part-time</td><td>302</td><td>452</td><td>754</td><td>€340,545</td><td>97%</td><td>47%</td><td>77%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>1,294</td><td>1,706</td><td>3,000</td><td>€670,209</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>IDS [3]</td><td>Full-time</td><td>91</td><td>479</td><td>570</td><td>€452,461</td><td>80%</td><td>88%</td><td>36%</td></tr>
<tr><td>TCPID [4]</td><td>Full-time</td><td>0</td><td>20</td><td>20</td><td>€160,000</td><td>100%</td><td>0%</td><td>0%</td></tr>
<tr><td>NALA [5]</td><td>Part-time</td><td>1,330</td><td>1,200</td><td>2,530</td><td>€272,396</td><td>50%</td><td>99%</td><td>86%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total Additional Provision</td><td></td><td>1,421</td><td>1,699</td><td>3,120</td><td>€884,857</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>eCollege [6]</td><td>Part-time</td><td>4,357</td><td>7,314</td><td>11,671</td><td>€2,164,000</td><td>70%</td><td>57%</td><td>33%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total National Programmes Provision</td><td></td><td>4,357</td><td>7,314</td><td>11,671</td><td>€2,164,000</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="13">Summary FET provision totals</td><td>Full Time</td><td>44,243</td><td>78,711</td><td>122,954</td><td>€530,421,164</td><td>86%</td><td>59%</td><td>87%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part Time</td><td>37,010</td><td>125,489</td><td>162,499</td><td>€98,564,883</td><td>85%</td><td>78%</td><td>71%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Community Education</td><td>3,277</td><td>45,163</td><td>48,440</td><td>€11,428,777</td><td>90%</td><td>92%</td><td>71%</td></tr>
<tr><td>**Provider Type Summary**</td><td>**Enrolled/ Started on 1st January 2020**</td><td>**Starting Courses During 2020**</td><td>**Total for FET Provision in 2020**</td><td>**Funding for FET Provision in 2020**</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>VSCCS</td><td>1,294</td><td>1,706</td><td>3,000</td><td>€670,209</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Other FET Providers [7]</td><td>5,778</td><td>9,013</td><td>14,791</td><td>€3,048,857</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>ETB Provision Total</td><td>72,662</td><td>220,578</td><td>293,240</td><td>€636,695,758</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">ETB Innovation Projects</td><td>€5,145,168</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">ETB Provision Supports</td><td>€16,347,227</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">ETB FET operational costs, staff pay & overheads</td><td>€101,572,741</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">ETB Guidance Services</td><td>€7,270,398</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>84,530</td><td>249,363</td><td>333,893</td><td>€770,750,358</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

1. VSCCS - Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools
2. VSCCS PLC enhanced capitation/LDAs only
3. IDS - Irish Deaf Society
4. TCPID - Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities
5. NALA - National Adult Literacy Agency

6. eCollege funded through SOLAS allocation. eCollege starters include a portion of enrolled learners due to transition to PLSS
7. Other FET Providers: eCollege, Irish Deaf Society, National Adult Literacy Agency and Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities

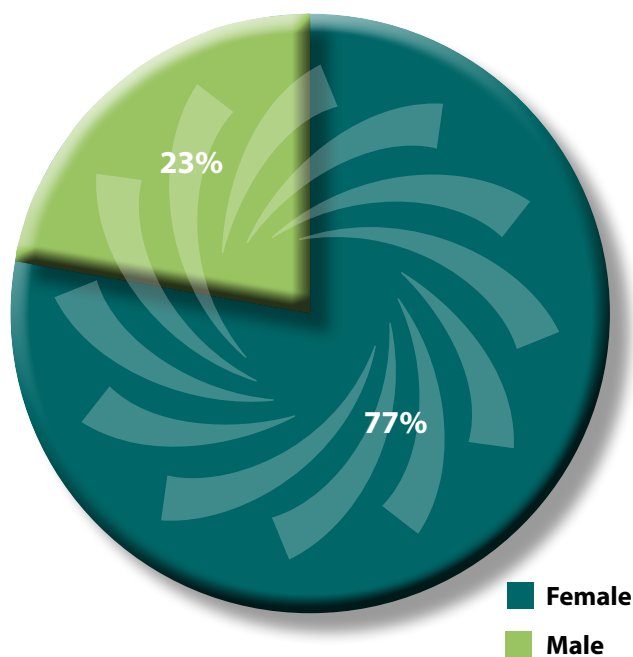# CHAPTER 3 – COMMUNITY EDUCATION FACTS AND FIGURES

3.2 LEARNER PROFILE

There is significant diversity in the profile of learners engaged in Community Education. This diversity emanates from a range of demographic characteristics and socio-economic factors. These include gender, family status, age, disability, race, membership of the Traveller community, social backgrounds and levels of literacy and numeracy skills. Community Education traditionally targets marginalised groups and communities such as early school leavers, people living in areas with high deprivation scores, lone parents, people involved with the criminal justice system, people who are long-term unemployed and people who are homeless, to a name a few.

Data from SOLAS Data Analytics Unit provide an insight into the profile of the 33,000 discrete learners that access Community Education. These data show that the majority (77%) of Community Education Learners are women and that more than half of learners are over 55 years of age. A cross-reference of SOLAS data with Pobal's deprivation index, shows that over two-thirds of learners are in areas with above average levels of deprivation, with 22% of learners in areas designated as disadvantaged. While there are no data available on learner's socio-economic background, data relating to learner's welfare status provides an indicator in this regard; the largest cohorts receiving disability payments and the state pension.

Figure 12. Gender Profile Breakdown

Gender Profile

- 77% of learners were women
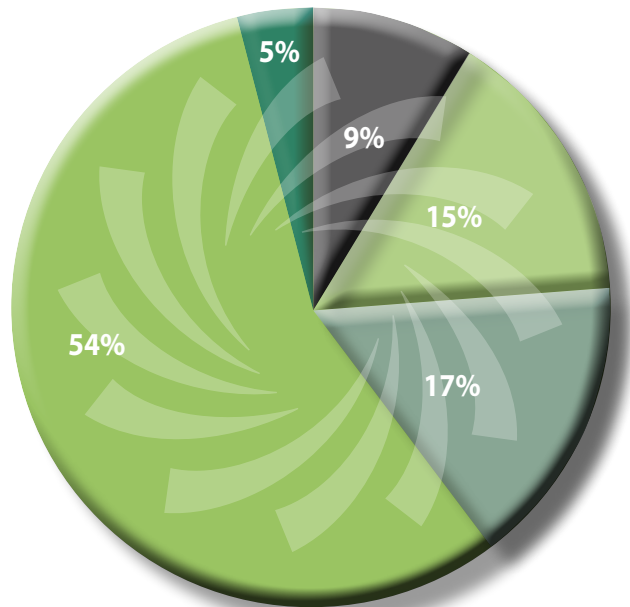- 23% of learners were men

CHAPTER 3 – COMMUNITY EDUCATION FACTS AND FIGURES

Figure 13. Learner Age Breakdown

Age Breakdown

Over half the learners participating in Community Education in 2019 were over 55 years of age. 32% of learners were between the age of 25 and 54 years. 14% of learners were under 35 years of age

|	Under 25 year olds:	5%
	25 -34-year-olds:	9%
	35 – 44-year-olds:	15%
	45 – 54-year-olds:	17%
	55 – 64+ year olds:	54%

Pobal Deprivation Data

Cross referencing Pobal deprivation indices with Community Education enrolments indicates that 64% of learners were in areas with deprivation scores ranging from "Marginally Below Average" (40%) to "Extremely Disadvantaged" (0.2%). Almost 37% of learners were in areas which were "Marginally Above Average, "Affluent" or "Very Affluent".

Figure 14. Community Education Enrolments and POBAL Deprivation index (2019)

**Community Education Enrolments and POBAL Deprivation Index (2019)**

Extremely Disadvantaged
Very Disadvantaged
Disadvantaged
Marginally Below Average
Average
Marginally Above Average
Affluent
Very Affluent
Extremely Affluent
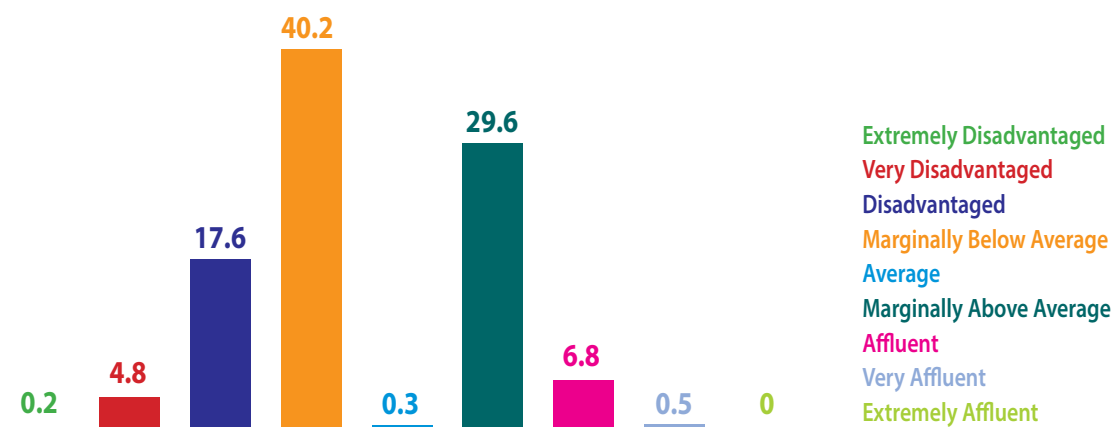
CHAPTER 3 – COMMUNITY EDUCATION FACTS AND FIGURES

Community Education Learners Welfare Status

Figure 15 below shows the self-reported welfare status of Community Education learners in 2019. It should be noted that the data is incomplete as a significant proportion of learners did not answer this question on the Learner Registration Form.

Figure 15. *Self-Reported Welfare Status of Community Education Learners, 2019*
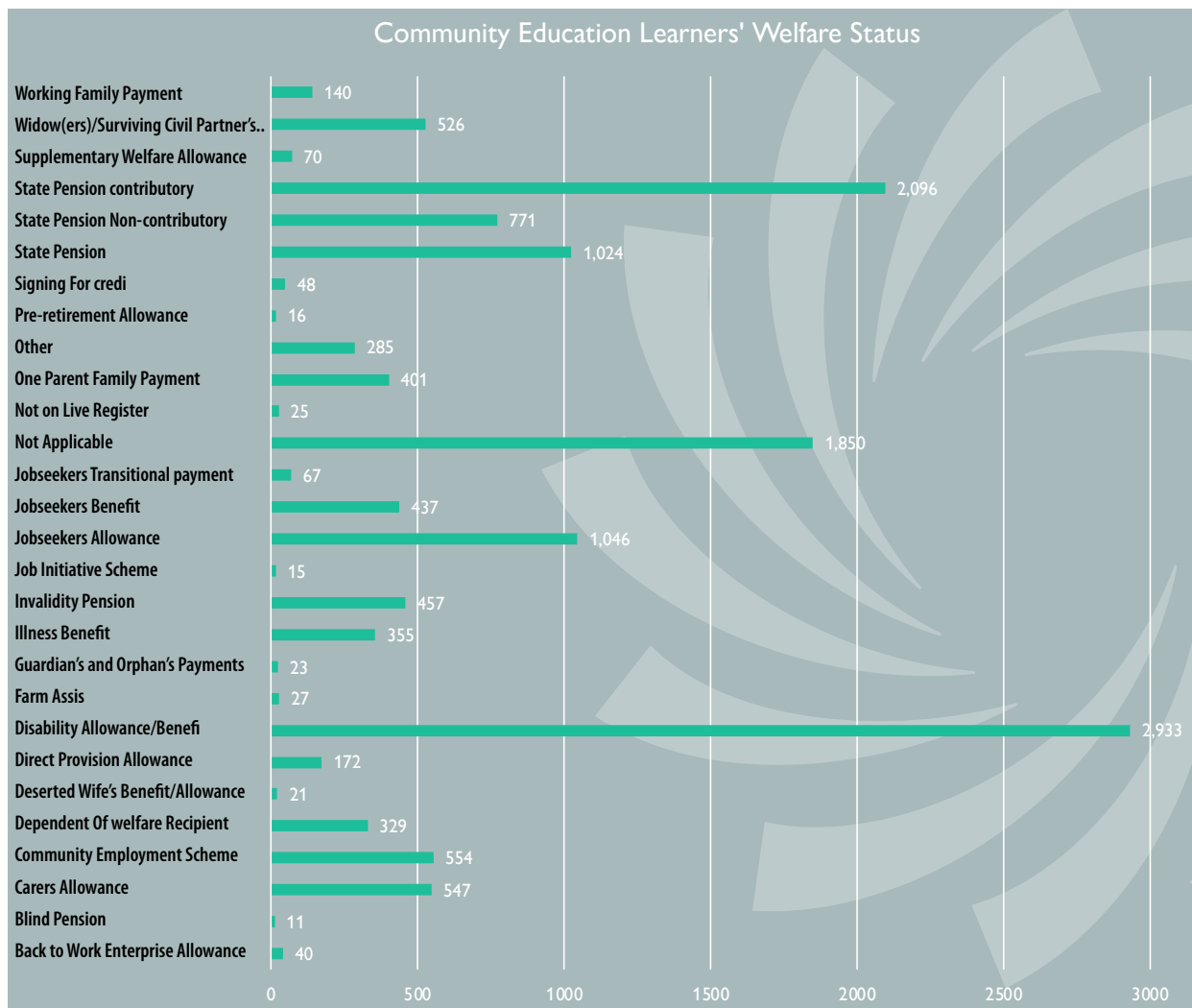
3.3 RETENTION, COMPLETION AND PROGRESSION RATES

Retention and Completion Rates

Extracted from the SOLAS table above, Table 3 below shows that Community Education has the highest learner retention and completion rates across ETB FET provision.

CHAPTER 3 – COMMUNITY EDUCATION FACTS AND FIGURES

Table 4: ETB FET Retention and Completion Rates and Beneficiaries (estimated 2020)

|	Retention Rate	Completion Rate	Beneficiaries
Full-time Provision	88%	59%	120,118
Part-time Provision	85%	78%	195,984
Community Education	90%	92%	48,440

Source: Extract from SOLAS FET Services Report 2020(pg 38)

Learner Progression Within FET

Figure 16 provides data on the number of learners that progressed immediately (i.e. in the same year) within FET in 2019. Out of the 33,000 discrete learners than engaged in Community Education that year, 1% progressed immediately to FET, broken down as follows in actual numbers:

- 1035 progressed to Level 3 FET
- 673 progressed to Level 5 FET
- 591 progressed to Level 4 FET
- 393 progressed to Level 2 FET
- 282 progressed to Level 6 FET
- 125 progressed to Level 1 FET
- 87 progressed to Non-NFQ aligned FET

Figure 16: Community Education Learner Progression within FET

Community Education Learner Progression within FET

Non-NFQ aligned FET	Level 1	2	3	4	Leaving Certificate	5	6
87	125	393	1035	591		673	282
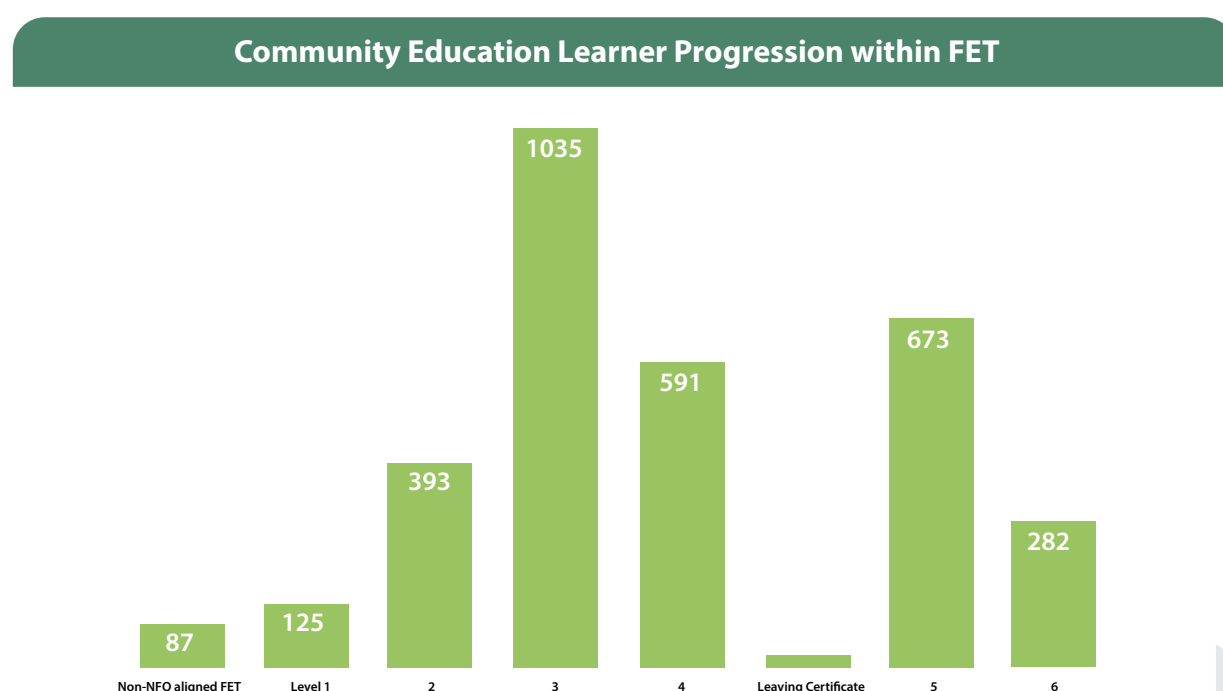
The Lantern Project

Cork ETB and Nano Nagle Place

Target Group / Theme:
Wellbeing and Urban Isolation

In keeping with the vision of the founder of the Presentation Sisters, the Lantern seeks to meet the needs of the local community. Mental Health and isolation are key presenting needs and inspire the Project's offerings. These include courses in arts, crafts, singing, movement and gardening delivered over 6 to 12 weeks in response to learner needs.

Partnership

CETB provides specialised trained tutors to teach the learners in the classes. It also handles all the employment-related administration and paperwork which in turn enables the partner organisation to provide greater focus on both learner recruitment and support.

Community Education Features

✓ It is learner centred and values the experience of the learners.

✓ As a non-formal learning programme, the primary focus is upon engagement, participation along providing both a positive learning environment and learning experience.

✓ Refreshments are always available on site, and this also assists in ensuring an informal communal feel to the course and opportunity for learners to communicate with each other.

✓ The course allows for open-ended participation and offers possibility of progress to other courses, in the centre, and beyond, including more formal courses.

Outcomes and Impacts

Learners meet others with similar interests and can share and learn skills. It specifically and incidentally supports well-being, which keeps people out of the more formal mental health/ health-care systems. People look forward to the programmes, and they always fill up quickly, an indication of how appropriately they meet the needs of the people.

It provides a centre for community engagement, a place where people not only learn but can also come to socialise, or just sit in the sun, in a place where they belong. It has raised the appreciation of its own capacity and skills. It has reduced the need for medical/ mental health interventions in the locality.

ETB FET Approach To
Community Education

Climate Justice Education

City of Dublin ETB

CDETB Adult Education Service recently developed its first Climate Justice Education Strategy. The aim is to deliver high quality climate justice education programmes across a range of subjects to build critical literacy around the climate crisis and just transitions. A two-pronged approach is taken: a) embedding climate topics into existing subjects, b) creating bespoke Climate Justice courses. In 2021, 4 pilot courses were delivered. These courses facilitate learners to learn about climate crisis and to take collective action in their local area, e.g. getting involved in community gardens; Tidy Towns; creating art exhibitions.

Partnership

City of Dublin ETB: developed, designed and delivered this pilot programme within its own adult education centres. From September 2021, CDETB will be working with its community partners to bring Climate Justice Education into the heart of communities across Dublin City.

This course motivated me to be more self-conscious about things I buy; the water and power I use in my daily life, and the waste I produce. My interest in learning more about global warming and climate justice got stronger after this course.

Community Education Features

✓ **Learner centred:** Classes meet people where they are at and facilitate meaningful engagement and appropriate, community-identified solutions to the climate crisis.

✓ **Critical thinking:** The learners are equipped with the basic science of climate change and just transitions and analyse how these intersect with the social issues facing their communities.

✓ **Empowerment and participation:** Through the social action model of education the course facilitates learners to get involved in climate justice initiatives in their local communities

✓ **Social inclusion:** The programme is aimed at communities and learners who are marginalised from national or local dialogues on the climate crisis.

✓ **Social justice:** taking a climate justice approach ensures that the courses focus supporting learners to be involved in a socially just response to the climate crisis, locally and globally.

Outcomes and Impacts

The courses facilitate learners to develop their critical knowledge on the climate crisis and become involved in climate justice initiatives in their communities. Learners develop their voice so they can take part in informed conversations about climate change and just transitions with decision-makers in their local communities. 86% of learners have reported that their knowledge of climate justice issues increased greatly and that they are more likely to take action in their community to address climate change.

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

There is a diversity of Community Education provision across the country, reflecting the bottom-up approach that underpins FET. Notwithstanding the disparate local models, the delivery of Community Education provision is based on a set of shared approaches which are summarised in Figure 17. These are explored in more detail throughout this document, as referenced.

Figure 17. Shared approaches to the Delivery of Community

Values Led

Provision is centred around the values Page 23

Working in Partnership

It is delivered in partnership with community partners Pages 55, 69 & 72

Community Based

It is based in local communities – villages, towns, cities, urban, rural Pages 28 & 56

Rooted in Community

Practitioners have an in-depth understanding of a community's values, culture & circumstances Page 25

Learner Led

Learners are supported to lead on their own learning process based on their need and aspirations Page 19

Equality between tutor and learner

Tutors use dialogical teaching and learning methods which promote equality and mutual respect Page 19

Individual and Collective Learning

Learning is for individual empowerment, as well as collective empowerment at a community and societal level Page 18

Flexible Provision

Flexible approaches are visible across a range of functions Page 29

Wrap-around Learner Supports

The synergy between ETBs and community partners ensure wrap-around supports which address learner needs and support progression Page 61

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Figure 18: Key Stages of ETB FET Community Education Provision

SOLAS allocates €784.5m to ETBs annually for FET. Of this €11m is allocation to Community Education.

Each of the 16 ETBs work in partnership with community partners at grassroots level to plan Community Education provision for the year ahead, based on local needs.

Most provision is organised and hosted by community partners and takes place in local communities, be they geographic communities or communities of interest. Some provision takes place in Adult Education Centres.

Funding/resources are made available to community and voluntary organisations to deliver Community Education based on identified need. In some cases ETBs deliver courses directly in Adult Education Centres.

Provision is open to all, but is particularly responsive to the needs of disadvantaged or socially excluded groups.

Course subjects are varied and include life skills, creative arts, environment / horticulture, health and wellbeing, IT, history, politics, personal development, and work skills, to name but a few.

Provision is outside the formal education setting. Most provision is non-accredited with a small proportion of accredited provision .

Course content is flexible and agile. The non-prescribed curriculum enables tutors, learners and community providers to identify learning objectives and content at course commencement .

Learners are supported by ETBs and community providers to address barriers to participation and to progress towards other FET options, where relevant .

Courses are evaluated to inform improvements in provision and data is collected to analyse learner trends and outcomes.

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

4.1   STAFFING

ETB Community Education staffing structures vary across the country. However, all ETBs have Community Education Facilitator (CEF) posts which report into Adult Education Officers. CEFs have responsibility for managing Community Education provision in their area and coordinate with organisational, community and other stakeholders in this regard. CEFs often work closely with other community-based education programme colleagues to support joined-up approaches to provision and supports. The role of CEFs is described in more detail in Section 1.8.

Many ETBs also have Community Education Resource Workers or equivalent, and administrative staff who support the development and delivery of Community Education locally.

Community Education Tutors

Community Education is delivered in community settings by tutors who are skilled at drawing learners out to create an interactive, informal environment. Tutors use dialogical teaching and employ learning methods which promote equality and mutual respect and which values learners' lived experiences.

Tutors are aware of the power dynamics at work in a learning setting, both inside the learning group and outside it, including their own power in the group. They use facilitative approaches to create an informal, relaxed and sociable setting and to promote mutual support. They are aware of the intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to participation and facilitate learners to access supports to overcome these barriers. Tutors also play a key role in supporting learner progression, both within Community Education and on to other FET opportunities.

4.2   COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Community Education's delivery model is based on partnership between ETBs and the community and voluntary sector. Broadly speaking, there are two different types of community partners involved:

a)   Those in receipt of ETB community education tutor hours, which is sometimes accompanied by a small grant to cover course costs or by teaching and learning materials and resources supplied by ETBs.

b)   Community partners who receive grants (ranging from less than €10,000 to over €1M) to develop and deliver Community Education in specific communities.

Through this partnership approach, ETBs and their community partners facilitate increased localised access to Community Education and wider FET through their extensive reach into and across Irish communities. This hybrid model is based on two sets of complementary resources, as follows:

➢ ETBs have a wide geographic presence with education and training taking place in over 250 FET facilities across the country.

➢ This infrastructure is supplemented and complemented by premises and resources provided through the community and voluntary sector, which has a presence in virtually every community in the country. This adds significant value to ETB FET in terms of reach, accessibility and value for money.

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

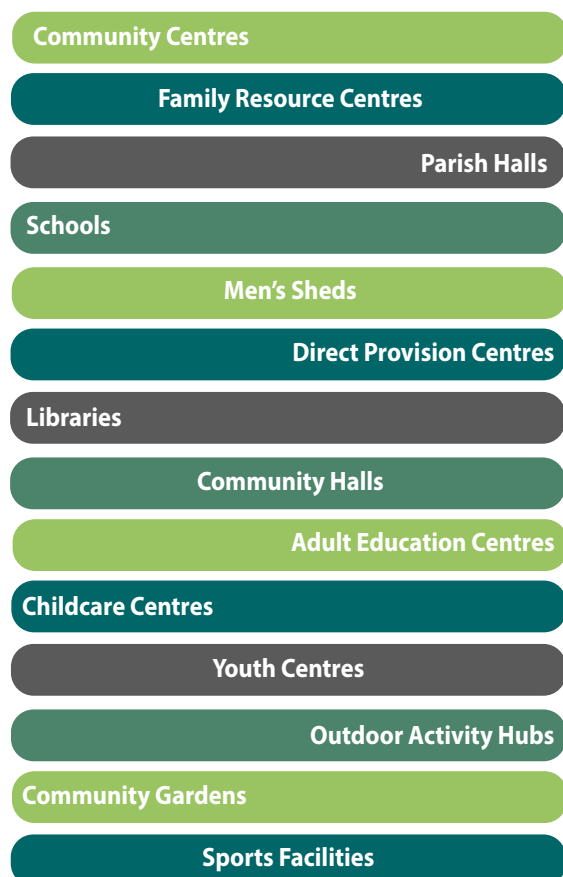**Figure 19.** *Examples of the community-based venues that host Community Education.*

- Community Centres
- Family Resource Centres
- Parish Halls
- Schools
- Men's Sheds
- Direct Provision Centres
- Libraries
- Community Halls
- Adult Education Centres
- Childcare Centres
- Youth Centres
- Outdoor Activity Hubs
- Community Gardens
- Sports Facilities

Figure 19 provides examples of the community-based venues that host Community Education across the country. These venues, be they ETB or community and voluntary sector venues, are also used in the provision of other FET such as Adult Literacy, ESOL, BTEI or LTIs. They often serve as community hubs, offering a range of supports, services and activities to the local community. FET, including Community Education, plays a key role in drawing people into these facilities, thereby promoting social cohesion, combatting isolation and facilitating civic engagement. Furthermore, within the context of Ireland's spatial distribution, and its higher than European average population living in rural areas (31% Ireland; 27% Europe), this hybrid approach to learning venues supports the principle of accessibility and enables citizens to "learn local". It should also be noted that the wide reach of Community Education is further enabled through the availability of public and other buildings, such as libraries, museums, churches, Direct Provision Centres and civic centres.

4.3   TARGET GROUPS

Community Education is open to all but is particularly responsive to the needs of marginalised communities. These communities can be defined as geographic communities – often those with high levels of deprivation or rural isolation – or as communities of interest, generally minority groups or those experiencing social exclusion. Table 5 provides an overview of some of the communities targeted by Community Education:

Table 5. *Overview of some communities targeted by Community Education.*

Older people	Lone parents	Homeless people
Migrant communities	Travellers	Men's Groups
People with disabilities	Women's Groups	People misusing drugs / alcohol
People with mental health issues	LGBTQI+ Groups	People who are ex-offenders
Carers	Climate action groups	Vulnerable youth

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

4.4   COURSES

The range of Community Education courses offered nationwide is extensive. Table 6 presents a selection of courses, using data provided from SOLAS Data Analytics Unit.

Many Community Education courses are of short duration – typically ranging from 6 – 12 weeks. Courses are often tailored to meet learners needs, with flexible curriculum and content. Community partners and tutors are adept are ensuring that courses are responsive and relevant to community need, and often use facilitative approaches to explore learner needs and wants at course commencement.

Table 6. Selection of Community Education Courses, data from SOLAS Data Analytics Unit.

Advocacy
Art & Design
Baking
Cert. in Community Studies
Communication
Conversational Irish Advanced
Cookery
Cultural Awareness
Customer Service
Digital Media QQI L3
Drama
Drawing
ECDL - Online
First Aid

Gardening
Health and Fitness
Horticulture
iPad Training
Internet Skills
IT Computer Literacy
Manual and Computerised Payroll
Mathematics
Mindfulness
Men's Shed Wood Turning
Personal and Interpersonal Skills
Personal Care and Presentation
Pottery
Singing

Social Justice Principles
Special Needs Assisting
Teamworking – Journeys
Textile L3
Tourism with Business
Understanding
Community Development
Technology for Visually Impaired
Upholstery
Visual Art
Woodwork
Yoga
Youth Work

Focus Ireland Creative Gardens

Waterford Wexford ETB and PETE Focus Ireland

Target group: *Currently homeless or identified as at risk of homelessness*

This innovative project sought to combine a general learning course in conjunction with a gardening course and a creative arts course through the services of PETE. PETE customers worked with local artists and gardeners to create a unique space for Focus Ireland customers, staff and visitors to enjoy. It is hoped that the participants can move forward in the community and forge links with groups like Age Action Ireland to share their skills, knowledge and experience whilst contributing to the local community.

Partnership

WWETB: Tuition hours were granted upon application to the Community Education Programme and a small grant was also given by WWETB. This was supplemented with money from Creative Ireland and Waterford City Council. The CEF offered support to the group and the working relationship which was bult up between WWETB and PETE has enabled other creative and empowering projects to come to pass in recent months.

PETE: recruited the learners. Local businesses came on board with materials for this project such as paint, off cuts of wood and tools. Local garden centres donated plants and offered sound advice. Renew Enterprises, and Treo Port Láirge designed and made upcycled garden furniture and creative installations, which added greatly to the garden. It was extremely positive to see Focus Ireland customers engaging with Renew staff and to witness cross agency / community work at its best.

Community Education Features

✓ **Enhancing learning**- benefit of engaging learners in meaningful education, gardening and creative arts programmes, thus providing opportunities for progression.

✓ **Fostering empowerment**-creating an atmosphere where there is more emphasis on dialogue and conversation than the delivery of knowledge and skill

✓ **Contributing to Civic Society**- enabling the participants to improve their skillset and to continue to forge links within their community.

Outcomes and Impacts

As a result of the success of this project, the team was asked to take on the transformation of more gardens for Focus Ireland customers. One single mother noted that the project was a "life-saver for her", as it gave her the mental space to switch off from every day demands – this, coupled with the physical tasks, gave her a new-found energy and sense of purpose. WWETB have continued to support the work of PETE and went on to grant fund a Summer Re-engagement project for young adults who were living alone with their children and who were particularly isolated during the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. PETE were also successful in obtaining a Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage grant which augmented the service they provide by introducing an IT device loan scheme supported by an individual mentoring programme.

Willow Work

Longford Westmeath ETB and Bridgeways Family Resource Centre

Target Group: *Marginalised Women*

This course was organised to celebrate International Women's Day. It was designed to combat isolation during the Covid 19 lockdown by providing a relaxed, fun, learner-centred initiative. The course targeted marginalised women from a range of backgrounds including women retuning to education, Traveller women and women from designated disadvantaged (Clár) areas. Learners made several pieces out of the willow kits provided and learned a traditional skill.

Due to Covid restrictions the course was run online. As many of the women did not have computers, laptops made available to them, funded by the Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund. These laptops made it possible for the women to partake in the classes.

Partnership

Longford Westmeath ETB: LWETB provided the tutor hours and materials for the classes. Funding for laptops was secured by the FRC through the MAEDF which is administered by the ETB. The strong collaboration between LWETB and Bridgeways FRC ensures that they can work together to address inequality of rural Longford.

Bridgeways FRC: The FRC does vital work within the community. Their close ties with the community mean that they act as an important link between LWETB and potential learners. For this course, the FRC provided the learning venue, identified the need, recruited the learners and provided support to the learners to engage in the classes

Community Education Features

✓ **Rooted in Community:** Bridgeways FRC are based in the community and are excellent at identifying local needs. LWETB benefits greatly from this relationship as FRC clients are LWETB our target group.

✓ **Inclusion and Equality:** This course was underpinned by the principles of inclusion and equality.

✓ **Learner Led:** The tutor used a flexible and learner centred approach, based on the needs of the learner.

✓ **Informal Learning:** The classes were delivered in open, friendly, inviting and fun manner.

Outcomes and Impacts

The learners acquired new skills and the course helped to create awareness of International Women's Day. There was camaraderie between the learners which helped to alleviate social isolation during Covid-19 lockdown. Crucially, this course (and others like it) enabled LWETB and Bridgeways FRC to stay in contact with vulnerable women during the Covid crises. In this way, it helped to combat isolation and provided opportunities for Bridgeways FRC to offer other supports to the women during this difficult time.

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

4.5   LEARNER SUPPORTS

The learner profile on page 46 illustrates the diverse learner base of Community Education. There is a richness and complexity to this learner profile which must be served by ETBs and their community partners. This requires an understanding of "the enormous complexity of relationships between learning, life events and the outcomes of learning"[6]. It also requires a capacity to apply appropriate resources and supports (figure 20) to address the barriers faced by many of this diverse learner base in engaging in learning.

Figure 20: Integrated Learner Supports
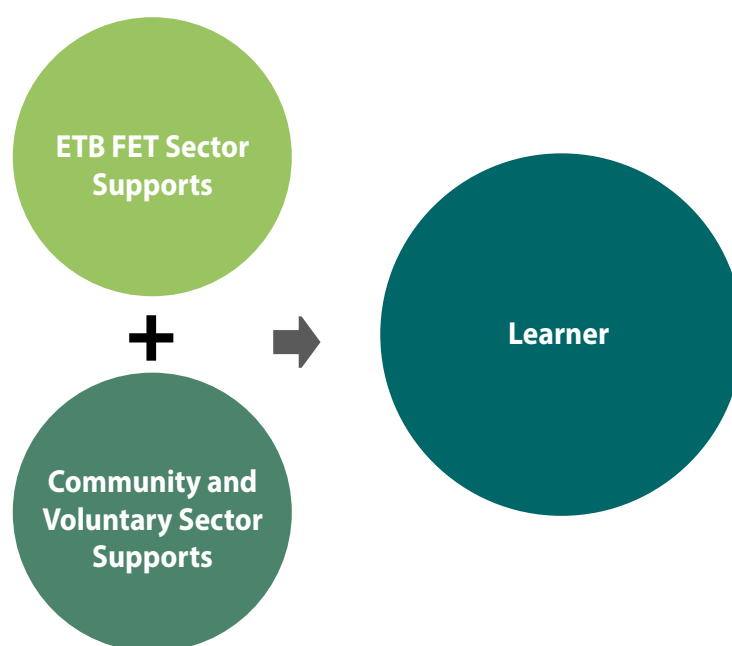
Barriers to Learning

Barriers to learning can be intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic barriers relate to the learner themselves and include physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities, as well as chronic illness and psycho-social factors. Extrinsic barriers are factors which arise outside the learner, but which impact the learning experience, such as family or community factors.

In 2017, SOLAS published a report on barriers to FET – *Barriers to Further Education and Training with Particular Reference to Long Term Unemployed Persons and Other Vulnerable Individuals.* The findings highlight that there are significant challenges encountered by learners from marginalised groups seeking to engage with FET, including young people under 25 years of age, long-term unemployed people, people with disabilities and members of migrant communities. The research found that there are deep-seated socio-cultural barriers which prevent these groups from engaging and participation in FET.
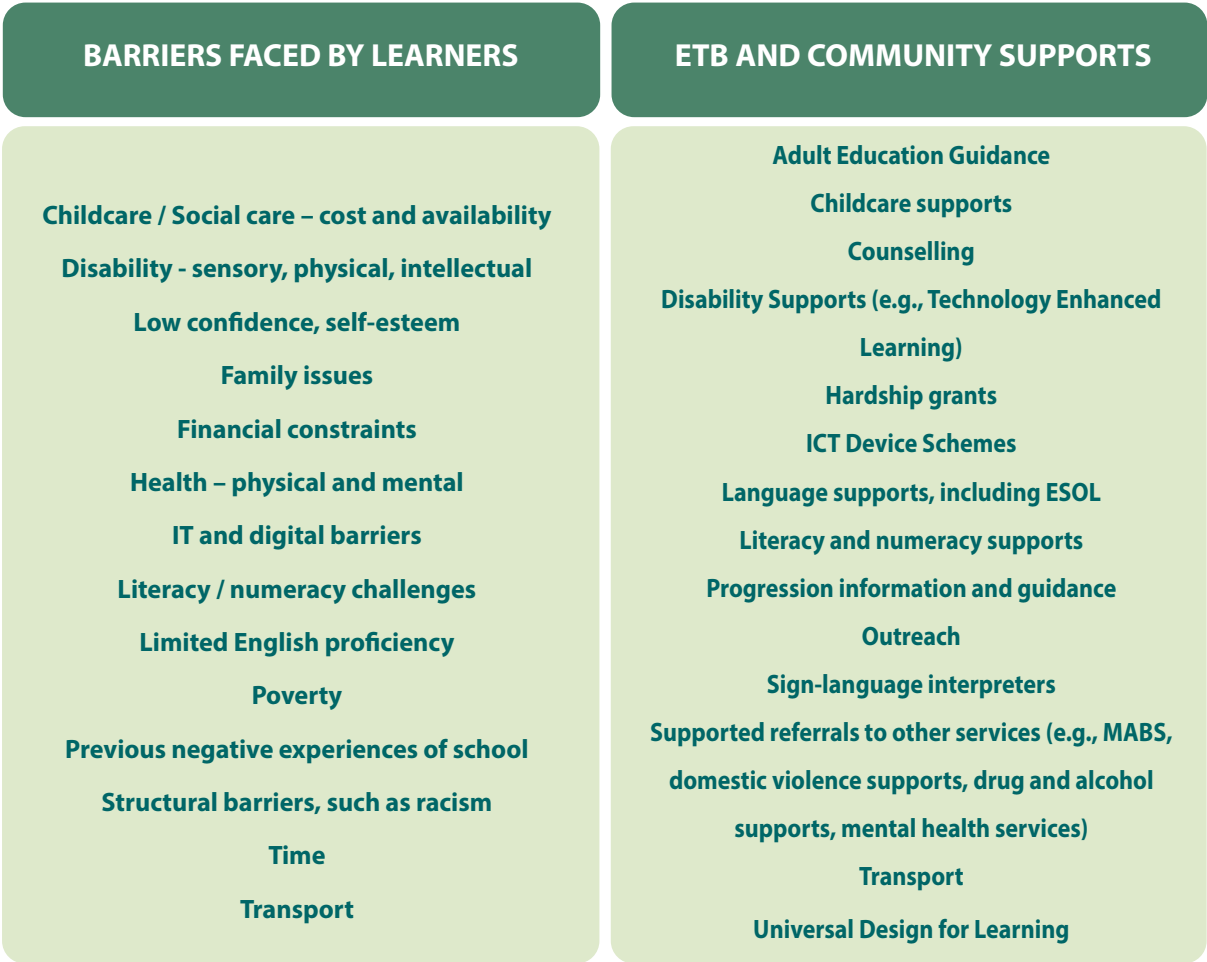
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[6] Feinstein and Hammond 2004

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Reducing Barriers and Supporting Engagement

SOLAS data show that over two-thirds of Community Education learners are in areas experiencing levels of deprivation which are above, or significantly above, average. Working in partnership, ETBs and community partners offer supports and interventions in response to the complex needs which are often associated with deprivation and marginalisation. Practitioners have the requisite knowledge to understand the relationship between deprivation and learning and have the skills and experience to ensure that supports are responsive, relevant and effective.

The synergistic relationship between ETBs and community partners enables each to contribute complementary interventions and initiatives which often work in tandem to provide wrap-around supports. Some learner supports are universal in nature, while others target the needs of particular cohorts or disadvantaged communities using bespoke approaches. While there are variations in the nature and level of supports across the country, the overall aim is to facilitate meaningful learning and development, regardless of circumstances of the individual or group.

Figure 21: Barriers and Supports

BARRIERS FACED BY LEARNERS	ETB AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS
Childcare / Social care – cost and availability	Adult Education Guidance
Disability - sensory, physical, intellectual	Childcare supports
Low confidence, self-esteem	Counselling
Family issues	Disability Supports (e.g., Technology Enhanced Learning)
Financial constraints	Hardship grants
Health – physical and mental	ICT Device Schemes
IT and digital barriers	Language supports, including ESOL
Literacy / numeracy challenges	Literacy and numeracy supports
Limited English proficiency	Progression information and guidance
Poverty	Outreach
Previous negative experiences of school	Sign-language interpreters
Structural barriers, such as racism	Supported referrals to other services (e.g., MABS, domestic violence supports, drug and alcohol supports, mental health services)
Time	Transport
Transport	Universal Design for Learning

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Adult Guidance Services

ETB FET learner supports are provided through a broad range of programmes and services. A critical component of this integrated support process is the Adult Guidance Service which plays a key role in supporting learners to make informed choices relating to education, training and employment. Through one-to-one and group support, this service ensures learners have access to impartial guidance and advice to identify their options and to facilitate learning pathways towards other FET opportunities.

Literacy Supports

As highlighted in Section 1.9, the Adult Literacy Service provides a range of interventions and supports designed to Increase access to education, training and skill development opportunities by introducing language, literacy and numeracy supports across all programmes.

Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund (MAEDF)

The Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund (MAEDF) aims to provide funding to support educationally disadvantaged learners to access and participate in Community Education. The fund was first made available in 2020 with over 500 Community Education projects funded throughout the country. Projects included initiatives to support online learning, projects that supported community connectedness and projects that provided social support to disadvantaged individuals and communities.

The purpose of the MAEDF in 2021 was to assist ETBs and their community partners to increase their capacity to address the decline in participation of disadvantaged learners, particularly those on literacy and basic skills programmes at NFQ Levels 1 to 3. The fund places a strong focus on Community Education as a proven mechanism to support and engage disadvantaged learners. The fund also focuses on building the digital infrastructure of community partners and to build their capacity to deliver blended learning to meet learners' complex needs.
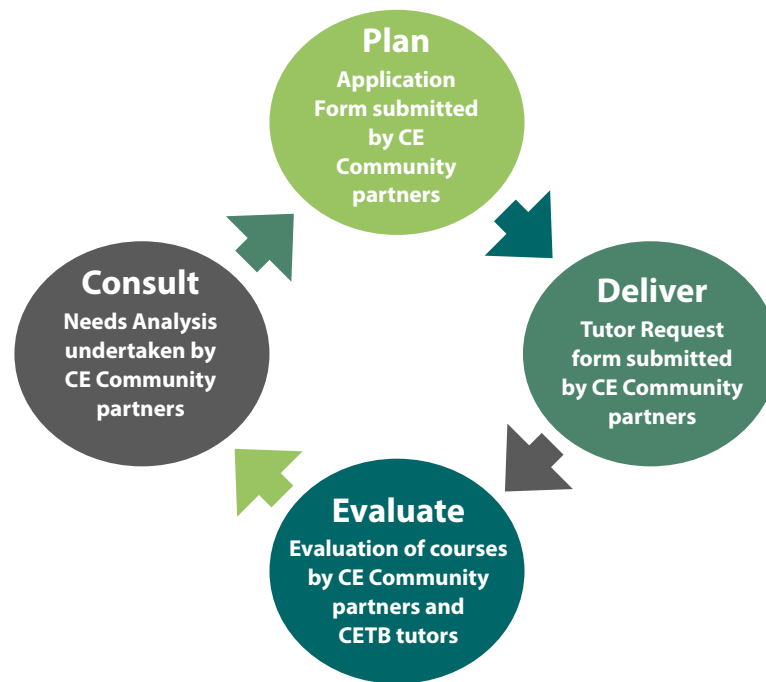
The Community Education in Action models in this report demonstrate MAEDF's versatility and impact. In Limerick and Clare ETB, the Kayaks for Dads course was continued as an NFQ Level 1 Certificate through funding provided by MAEDF. In Waterford Wexford ETB, Focus Ireland was successful in obtaining MAEDF funding to introduce an IT device loan scheme supported by an individual mentoring programme. In Longford Westmeath ETB the fund ensured that marginalised women from diverse backgrounds could participate in the Willow Work course during Covid-19 lockdown by making laptops available to them in their homes.

4.6   QUALITY ASSURANCE

Promoting Quality in Non-Formal Learning

As Community Education is broadly outside the formal education sector, recognition is given to quality assurance approaches used by Community Education practitioners in the design, planning, delivery and review of non-formal learning. Ongoing cyclical self-evaluation regularly takes place in non-accredited courses, as outlined in the sample model below (Figure 22).

Figure 22*: Quality Assurance Model for Non-Accredited Courses.*

This model of non-accredited quality assurance is informed by the following factors:

- Community Education in the context of lifelong learning seeks to place the person at the centre of the learning process by constantly reviewing, reflecting on and evaluating the efficacy of the teaching, learning and assessment process.
- This approach allows for opportunities for Community Education tutors and learners to reflect, feedback and discuss courses with a view to optimising the learning experience and impact.
- Quality assurance processes in Community Education are cognisant of retaining the distinguishing features and approaches of Community Education and recognise its critical role in reaching out to and supporting those most distanced from learning.

Accredited Provision

ETBs are required to have effective Quality Assurance processes in place which must include provision for engagement with external partnerships and second providers including sub-contracting of provision in accordance with the statutory guidelines. In the context of Community Education, ETBs have varying quality assurance arrangements with community partners. In some cases, community partners operate within their own quality assurance procedures. In these cases, they must have in place sufficient resources, as well as corporate, structural and internal quality assurance systems, to sustainably provide FET. In other cases, community partners operate within ETB Quality Assurance systems through a formal arrangement. These arrangements must be monitored and reviewed to assure their effectiveness. ETBS recognise that Quality Assurance processes and procedures should assist Community Education to retain its distinguishing features of equality, partnership and participation.

4.7   UNDERSTANDING AND MEASURING OUTCOMES

SOLAS's Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) provides an integrated approach to the collection and processing of learner data, including programme outputs and outcomes. However, it does not have the capability to capture soft or transversal outcomes. Therefore, while PLSS has the capacity to capture some of Community Education's diverse benefits and outcomes, as described on page 30, it is unable to provide a complete picture of Community Education's role and impact. Given that 25 - 50% of FET learners engage in Community Education, this has a significant implication for ensuring that FET planning and resourcing is informed by robust and thorough analysis.

This challenge is succinctly captured in a 2015 report for Education and Training Boards (ETBI) Ireland relating to the wider benefits of learning stated the following:

"There is substantial Irish and International research evidence that participation in community education and adult literacy programmes has a positive personal and social impact on individuals and communities. These wider benefits include improved confidence and self-esteem, assertiveness, active citizenship, improved health, greater community involvement, preparation for work and a better sense of personal wellbeing. However, these wider outcomes of learning do not currently form part of data reporting requirements at national level, and there are no administrative systems in place to capture and track these outcomes".[8]

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[8] Kett, 2015

CHAPTER 4: ETB FET APPROACH TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

In recognition of this challenge, the National FET Strategy emphasises the need to develop more effective means of measuring softer outcomes. The issue is also reflected in recent ETBI – SOLAS publications:

- The "Vision for Tertiary Education"[9] cites Community Education as a good example "where soft or core skills are central to the aims of increasing social inclusion through empowering individuals and developing communities." It notes that there are sound theoretical perspectives that support the wider benefits of learning and the pedagogical approaches that foster confidence and self-esteem in learners. It emphasises that "often, the most effective skill sets are the transferable and interpersonal ones to equip and empower FET learners to manage various complex situations and engagements outside of work (as well as in work)". It goes on to note that these soft (or core) skills are "over and above the most important set of skills for many ETB learners ….. being highly personalised and central to the wellbeing of many individuals and communities served by ETBs".

- *FET College of the Future Report* sets out that the creation of an integrated FET college will be enabled by a Learner and Performance Centred theme. In this regard, it identifies the learner voice as a key area for development, with a renewed focus on developing and capturing transversal skills development among learners. It states that the FET sector will "develop metrics which can capture and value the range of 'soft' and 'transversal' skills which FET learners have acquired throughout their learning journeys"

ETBI is currently overseeing the development of a framework to capture the wider benefits of learning based on four key outcome areas:

Personal Development

Health and Wellbeing

Family and Community

Education and Employment

This is an important step as it will enable ETBs to capture soft outcomes for the first time, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive analysis of FET inputs, outputs and outcomes. In turn, this will enable ETBs to respond to economic and societal imperatives based on a deeper, evidenced understanding of their role and the impact on learners, communities and society as a whole.

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[9] SOLAS, 2021

The Cultural Champions Project

Cavan & Monaghan ETB, Monaghan Integrated Development, Tusla, ISPCC, Fáilte Isteach, Teach na nDaoine FRC, Clones FRC and members of new communities

Target Group: *New Communities*

Programme partners throughout Monaghan identified a support need for members of new communities in the county. They recognised the importance of agencies having strong relationships with new communities to support early intervention and prevention work with children and families. The purpose of this project was to train Cultural Champions in these new communities to support and assist members of their communities in the Child Protection and Welfare process and to advocate on behalf of them.

Training was provided by CMETB and other agencies to these "Cultural Champions". Training included QQI Level 6 Family Rights Advocacy & Information, Advice & Advocacy Practice, Child Protection & Welfare, Positive Parenting and Best Practice Translation. The Cultural Champions are now equipped with the necessary skills to work with families and to play a vital role in signposting and supporting families to engage positively with state services when dealing with parenting and childcare issues.

Partnership

Cavan & Monaghan ETB Community Education Services: provided Community Education tutors for this programme to deliver the two Level 6 Advocacy modules.

Community Partners: To ensure the project's success, a range of stakeholders were involved in recruiting, funding and supporting the Cultural Champions, providing venues and delivering the training modules. These agencies continue to support the Cultural Champions on a one-to-one basis. CMETB have continued to engage with them for advice on many areas including programmes design for non-nationals and translation support.

Community Education Features

✓ **Collaboration & maximum use of resources:** Excellent model of interagency collaboration - sharing of contacts, resources, funding and expertise

✓ **Needs based:** Driven by specific local need identified at the time

✓ **Social leadership:** Developed the capacity of members of new communities to lead and support others from their community

✓ **Empowerment:** Empowered local communities to affect individual and community change

Outcomes and Impacts

12 participants from 10 countries participated in the programme - from Poland, India, Latvia, Croatia, Syria Arab Republic, Lithuania, Romania, Nigeria, Angola and Sudan. These Cultural Champions gained invaluable qualifications and skills to enable them support and work with vulnerable people in their own community. They support families, accompany them to appointments and act as a translator for state services. For a number of the champions, the programme has led to paid employment. The success of this programme was so remarkable that it was subsequently delivered in Cavan.

CHAPTER **5**

Founded On Partnership

Mná le Chéile *Galway and Roscommon ETB and Mná Le Chéile*

Target Group: *Gaeltacht Women living on an Offshore Island*

Mná Le Chéile was formed in 2007 on Inis Oírr. Co. na Gaillimhe. The group's activities are generally based around sewing and quilting. They have developed a beautiful workshop room, Teach Bríd, to house their classes, materials and meetings. Over the past 14 years, older members have acted as mentors and supporters of newer members, passing on experiences and skills. The group speak of the value of these connections. There is a wide age range of people engaged in their programme who speak Gaeilge and English.

Partnership

Galway and Roscommon ETB: The ETB provides grant funding to the group. In addition, the Community Education Facilitator (CEF) has regular contact with the group to identify other supports needed. The CEF regularly engages with the group and invites them to ongoing training provided by Community Education. The grant from GRETB, on occasion, means that a tutor can travel from the mainland to deliver courses.

Mná le Chéile: The group provides the training venue, identifies their own learning needs, recruits new learners and provide support to each other. The group also organises trips to the mainland. These cultural and educational activities are not only for group members, other Islanders are also welcome and encouraged to participate. The group is aware that they can contact the CEF at any time for any supports required.

Community Education Features

✓ **Nonformal / Informal:** The course is an example of non-formal/informal education for adult learners who are engaged in lifelong learning.

✓ **Needs-Based:** The group survey the needs of its members to ascertain what courses are needed.

✓ **Inclusion:** One of the key principles of the group is to encourage maximum participation and promotion of inclusivity on the island.

✓ **Empowerment:** The group also focuses on providing opportunities for all learners on the island, encouraging empowerment and strengthening the community.

✓ **Flexibility:** Classes are offered both in the mornings and evenings to facilitate the needs of the group. This flexibility allows for a wider engagement with the community as a whole.

Outcomes and Impacts

The group has made a significant impact on individual learners and on the entire community. It is a vital source of integration to newcomers to the island. New residents are actively recruited to the group, and this has a very positive impact for older and newer members. Learners speak of how much they look forward to their classes and meeting people for the cúpan tae.

CHAPTER 5 - FOUNDED ON PARTNERSHIP

5.1   COMMUNITY EDUCATION PARTNERS

The ETB FET sector is underpinned by a strong inclusion and community development ethos, with ETBs collaborating all over the country with agencies and organisations to foster inclusion. Partnership is at the centre of this approach and is vital to enabling people to participate in learning in an accessible, inclusive and supportive manner.

Community Education is founded on partnership. Its funding, planning and delivery is underpinned by collaboration between key stakeholders to ensure a rich learner experience. While a wide range of stakeholders contribute to the design and delivery of Community Education, its key stakeholders are SOLAS, Education and Training Boards and the Community and Voluntary sector. Each of these partners bring skills, expertise and resources which, combined, creates a programme which has the highest learner engagement and retention figures in FET. This symbiotic relationship is illustrated in Figure 23 and expanded upon in this chapter.

Figure 23: *Community Education Key Partners*
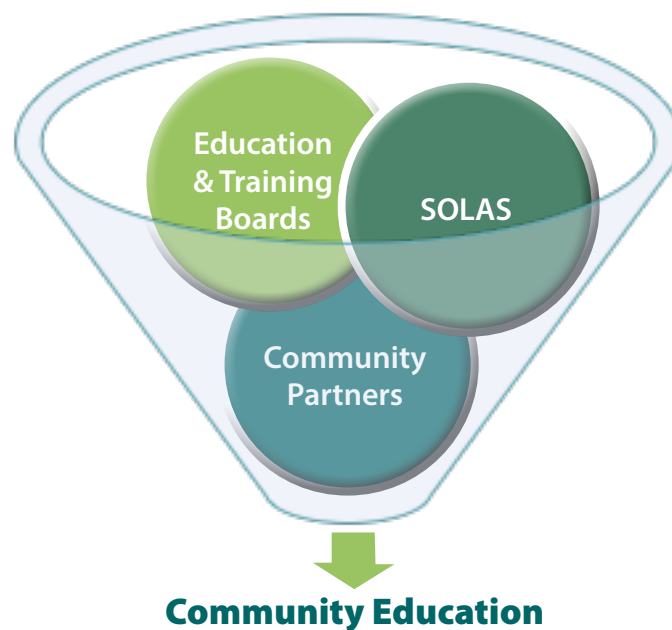
a) **SOLAS** is charged with overseeing the planning, funding and coordination of publicly funded FET in Ireland. It also develops and implements initiatives that support the development of a strong FET sector. SOLAS provides annual grants to the country's 16 ETBS to enable the provision of FET and to support FET infrastructure development.

b) **ETBs** are the statutory education authorities with responsibility for further education and training. They manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, pilot community national schools and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes.

c) **Community Partners** are non-profit organisations, independent of ETBs, that deliver community supports and services at local level. They partner with ETBs to provide Community Education and other FET through an extensive network of community facilities. They deploy their resources, infrastructure, networks and local knowledge to respond to local needs.

CHAPTER 5 - FOUNDED ON PARTNERSHIP

## 5.2   SOLAS CONTRIBUTION TO FET AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

In addition to funding the ETB FET sector, as detailed in Chapter 3, SOLAS administers a range of national systems, services and strategies that support the sector's development. Key examples in this regard include:

- SOLAS holds Strategic Performance Agreements with each individual ETB to create a transparent relationship between SOLAS and the ETBs that reflects Government and sectoral strategies.
- In 2020, SOLAS published a new FET Professional Learning and Development Statement of Strategy with the aim of enhancing the skills of those involved in the delivery, administration and management of FET.
- In response to the Covid-19 crises, SOLAS made courses temporarily available free of charge on its eCollege online learning service. In relation to digital transformation, the SOLAS Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Support Unit works closely with the FET sector to embed technology within provision.
- The Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS) is a joint initiative between SOLAS and ETBI. It is an ICT system which provides a suite of tools for FET providers to manage and administer the programmes they offer. PLSS is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the sector, including introducing new functionality to improve the data collection and user experience.

5.3   ETB FET CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

ETBs are the largest funders of Community Education provision in the country. However, their contribution to Community Education extends significantly beyond the funding, grants and tutor-hours which resource Community Education annually. Funding is supplemented by a wide range of supports, services and initiatives which contribute to a vibrant and successful sector with quality provision and diverse learner outcomes. The range of ETB FET's contribution to Community Education is illustrated in Figure 24 and expanded upon below.

Figure 24: Range of ETB FET Contribution to FET
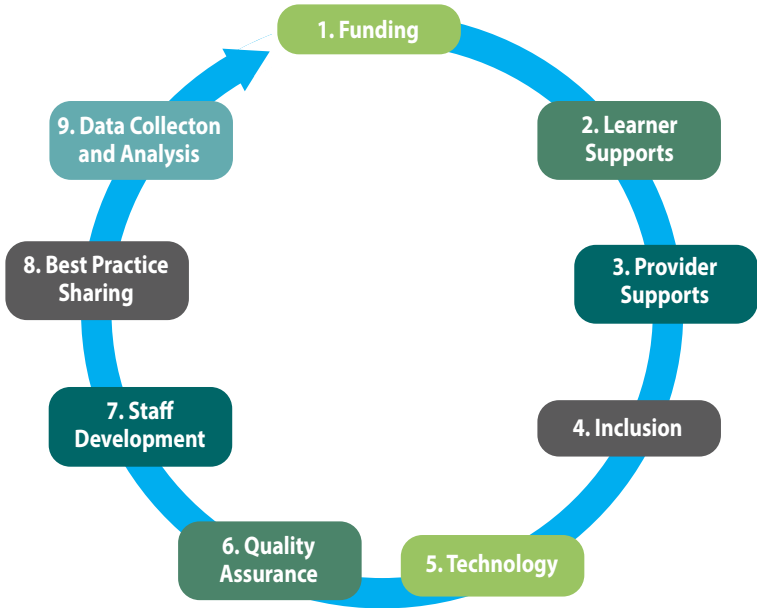
CHAPTER 5 - FOUNDED ON PARTNERSHIP

1) **Funding:** Chapter 3 provides an overview of SOLAS' annual allocation to FET and a breakdown of the allocation per provision, showing that ETBs were allocated €11.5m in 2020 for Community Education provision. In turn, individual ETBs allocate funding to community partners to deliver Community Education utilising one or more funding mechanism:
   - allocation of grants to community partners to recruit tutors
   - allocation of ETB tutor hours to deliver specific courses
   - allocation of core funding

   In a very small number of cases, ETBs utilise a portion of the SOLAS funding to directly provide Community Education in ETB Adult Education Centres.

2) **Learner Supports:** ETBs provide a broad range of integrated supports and resources to facilitate learner engagement, retention and progression in FET. These are outlined and analysed in Section 4.5. As the nature and scope of support varies across provision and across individual ETBs, the National FET Strategy commits to addressing inconsistencies to ensure that consistent and integrated support is offered to all learners in all FET settings.

3) **Provider Supports:** ETBs provide technical assistance and other supports to community partners in order to facilitate good practice in the organising and delivery of provision.

4) **Inclusion:** FET ensures that supports are available to enable any individual, regardless of background or formal education level, an opportunity to learn and develop. In this regard, it provides a wide range of learner supports and services, as outlined in Section 4.5. ETBs also work to foster inclusion through the continual development of innovative initiatives and supports. Most recently, the publication of the Conceptual Framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for the Irish FET sector aims to increase access to equal learning opportunities within the mainstream teaching environment.

5) **Technology:** ETBs continually develop their digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning, assessment and the delivery of support services. In the context of Community Education, technology is increasingly deployed to support marginalised cohorts to participate in learning in an accessible and learner-centred manner. This was particularly evident during the Covid-19 crises when online learning and engagement was prioritised by practitioners to reach out to vulnerable and isolated people.

6) **Quality Assurance:** ETBs promote the delivery of quality FET through quality assurance processes. They support staff and community partners to embed appropriate, learner-centred quality assurance systems.

7) **Staff Development:** Through consistent training and professional development, ETBs support staff to enhance their skills to ensure the effective delivery, administration and management of Community Education.

8) **Best Practice:** ETBs support good practice in the design and delivery of Community Education through information-sharing, networking, research and technical supports.

9) **Data Collection:** ETBs undertake data collection and analysis to better understand learner needs, to identify trends and to inform the evaluation and improvement of provision. The PLSS system enables ETBs to manage the applicant and learner lifecycle.

CHAPTER 5 - FOUNDED ON PARTNERSHIP

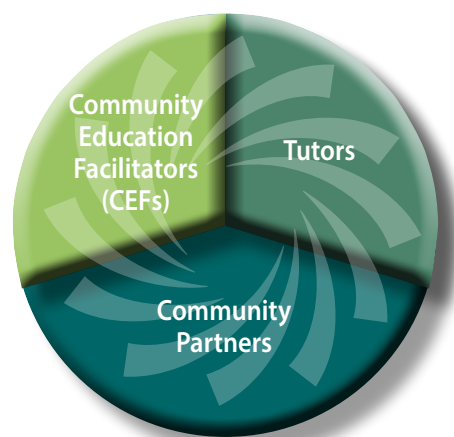## 5.4   COMMUNITY PARTNERS CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Section 4.2 describes how ETBs work in collaboration with community partners to deliver Community Education in almost every community in Ireland.

1)   Community Education is hosted by community partners in local community facilities, with a focus on providing accessible, relaxed and informal settings.

2)   ETB FET funding of Community Education is often augmented by community partners through "benefit-in-kind" generated by signifcant voluntary activity, as well as through learner fees and philanthropic contributions.

3)   Community partners are rooted in the community and have a robust understanding of and appreciation for local contexts and community needs. Through long-standing local networks and relationships, they are well positioned to engage with potential learners. This "pre-development" role is often initiated through informal conversations, casual engagements and spontaneous contacts. Pre-development work is a fundamental feature of Community Education and is resource intensive, requiring time, skills and local knowledge.

4)   Community partners help learners to identify barriers to their engagement and provide direct supports to address these barriers or refer learners to other supports (see also Section 4.5 "Learner Supports") They support learners to create and navigate personal development pathways and/or to identify progression to other learning opportunities, within FET or beyond.

5)   Community partners often coordinate with each other to schedule and promote Community Education classes locally, thereby minimising duplication and optimising learner engagement.

6)   Community partners develop and maintain links with other services that support people who are distanced from education (such as homeless or drug and alcohol services). These alliances help them to "keep their finger on the pulse", to understand community needs and to identify pathways for vulnerable cohorts into Community Education and other FET provision.

Figure 25: Key Practitioner Roles

5.5   PRACTITIONER PARTNERSHIP

The commitment of Community Education practitioners to delivering quality, responsive provision is clear. While there are a range of practitioners involved in provision, this paper highlights three roles that play key roles in the effective management and delivery of Community Education – Community Education Facilitators, Tutors and Community Partners (see pages 32 & 55).

Introduction to the Practice of Mindfulness

Louth Meath ETB and MS Ireland Louth Meath Branch

Target Group: *Disability Group*

This course is an introduction to the practice of mindfulness for people living with Multiple Sclerosis. Learners explore the techniques and practices of mindfulness. They familiarise themselves with the tools available (such as breathing and the senses) to become more aware of their ability to focus and to calm a busy mind.

Learners also have the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings and to develop their own personal daily practice as the weeks progress.

The partnership between the ETB and MS Ireland enabled outreach to learners who wouldn't necessarily engage otherwise. This forge between partners facilitated people to engage in a positive learning experience and to gain practical skills, which sometimes lead to progression into other areas of FET.

Partnership

Louth Meath ETB: Tuition hours are granted upon application to the Community Education Programme. Support from the Community Education Facilitator is always offered to each group, whether through help in recruiting learners or accommodating groups with specific requirements. Integrated learner support is offered through the Adult Guidance Service who links with each group to make them aware of various opportunities and services within the FET sector

Community Partners: MS Ireland (Louth Meath Branch) were responsible for securing venues, Covid restrictions permitting. They also identified the individual needs of the group, recruited learners and secured tuition based on those need. Mindfulness was highly sought after this year due to the global pandemic.

Community Education Features

✓ **Respect and Compassion:** The aim is to create a relaxing space for everyone to feel safe and, for that period of time, to focus only on themselves.

✓ **Accessibility:** With all activities moving online due to Covid, tuition has never been more accessible for most learners. Learners were offered I.T. supports to ensure they could participate and engage.

✓ **Flexibility:** The course is flexible and continually adapted to meet learner needs

✓ **Empowerment:** Learners are supported to accept things as they find them and to respond in a non-judgemental and gentle manner. It focuses on the practice of loving kindness and how to be a good friend to ourselves and others.

Outcomes and Impacts

Learners commented on how mindfulness practice has positively impacted on their lives and how Community Education courses act as an outlet for them. They have gained practical skills from engaging in these courses and continue to utilise the skills in their daily activities. The group has expressed great gratitude towards the mindfulness tuition and the tutor.

SPOTLIGHT ON GOOD PRACTICE

Building the Capacity of Community Partners

Galway Roscommon ETB (GRETB) places a strong emphasis on supporting its community partners to deliver high quality Community Education. The Community Education Service works with Local Development Companies to support community partners to progress from providing Community Education using tutor hours to a more empowering model of using grant funding; grants offer partners the freedom to apply for funding, source and employ tutors, and manage and report on funding. GRETB Community Education Facilitators work with Local Development Companies to identify community partners' needs, provide mentoring and build their capacity to manage ETB funding. Community partners are offered an opportunity to participate in a training programme aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills in this regard. Programme content includes: funding applications and reporting, conflict management, committee skills, strategies to re-engage people post-Covid19. This model of capacity building has resulted in the emergence of new community partners and has increased the capacity of existing ones. From an ETB perspective, the model is vital to ensuring that GRETB works effectively with the local community to deliver Community Education.

Promoting Coordination and Collaboration

Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN) is a network of community education partners in Limerick City. Funded and supported by Limerick and Clare ETB (LCETB), it represents 15 community organisations and 3000 learners. LCEN's vision is that all learners, including those experiencing social or economic exclusion, have access to quality learning opportunities in their own community. It works collectively to share good practice, avoid duplication and to raise awareness of the role and value of Community Education. It also supports its member in the provision of Quality Assured Community Education. In 2021, LCEN, LCETB and Learning Limerick undertook a citywide project to keep learners connected with Community Education and with each other during Covid-19. The Self-Portrait Project encompassed the essence of Community Education and enabled those who had previously been in community-based classes to continue their involvement in a supportive and inclusive manner. Learners were asked to create their own self-portrait in an art/craft medium of their choice. Fifty learners from diverse backgrounds participated in the project. The Self-Portraits were exhibited in a virtual gallery during Limerick's Lifelong Learning Festival in May 2021, with a walk-in self-portrait exhibition taking place in late September.

Promoting and Celebrating Community Education

Waterford and Wexford ETB's promotional video, "A Place to Go", tells the story of Community Education in Waterford and Wexford and showcases the quality and diversity of its provision. It brings viewers into community centres and adult learning venues across the region and celebrates Community Education's informality and flexibility - people talking, doing things in groups, a sense of warmth and homecoming. Learners articulate how Community Education has "changed their lives", "is the best thing I ever did" and how it helps to combat boredom, isolation, loneliness and depression. The video emphasises that Community Education supports people that might not have had a chance to develop themselves through formal learning and that it creates a space for people to articulate their perception of the world and to do new things. It supports people to voice their needs and concerns in a collaborative manner and has the capacity to create meaningful discussion about individual and societal issues. It describes the benefits of Community Education – the physical, mental and social benefit of interacting with other people – and its powerful contribution to people living meaningful, flourishing lives. "*I'm going to make it, now I know, I have found a place to go, where I feel good, watch me grow".*

Community Education Toolkit

Donegal Community Education Support Programme and Donegal Community Education Forum worked together to produce a toolkit with information for providers, tutors and participants. The toolkit was produced in response to a key recommendation of Purpose, People, Process: Community Education in Donegal 2018, which was commissioned by Donegal ETB to capture the status of Community Education in the county. The toolkit aims to support all who work in Community Education and to build on its collaborative nature to the benefit of all parties. It emphasizes that Community Education and Community Development have shared objectives and overlap significantly in their underpinning philosophies of the collective empowerment of participants. It highlights that, Community Education has become one of the principal mechanisms used in Community Development to tackle exclusion and to achieve a range of beneficial societal outcomes. The toolkit provides a wide range of practical and useful information on subjects such as funding, courses, delivery, participation, meeting learner needs, evaluation, legislation, quality assurance and good governance. In 2020, the tutor section was published as a stand-alone resource.

Woodwork QQI Level 3

Kildare and Wicklow ETB, and Tiglin Challenge

Target Group:
Men in recovery from addiction

Tiglin provide a 9-month residential programme and 7-month reintegration programme offering practical and academic training while equipping individuals to live a life beyond addiction.

This programme aims to provide access to a supported, skills-based education programme, offered at NFQ Level 3 to support those recovering from addiction to reintegrate into their family and society. The aim is to equip learners with skills, knowledge and competence to use power and hand tools to complete a woodwork.

This Woodwork module 3N0589 may be used to complete the Level 3 QQI Certificate in Employability Skills major award 3M0935. A majority of the learners have low educational attainment and have had previous negative educational experiences.

Partnership

Tuition hours are provided by the Community Education Programme. A collaborative approach is achieved through regular contact between the CEF, the tutor and Tiglin staff. The course is delivered at a KWETB FET Centre close to Tiglin, with Tiglin providing bus transport from the residential centre to the FET centre. The FET centre provides a purpose-built woodwork room, tools and equipment. The cost of materials is covered by the Community Education Programme. The group were assessed by KWETB Adult Basic Education (ABE) Service to identify learner supports required.

Community Education Features

✓ Promotes social inclusion by responding to the needs of a group experiencing addiction issues and previous educational disadvantage.

✓ The tutor *operate from an ethos of inclusivity and equality* and provides a learner centred environment, building trust with the group and encouraging respect amongst the group.

✓ Encouragement of peer learning and group discussion in the classroom setting and facilitating participation in a group educational setting.

✓ The assessment method for this module is mainly by skills demonstration (80%) and this practical aspect of the course is attractive to the target group.

✓ Provision of literacy and numeracy supports to the group through integration with KWETB ABE service supports the learners with the required written and numeracy elements of the course.

Outcomes and Impacts

This positive educational experience can contribute to the rehabilitative process by increasing personal confidence and self-motivation. Achievement of certification provides options and pathways for future education and/or employment. Learners have reported a huge sense of satisfaction and pride when they complete their wooden artefacts. Certification is highly valued and inspires confidence in their ability to progress to further learning and/or employment opportunities. Positive inter-generational effects have been reported by learners, speaking of the pride in showing their certificate to their children and extended family members. Practical Woodwork skills learnt have been used subsequently by the group in their daily lives. The enduring comment from the students was that they loved being in a stimulating environment outside of their centre where they could be creative and have a feeling of normality and achievement.

A Vision For The Future of Community Education

CHAPTER 6: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

6.1   ENSURING A VALUES-LED APPROACH

ETBs must navigate the future of Community Education within the context of several complex and, sometimes, competing factors. These include:

-        Learner needs

-        Available resources

-        National FET Strategy priorities

-        National economic imperatives

-        Societal imperatives

The core values of FET and sub-values of Community Education, as described on pages 22 & 23, , and in the Definition Framework on page 6, will provide ETBs with a strategic compass for navigating these factors. They will act as guiding principles for ETBs in cementing Community Education's role as a "critical part" of FET provision. They will help ensure that FET realises its vision of "empowering learners to participate fully in society and to become active citizens and drive vibrant and diverse communities"[10]. These values will be woven into all aspects of Community Education provision – its planning, resourcing, delivery, supports, quality assurance, measuring, outcomes analysis and impact assessment. This will ensure that the distinguishing features and benefits of Community Education (page 28) will be fully harnessed for maximum impact.

Figure 26 captures how these values will be applied in practice by ETBs as guiding principles in the provision of Community Education.

Figure 26: Application of Values to Community Education Provision

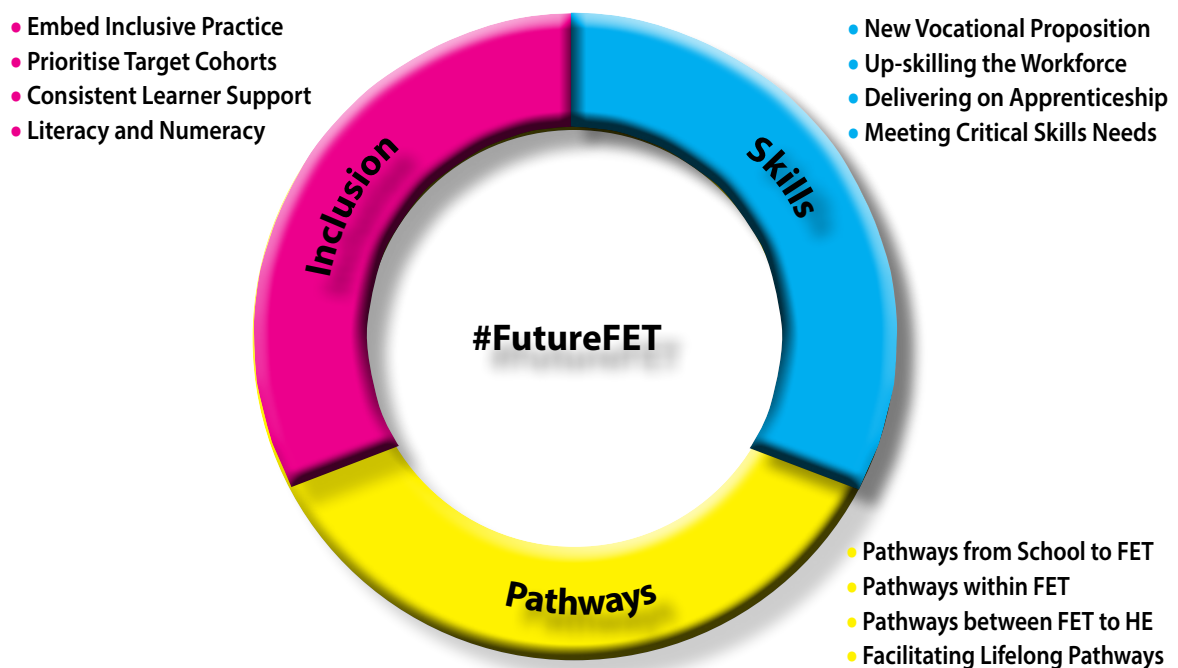| Lifelong Learning	Social Justice	Active Citizenship	Economic Prosperity
Promoting the role of non-formal education in lifelong learning	Advancing social justice principles to promote inclusion and equality	Facilitating learning for active citizenship	Promoting active inclusion to support of skills development
Learner-Led	**Partnership**	**Participatory**	**Group-Focused**
Enabling learners to lead their own learning towards autonomy and empowerment	Supporting meaningful partnership with community partners	Optimising participation through dialogical teaching and learning method	Promoting collective learning towards community cohesion

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[10] National FET Strategy, p. 36

CHAPTER 6: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

6.2 COMMUNITY EDUCATION'S ROLE IN ACHIEVING THE NATIONAL FET STRATEGY'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The FET ETB sector has developed significantly since ETBs were created in 2013. The first FET National Strategy (2014 – 2019) focused on setting clear strategic direction, building partnerships and strengthening organizational effectiveness. The current strategy (2020 – 2024) focuses on strengthening the way in which ETB FET services are structured, funded and delivered. In this context, the strategy sets out three Strategic Priorities for FET's future development:

Fostering Inclusion	Building Skills	Creating Pathways

Figure 27: Three Strategic Priorities for FET's future development

Inclusion
- Embed Inclusive Practice
- Prioritise Target Cohorts
- Consistent Learner Support
- Literacy and Numeracy

Skills
- New Vocational Proposition
- Up-skilling the Workforce
- Delivering on Apprenticeship
- Meeting Critical Skills Needs

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Pathways
- Pathways from School to FET
- Pathways within FET
- Pathways between FET to HE
- Facilitating Lifelong Pathways

Community Education is well positioned to contribute towards realising these priorities and has a particular role to play in "Fostering Inclusion". The ongoing growth and development of Community Education in the FET sector will strengthen this role in supporting inclusion, developing skills – particularly transversal skills - and facilitating learning pathways.

CHAPTER 6: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Fostering Inclusion

Community Education has a demonstrated track record of successfully engaging priority target cohorts, including people with disabilities, members of the migrant communities, Travellers, the long-term unemployed, ex-offenders and women returners. With the highest retention and completion rates in FET, Community Education is uniquely positioned to foster inclusion. Indeed, *the FET College of the Future* envisages the development of a collaborative vision for inclusion with "current best practice in community education and related sectors" becoming the norm in embedding inclusive practice across the FET sector.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) will also play a key role in fostering inclusion. Its principles and approaches complement those of Community Education in supporting equal access to, and engagement in, learning. Both Community Education and UDL provide for flexibility and enhancements in the way learners are engaged and barriers to participation are reduced. Indeed, Community Education practitioners deploy the inclusive practices outlined in the UDL's "Simple Inclusion Pyramid", i.e., inclusive, responsive and flexible pedagogical design and delivery; group supports based on identified need; intensive individual supports. Furthermore, UDL values promote intent and acceptance.

Technology also offers significant potential to strengthen Community Education's reach and to widen access to the most marginalised groups, particularly those in rural areas, those with limited mobility and those with caring or other constraints. Case studies in this paper demonstrate the success of technology in reaching vulnerable and isolated people during the Covid-19 crises. There is an opportunity to build on this success over the coming years through appropriate resourcing and supports. However, a key challenge will be to ensure that technology itself is not allowed to become a barrier to engagement and participation.

In the context of Community Education's synergistic relationship with the community and voluntary sector, there is potential to optimise this relationship to support greater inclusion of marginalised individuals and communities. This relationship is vital to facilitating accessible, inclusive and supported learning. The contribution of the community and voluntary sector – in terms of skills, expertise, resources, infrastructure, local knowledge and long-standing relationships within and across communities – plays a pivotal role in Community Education's success in terms of learner engagement and retention. In this regard, the continued growth and development of the community and voluntary sector will be essential to realising FET's strategic priority of fostering inclusion.

Creating Pathways

The National FET Strategy commits to developing clearer learning pathways to facilitate learners to navigate their personal learning journey with more ease and confidence. Community Education acts a first step for many on this pathway and fosters a range of disparate personal, community, economic and societal outcomes which are reflective of the diverse learner profile. Community Education practitioners – CEFs, tutors, community partners – play a pivitol role in supporting learners to identify their options, assess their choices and in facilitating pathways towards diverse outcomes.

CHAPTER 6: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The capacity of Community Education to facilitate diverse outcomes along *wider* pathways is also relevant here. In this regard, the current SOLAS / ETBI initiative to pilot an approach to capture the wider benefit of learning across fours domains (Personal Development; Health and Wellbeing; Family and Community; Education and Employment) is important. This will enable ETBs to capture soft outcomes for the first time, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive analysis of FET inputs, outputs and outcomes. This, in turn, will enable ETBS to identify how best to deploy its resources to facilitate progression along these wider pathways.

Building Skills

Research shows that success in FET often stems from non-formal, non-accredited provision which facilitates learner to develop transversal of "soft" skills[11]. These are categorised by UNESCO within the following categories:

1. Critical and innovative thinking
2. Interpersonal skills
3. Intrapersonal skills
4. Global citizenship
5. Media and information literacy
6. Others, such as problem solving, communication, teamwork and leadership.

Community Education often focuses on developing soft skills and on achieving outcomes relating to the UNESCO categories above.

Community Education also contributes to the National Skills Strategy which refers to transversal skills as being "ever more important to an individual's successful and sustainable employment". These skills are critical to enabling people to move between jobs and careers, to participate in lifelong education and training and also to improve the flexibility and competitiveness of the labour market. Likewise, Ireland's Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025, *Our Rural Future,* highlights the importance of transversal skills, such as communication skills, organisational skills, self-motivation, as being increasingly important for work in all sectors.

6.3   DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

The development of a Community Education Framework will provide an opportunity to strengthen the important role played by Community Education. The framework will aim to ensure a more consistent approach to provision while retaining the flexible, participative, grassroots approaches that are at the heart of Community Education. It will facilitate a more consistent approach to resourcing; more consistent and integrated learner supports; enhanced sharing of good practice; clearer learner pathways; the gathering of basic learner data; and more appropriate approaches to capturing outcomes and learner achievements. The framework will be developed in partnership with key stakeholders, including SOLAS, ETBs, community partners, learners and other relevant stakeholders (such as Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Department of Rural and Community Development, Pobal, Aontas and the Wheel).

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[11] Aontas, 2013

The National FET Strategy notes that "while the strength of community education must remain a 'ground up' approach, FET does need to ensure that there is general support for good ideas and projects across the system, and that communities benefit in the same way from financial and other support regardless of where they are based". The strategy suggests seven core principles as a starting point for developing the framework. These are outlined in figure 28. This position paper aims to inform the framework's development by providing a frame of reference for ETB FET Community Education in terms of values, distinguishing features, practice and outcomes.

Figure 28: *Seven Core Principles for establishing a Community Education Framework*

6.4   ENABLING THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

ETBs will utilise the following enabling factors to promote the continued development and growth of Community Education. By applying these enabling factors, Community Education's contribution to the strategic priorities of the National FET Strategy will be optimised. Crucially, it will also ensure that Community Education is well positioned to play a key part in supporting and advancing FET's evolving role in Ireland's social cohesion and development, as described in the national strategy.

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[11] Aontas, 2013

CHAPTER 6: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

1	**Utilising its Core Values as Guiding Principles**	ETBs will ensure that FET Community Education is underpinned by the values outlined in page 23. These values will act as principles to guide all aspects of Community Education provision
2	**Supporting Community Partners**	ETBs will value and support the pivitoal role of the diverse network of community partners across the country. ETBS will work to strenghten this partnership and to support a vibrant community and voluntary sector
3	**Ensuring a Robust and Consistent Resource Framework**	ETBs will ensure that Community Education's funding framework enables its continued growth and development, with a view to ensuring that learners and communities benefit consistently from ETB funding and other supports.
4	**Understanding Learner and Community Needs**	ETBs will collaborate with community partners to ensure best-practice approaches to engaging learners and communities. This will ensure responsive, bottom-up provision based on evidenced local need
5	**Supporting Learners**	ETBs will strengthen collaboration with community partners to enable integrated approaches to supporting learners by responding to intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning
6	**Promoting Quality**	ETBs will support high quality Community Education provision by embedding quality assurance systems that complement and preserve the distinguising features and approaches of Community Education
7	**Facilitating Flexibility and Responsiveness**	ETBs will ensure that Community Education's processes and systems are streamlined and efficient and that they are aligned to Community Education's values and approaches
8	**Integrated Pathways**	ETBs will ensure that there are integrated pathways to link learners to learning pathways within Community Education and to other FET and HE opportunities
9	**Facilitating Ongoing Professional Development**	ETBs will ensure Community Education practitioners are equipped with the requisite skills and tools to ensure excellence in provision based on Community Education's distinct pedagogy.
10	**Capturing and Valuing Outcomes**	ETBs will capture and highlight Community Education learner outcomes, ensuring that outcome measurement processes capture both hard and soft outcomes, reflecting the ethos and approaches of Community Education

CONCLUSION

The National FET Strategy envisages an evolving role for FET "which is cognisant of the broader purpose of learning and goes beyond meeting the needs of the economy". It notes that "FET also facilitates personal development, vibrant and integrated communities, and a commitment to social justice that defines Ireland today. This must continue to remain a core part of its fabric". Community Education is well positioned to support this evolving role. Its roots are based in the ethos of social justice and its approaches prioritise personal and community development outcomes. It attracts the highest learner footfall across FET provision and has the highest engagement and retention rates. Furthermore, Community Education is recognised in the FET Strategy as being "critical" to provision and is highlighted in the *FET College of the Future* as having best practice in fostering inclusion, with a robust track-record of engaging groups most distanced from learning.

The development of framework by ETBI to capture the wider benefits of learning will be pivotal to harnessing the strengths of Community Education. It will enable ETBs to capture soft outcomes in a systematic manner for the first time, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive analysis of FET inputs, outputs and outcomes. This, in turn, will enable ETBs to respond to societal and economic challenges based on a more robust and complete understanding of FET's broad role and impact on learners, communities and society.

Finally, the development of a Community Education Framework presents a significant opportunity to optimise the role and value of Community Education by utilising Community Education's unique strengths to position it as a key driver of Ireland's social development into the future.

Community Leadership Project

Donegal ETB, Inishowen Development Partnership and Donegal Local Development Company

The Community Leadership Project aimed to facilitate collaboration by strengthening relationships and provide training opportunities for community leaders in Donegal. It was funded under the EU's PEACE IV programme and managed by Donegal County Council as part of its "Building Positive Relations" programme.

It enabled 69 participants from 10 community hubs to avail of training in leadership skills; ethical and power dimensions within groups; social analysis concepts including power, discrimination, prejudice, racism, multiculturalism, sectarianism, interculturalism, globalisation; and actions needed to promote change at both community and national level. The programme also included two structured cross-community/ diversity events which brought participants from different hubs together and provided opportunities for shared learning and dialogue.

Partnership

The Community Leadership Project was successfully developed and delivered through collaboration between a range of stakeholders committed to promoting peace and reconciliation in Donegal. These included **Donegal ETB, Donegal County Council, Donegal Local Development CLG** and **Inishowen Development Partnership**.

Match funding was provided by the Executive Office in Northern Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland.

Community Education Features

✓ **Community Cohesion:** The programme was characterised by respect and aimed to support communities to live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

✓ **Inclusion and Diversity:** The programme aimed to facilitate an environment where cultural diversity was respected and celebrated across communities.

✓ **Empowerment:** The programme aimed to build the capacity of community leaders in areas that suffered from the legacy of The Troubles.

Outcomes and Impacts

The project enhanced participants understanding of other cultures within their local communities and increased their awareness of stereotyping, sectarianism and discrimination, including integration of migrants and disability rights. From a sustainability perspective, the Community Education Network has been enlarged and strengthened; a community leadership curriculum resource pack is available and participants are keen to continue their learning through engagement with FET services. In addition, the programme set up a network of voluntary and statutory organisations which is a lasting legacy of the project. It continues to support the educational and developmental needs of the community and to build positive relationships between communities.

85

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