Purpose People Process

Community Education in Donegal 2018

Purpose, People, Process

*Community Education
in Donegal 2018*

Donegal Community Education Forum

The Community Education Forum in its current format was established in 2016 by Donegal ETB's Further Education and Training (FET) Service.

Forum members

Community and Voluntary Sector

• Cairde le Chéile	James McClean
• Sliabh Sneacht Centre	Gabriel Doherty
Donegal County Council	Charles Sweeney
Donegal ETB	Cróna Gallagher, Martina Needham, Catherine Friel and Sinead Campbell
Donegal Local Development Company	Padraic Fingleton
Donegal Family Resource Centre	Jean McLaughlin
Donegal Travellers Project	Siobhan McLaughlin
Donegal Women's Network	Finola Brennan
Health Service Executive	Peter Walker
Inishowen Development Partnership	Shauna McClenaghan and Denise McCool
Intercultural Platform	Paul Kernan and Siobhan McLaughlin
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	John Andy Bonar and Brian McGonigle
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	Trish Conlon and Declan Doherty
Pobail le Chéile	Paul Kernan

Purpose, People, Process – Community Education in Donegal 2018 describes a rich tapestry of practice that is congruent with the egalitarianism often associated with community education. This isn't the first time Donegal-based practitioners have asserted the values that underpin their work; principles that emerged as part of the women's movement and wider anti-poverty and community development movements of the 1980s and 1990s which took issue with how inequality affected certain communities.

When community education puts people at the heart of practice it is local, person-centred, participatory and collaborative in addressing such learning needs as personal development, literacy and numeracy, language supports, upskilling for employment, and social and political awareness. Often it is quite different to what we remember from school, where the expert teacher pours 'knowledge' into largely passive students. Instead, learning is believed to be complex, non-linear, unanticipated, experiential, and best done in the company of others.

The Donegal Community Education Forum has held firm on these Freirean-led values for many years. This report re-asserts its ambition that each educational encounter is transformative, relevant to people's lives, dialogic, politicising, and a catalyst for action. Whilst this likely resonates with practitioners nationwide, there is a uniqueness to community education in Donegal; a county disproportionately affected by rural isolation, emigration, inadequate public transport, unemployment, poverty and deprivation. Amidst this context, community education is described as 'thriving' and is bringing people together in diverse, educational contexts.

Delve into the report and you meet a breadth of activity as people nurture their creativity, have fun together, explore technology, share the challenges of parenting, learn about their civil rights, become activists, and upskill for employment. The collaborative relationship between providers within the state-led Education and Training Board (ETB) and more locally managed community sector providers is particularly striking, and its shared vision to preserve a strong community education ethos and the commitment of course organisers, tutors on the ground, and participants of community education is remarkable.

This is important to appreciate amidst the altered ideological landscape that the researchers identify. Government-led managerialist policies have profoundly impacted community education, most notably through the merger of aforementioned ETBs and a downsizing of the formerly vibrant community and voluntary sector. The once long-awaited consultative White Paper *Learning for Life* (2000) wasn't perfect but it did appreciate the collective, needs-based, often immeasurable aspects of community education and recognised the centrality of local expertise. *The Further Education and Training Strategy* (2013) has a different emphasis that is top-down, centred on individualist models of measurability, and that seeks the delivery of tangible employability-

related outcomes. Community educators have always supported the aim of enhancing people's vocational wellbeing. But where this becomes the sole focus for funders, it can be demoralising due to an under-appreciation of the incalculable aspects of community education. There can also be difficulty securing funding for often non-accredited leisure-based, personal development and/or politicising programmes.
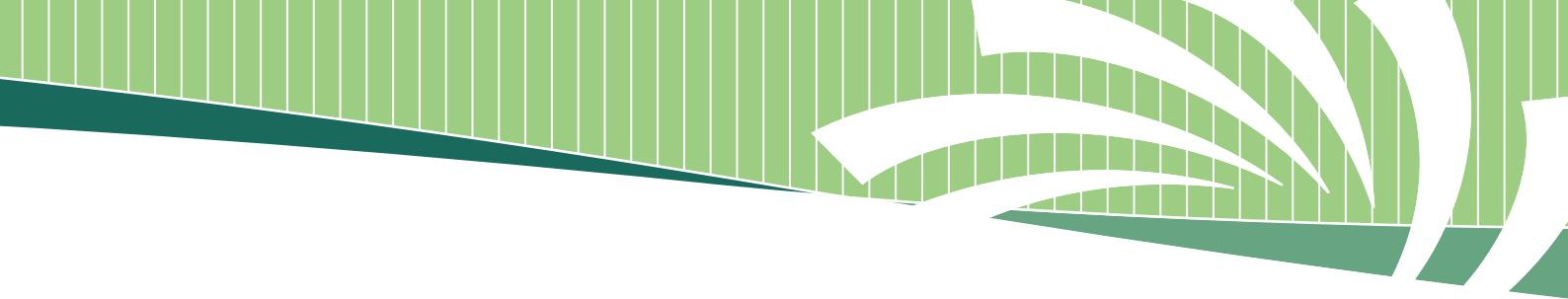
In a different publication, (Fitzsimons, 2017), I argue these managerialist-led changes haven't solely come about at the behest of Irish policy makers but are part of a global implementation of neoliberalism; a socio-political model that places our social and economic wellbeing in the hands of the market. Neoliberalism either seeks to privatise public provision of education, health, housing, transport and welfare, or enforces a business model on the state provision of these services. Although neoliberalism promised to trickle wealth generated from entrepreneurialism downwards to the benefit of everyone, the reality has been different with much evidence suggesting neoliberalism has facilitated a growing gap between rich and poor and environmental degradation and has worsened global hardships such as mass migration and perpetual war (Fitzsimons, 2017). This structural analysis is important to remember amidst a situation where many people, including community educators often precariously employed (O'Neill, 2015), feel trapped in a system where they have to work harder each day to maintain their basic living standards.

A Freirean approach to community education is about creating hope amidst this socio-political landscape and the type of community education described in this report is more important than ever. For Freire 'hope of liberation does not mean hope already, it is necessary to fight for it within historically favourable conditions … if they do not exist, we must hopefully labour to create them' (Freire 1994, p. 44). This report helps create this hope through its research methodologies. McGlynn and Gage 'make the road by walking' through rich research conversations that undoubtedly empower participants to re-assert and deepen their own understanding of community education.

The research's think tank for future development is an integral feature from which three actions emerge: the preservation and development of the values of community education; a re-engagement with the purpose and structures of the Community Education Forum; and the design of an innovative, accredited programme to support critical civic engagement. Implementation isn't without its challenges and the tensions of holding this line amidst an alternate policy discourse are very real. Yet this report embodies its own central recommendation as it seeks to nurture community education through collaborative leadership that not only cultivates a shared vision for community education but strategises for its very survival.

Dr Camilla Fitzsimons
Department of Adult and Community Education
Maynooth University
County Kildare

Contents

Abbreviations

CDP	Community Development Programme	HSE	Health Service Executive
CEF	Community Education Facilitator	IT	Information Technology
CEFA	Community Education Facilitators' Association	LYIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
CSO	Central Statistics Office	NESC	National Economic and Social Council
DCEF	Donegal Community Education Forum	NUI	National University of Ireland
DES	Department of Education and Skills	PPS	Personal Public Service
DTP	Donegal Traveller Project	QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute	SCEPW	Second Chance Education Project for Women
ETB	Education and Training Board		
EU	European Union	SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (merged with VEC to become ETB)		
		UCD	University College Dublin
FET	Further Education and Training	VEC	Vocational Education Committee (merged with FÁS to become ETB)
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council		
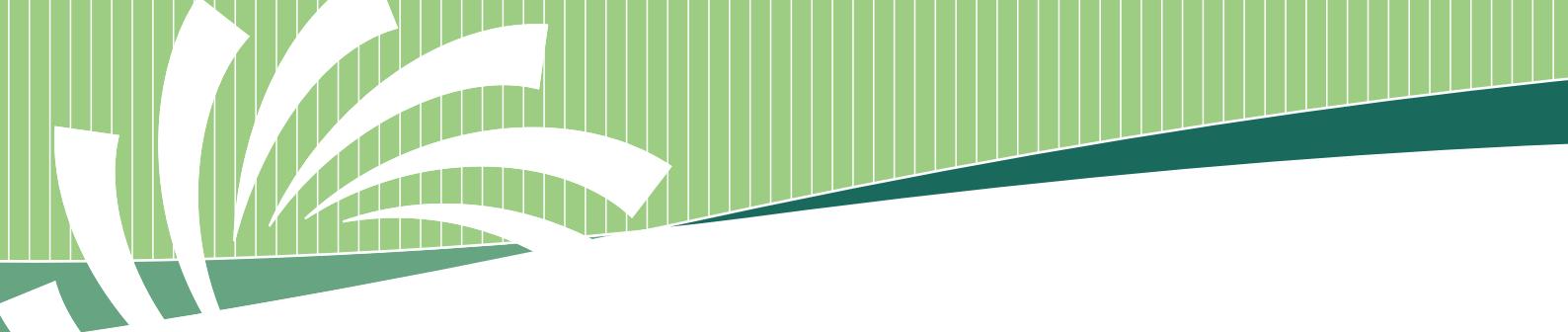
1. Introduction

The Donegal Community Education Forum (DCEF) and Donegal Education and Training Board's (ETB) Community Education Support Programme have undertaken a research study on community education in County Donegal.

It is 10 years since the Forum commissioned Claire Galligan to carry out research on the nature of community education in Donegal. In the past 10 years Ireland has experienced one of its worst recessions with high unemployment, emigration and in recent years a housing and homelessness crisis. These and other issues have also affected communities in County Donegal.

The Forum now wishes to enquire about the current state of community education in the county and has contracted researchers/facilitators Dr Liam McGlynn and Jacqui Gage, Partners Training for Transformation, to carry out the research. Liam took the lead role in the research and in writing this report, and Jacqui took the lead in designing the group processes used. Before describing the research, the role and membership of the Forum is described below.

Donegal Community Education Forum

The Donegal Community Education Forum was established in 2007. The Forum was convened by the then Vocational Education Committee's (VEC) Adult and Community Education Service and membership was drawn from providers of community education in Donegal. The Forum has 'the aim of recognising, promoting and advocating for community education and its resourcing in the county' (DCEF, 2008, p. 13). Its objectives were set as follows:

1. Development of a strategic and collective approach to community education provision in the county.
2. Identification of needs around community development and community leadership training.
3. Improving access for potential learners.
4. Vehicle for research into the benefits of community education.
5. Information sharing.

The original Forum membership in 2007 included Inishowen Partnership, Second Chance Education Project for Women, St Johnston and Carrigans Family Resource Centre, County Donegal VEC's Adult Education Service, Donegal Town Family Resource Centre (2007 only), Donegal Community Workers' Co-operative, a community education worker, Pobail le Chéile and Donegal Women's Network.

Forum membership in 2018 includes Inishowen Development Partnership, Donegal Local Development Company, Donegal Women's Network, Donegal Travellers Project, Family Resource Centres' representative, Community and Voluntary Sector representative, Intercultural Platform, Department of Social Protection, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Health Service Executive, Donegal County Council and Donegal ETB's Further Education and Training Service.

Research Aims

The research aims to provide an assessment of the current nature of community education and its capacity to deliver as a transformative educational process within Donegal.
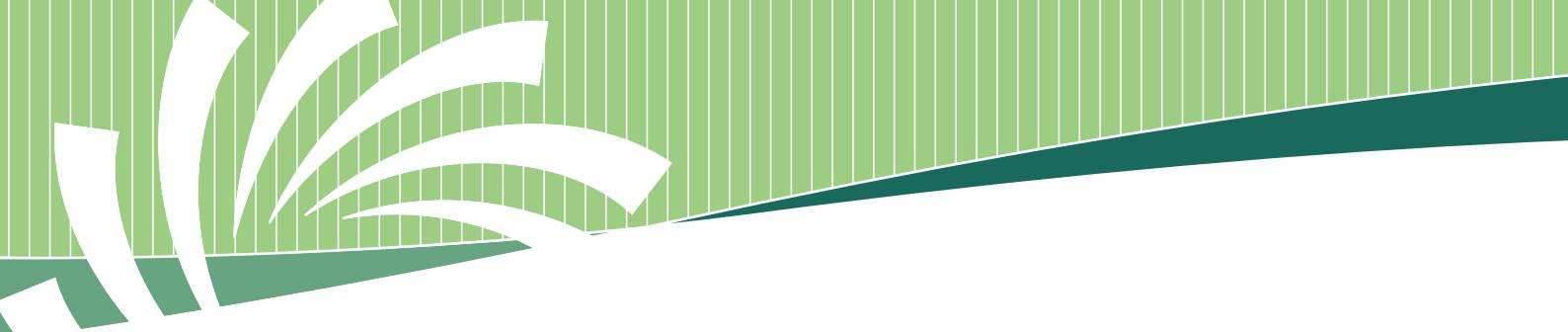
The tender brief for the researcher included the following elements:

- Carry out a desktop review and mapping exercise to identify current policy, key sites and stakeholders of community education provision within the county.
- Identify (using the AONTAS – National Adult Learning Organisation – definition) the range and type of community education programmes currently being delivered in Donegal.
- Use case studies and focus groups to illustrate and identify different community education models which are informed by the principles, processes and methodology which underpin it.
- Explore how community development creates the conditions to increase the participation of marginalised individuals/ communities in community education programmes.
- Analyse how community education responds to poverty, employment and other social justice and equality issues such as ethnicity and gender, and identify service gaps that need to be addressed.
- Facilitate (using the findings of the research) a think tank comprising the key stakeholders to inform and develop future community education programmes and practice, and explore how community education can best be used as a tool to develop critical thinking, social analysis and collective action.

Methodology

The research procedure utilized a qualitative methodology involving three approaches: a questionnaire survey, one-to-one interviews and focus groups. These are described in detail below. The data collection was carried out in the period August to December 2017. Analysis of findings was undertaken in the period December 2017 to February 2018. The think tank took place on 20 March 2018.

Questionnaire survey

An email/online survey was issued through the Donegal ETB's Community Education Support Programme to approximately 200 organisations providing community education courses in County Donegal. Completed questionnaires were returned by 53 respondents and 51 online responses were received along with one email response and one hard-copy response by mail. The questions focused on the *purpose of community education, processes used* and *people involved* in community education programmes in County Donegal and contained 27 questions (Appendix 1).

Preliminary findings from the survey were presented at the annual County Donegal ETB's Community Education Seminar on 5 December 2017 held at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Letterkenny.

One-to-one interviews

Five one-to-one interviews were completed involving representatives of key stakeholders in community education in County Donegal during November and December 2017. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The 15 interview questions covered a range of themes including: change, achievements, purpose, people, needs, relationship to community development and future direction. The question schedule is

included in the appendices (Appendix 2). The stakeholders represented were:

- One community education funder.
- Three community education providers representing people with disability, Travellers and women.
- One community education tutor.

Focus groups

Five focus group meetings were held (Table 1.1) with a total of 45 participants drawn from a cross-section of the county, urban and rural. Participants included members of the Donegal Community Education Forum, course providers and course participants.

The method used for the focus groups was the World Café (The World Café Foundation, 2015). Described as 'a powerful social technology for engaging people in conversations that matter', the World Café aims to 'foster collaborative dialogue, active engagement, and constructive possibilities for action'. The key question to guide the conversations was: 'What is your experience of community education?' The following rounds further explored key emerging themes from the conversations at each table.

All of the World Café feedback was recorded on digital Dictaphone audio recorders (one device per table) for later transcription and qualitative analysis using MAXQDA by the researcher.

Date	Venue	Participants
6 December 2017	Letterkenny	Community Education Forum focus group, Letterkenny, 5 participants, 1 facilitated group
22 November 2017	Donegal Town	South Donegal – Hosted by Donegal Women's Network, 12 participants, 3 tables
8 November 2017	Letterkenny	Travellers in Donegal – Hosted by Donegal Travellers Project, 9 participants, 2 tables
22 August 2017	Falcarragh	North West Donegal – Hosted by Pobail le Chéile CDP, Falcarragh, 9 participants, 3 tables
2 August 2017	Carndonagh	Inishowen Area – Hosted by Inishowen Development Partnership, Carndonagh, 10 participants, 2 tables

Table 1.1: Focus Group Meetings

2. The Meaning of Community Education

At the outset of this chapter, it is well worth referring to the 2008 research report on community education in Donegal by Claire Galligan (Donegal Community Education Forum, 2008) and in particular chapter two, 'Defining Community Education'. It is important to remember where we have come from as we look to the present and future of community education in Donegal. Revisiting our roots is one aspect of renewing our commitment to a shared meaning of community education.

The chapter from 10 years ago did exactly this in that it recalled the theory and practice which have shaped community education in Ireland. Some of this practice was emerging from Donegal at the time, notably 'neighbourhood work' (2008, p. 23). What follows is a brief summary of the material from 10 years ago as it remains relevant today. This chapter then moves on to consider the meaning of community education in the context of modern Ireland and Donegal in particular.

Revisiting Community Education Roots
The Donegal Community Education Forum (DCEF) adopted the AONTAS definition of community education at the time of its formation as the basis for their work in community education in the county.

Community education is education and learning which is rooted in a process of empowerment, social justice, change, challenge, collective consciousness and respect. It is within the community and of the community, reflecting the developing needs of individuals and their locale. It

builds the capacity of local communities to engage in developing responses to educational and structural disadvantage and to take part in decision making and policy formation within the community. It is distinct from general adult education provision, due both to its ethos and to the methodologies it employs.
(AONTAS, 2000, pp. 18-19, cited in DCEF, 2008, p. 16)

Galligan outlined the pedagogy (theory of teaching and learning) for community education which is based on the work of Brazilian educator and social activist Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Community education is about developing people's critical awareness about the issues affecting their lives in the communities where they live, be it unemployment, isolation, poor health, poverty, discrimination, lack of housing or transport. It is about critical reflection on the structures and systems in our world at the social, economic, political, cultural, legal levels that affect people's lives. Freire referred to this as a process of 'conscientization' (Freire, 1970, p. 85). Dialogue between the participants and teachers is central to community education, which contrasts with traditional education which viewed the teacher as the one with all the knowledge and pupils as having little knowledge. Community education values the experience of people in their communities, values their knowledge, as well as that of the teacher who adopts a facilitative style in the course using dialogue in their role. Finally, community education is about action. Bringing about social change is a key purpose of community education. Community education brings about individual and collective empowerment and transformation.
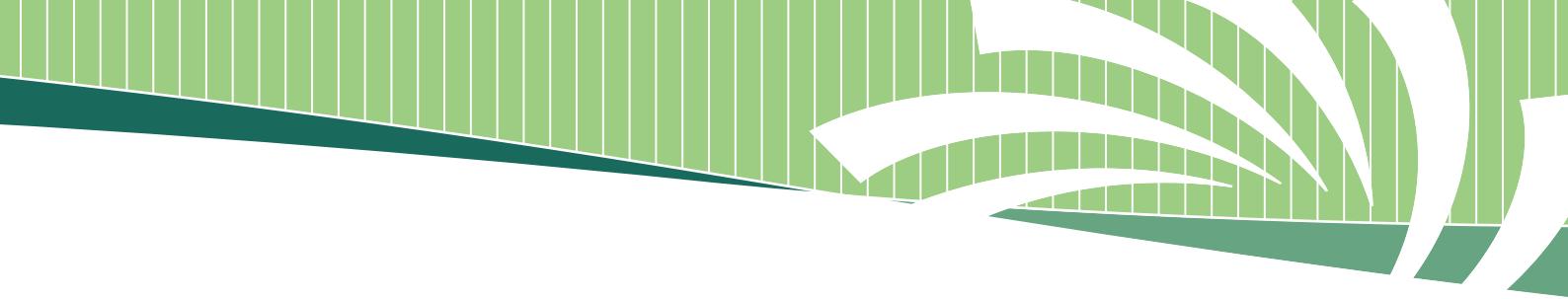
Galligan recalled the historical development of community education in Ireland. The following captures the essence of what community education is about:

> *People with common concerns were facilitated to come together to collectively look at the issues they were facing and develop ways to address these issues and change their situation. This meant increasing their awareness of the social, political and economic conditions that impacted on their lives and then taking collective action to try and change the way things were.*
> (DCEF, 2008, p. 16)

The characteristics of the community education model include:
1. Lived experience as the starting point.
2. Community education responds to disadvantage and exclusion.
3. Community education works at an individual, community and political level.
4. The community group is the deliverer of community education.

In 2008, the Women's Studies Centre in UCD had embarked on outreach programmes across the country. Women who had not completed formal education had the opportunity to complete the National University of Ireland (NUI) Certificate in Women's Studies. The centre also worked in Donegal and highlighted the barriers that exist for women returning to education and the need for supports such as childcare and transport to be put in place. A report by the Second Chance Education Project for Women (SCEPW) found that 'neighbourhood work' was vital to engaging with and encouraging women from marginalised communities to participate in community education (SCEPW, cited in DCEF, 2008, p. 22).

Whilst there were significant developments in women's community education up to and beyond 2008 in Donegal, there were also the seeds of men's community education in North Donegal at the time, before the arrival of the Men's Sheds movement. The work described by Bradley (2003, cited in DCEF, 2008, p. 20) starts with the lived experience of the men and the issues affecting their lives as the basis for their community education programme.

Renewing Community Education for Present and Future

The meaning of community education outlined above still holds as the ideal for those working in the sector today. It features in definitions of community education adopted by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), Education and Training Boards (ETBs), Community Education Facilitators (CEFs), and AONTAS Community Education Network. Whilst practice may vary within and among ETBs in Ireland, this meaning is broadly shared across the sector. The AONTAS definition is also shared by independent community education providers as well as ETBs.

The 2008 research raises the question as to how the ideal meaning and practice of community education described above actually translates in the learning setting. People question whether what is delivered as community education responds to 'needs at a collective
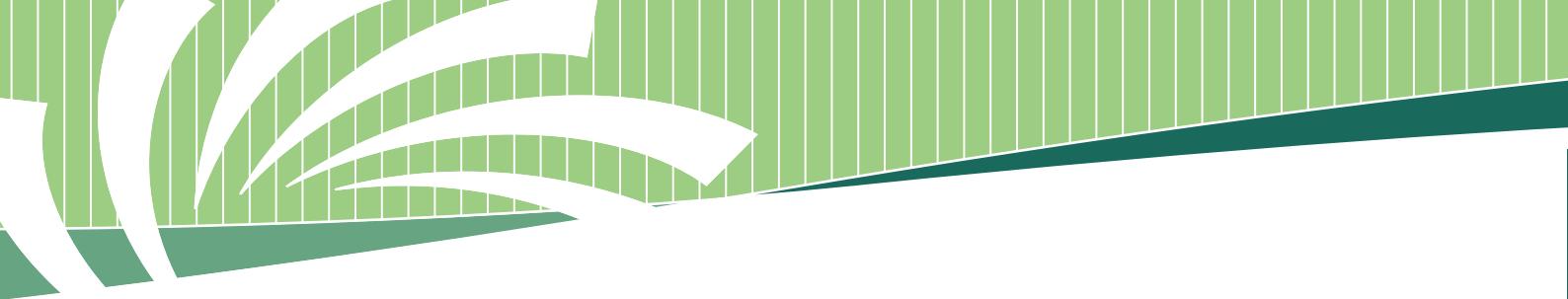
and at a broader political level' (DCEF, 2008, p. 19). The Women's Community Education Quality Assurance Framework (AONTAS, 2005 cited in DCEF, 2008, p. 20) adopts this radical view of community education as a 'process that should lead to a political action and a strategic approach in addressing "systematic" change'. As Marx wrote: 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world ... the point, however, is to change it' (Marx, 1865).

Defining community education for the 21st century

Donegal Community Education Forum reclaim the AONTAS definition again in the tender document for this research, albeit a reworded version, in 2017:

> *... a process of personal and community transformation, empowerment, challenge, social change and collective responsiveness. It is community-led reflecting and valuing the lived experiences of individuals and their community. Through its ethos and holistic approach, community education builds the capacity of groups to engage in developing a social teaching and learning process that is creative, participative and needs-based. Community education is grounded on principles of justice, equality and inclusiveness. It differs from general adult education provision due to its political and radical methodologies.*
> (AONTAS, 2017)

The structures and systems which create and perpetuate poverty and inequality in our world have unfortunately not diminished in the past 10 years. New, more immediate, challenges are now added, such as climate change and ultranationalism and racism. In the past 10 years, Ireland has experienced a devastating recession from which it is emerging, but many men women and children are still left behind. It is this context to which community education seeks to respond.

Five principles of Freire

There are five key principles to Freire's theory and practice which Hope and Timmel (1984, 1995) adopted for community work in Africa. These principles are core to the meaning of community education.

1. The aim of education is the *radical transformation* (or *liberation*) of unjust structures in economy and society.
2. Education must be *relevant* to the lived experiences of those participating in education – the learners.
3. Education involves a process of *dialogue* between teachers and participants.
4. Traditional education uses a *banking* approach which assumes only the teacher has knowledge and learners are left docile and uncritical. Freire introduced the *problem-posing* approach which involves co-creation of knowledge, critical reflection and action on real situations/problems to transform them.
5. Education is *praxis*, that is *reflection and action* on the world in order to transform it.
(Hope and Timmel, 1995, p. 16)

3. The Policy Framework for Community Education in Ireland

This chapter outlines the key policy documents which underpin community education policy and practice from the state's perspective, the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS – The Further Education and Training Authority. This chapter also includes the policy position paper of the Community Education Facilitators' Association (CEFA).

Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education 2000

The White Paper on Adult Education, *Learning for Life* (Department of Education and Science, 2000), was the first official policy document which recognised community education within the Irish education system. The White Paper defines community education in two ways: firstly as 'an extension of the service provided by second- and third-level education institutions into the wider community', and secondly as 'a process of communal education towards empowerment, both at an individual and collective level' (DES, 2000, p. 110). It is both in and of the community and has a 'collective social purpose and inherently political agenda – to promote critical reflection, challenge existing structures, and promote empowerment' (p. 113).

Whilst many commitments in the White Paper were honoured – for example, the appointment of Community Education Facilitators and allocation of a dedicated fund – other aspects remain to be delivered such as governance arrangements at national and local level (National Adult Learning Council) as well as a technical unit for community education.

Community Education Facilitators' Association Position Paper 2011

The Community Education Facilitators' Association launched its position paper, *Community Education: Enhancing Learning, Fostering Empowerment and Contributing to Civic Society*, in November 2011 (CEFA, 2011). The paper sets out the core principles and ethos of community education and a shared view on the ways forward for community education in Ireland. Having worked with community groups for 10 years, the CEFs believe in the value of community education having seen the transformation it brings 'in individuals and communities'.

The paper reasserts the core principles of community education rooted in the Freirean process of 'dialogue, reflection and action' (p. 2). CEFs share the AONTAS meaning of community education as 'empowering participants with the skills, knowledge and collective analysis to challenge oppression and to engage in action to bring about social change' (p. 2).

Community education in Ireland offers adults the opportunity to 'access a continuum of learning' (p. 4) at four levels: personal development, community development, social analysis and political participation (p. 4). Pre-development work involves working on an outreach basis to engage people in community education. The venues where it takes place are community centres, parish centres, halls, sports clubs, function rooms, Family Resource Centres, asylum seeker reception centres, schools, prison visiting areas, ETB outreach education centres and halting sites (p. 3).
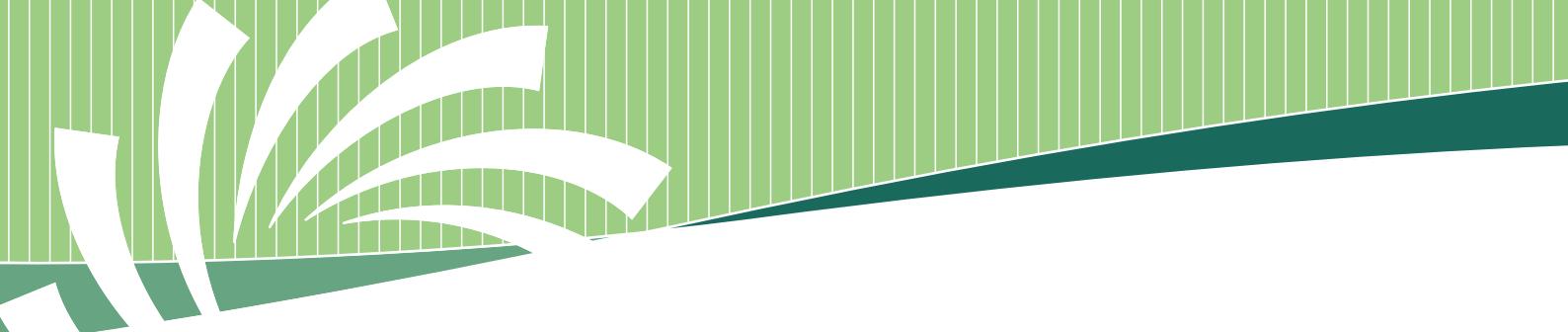
CEFA identify four key issues arising for community education in Ireland: (i) the need to value and reassert the social purpose of community education in line with EU policy as there is a concern that the balance has shifted to the economic or labour market purpose (ii) the need to improve knowledge, research capacity and measurement systems to further capture the value of community education (iii) to improve the targeting of community education for particular marginalised groups (iv) to strengthen partnership with local and community development and also ensure its support at inter-Departmental level (CEFA, 2011, pp. 9-13).

The paper concludes with seven specific proposals on the path forward: (i) a national debate on how to refine, develop and reinforce community education (ii) a system to measure qualitative outcomes of community education (iii) a memorandum of understanding for improved inter-agency and intra-agency co-operation in the area (iv) operational guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills (delivered in 2012) (v) a ring-fenced budget for community education (vi) the Community Education Service be designated a nominating body for the Local Education and Training Boards (vii) establish the Community Education Technical Unit promised in the White Paper.

Community Education Operational Guidelines 2012

In 2012, the Department of Education and Skills published *Community Education Programme: Operational Guidelines for Providers* (DES, 2012). The guidelines set out the definition of community education located 'outside the formal sector', 'fostering empowerment' and 'contributing to civic society' (p. 3). The programme is explicitly targeted at local groups, both area-based and issue-based with a 'particular emphasis on reducing educational and social disadvantage' (p. 4). Adults with low or no formal educational qualifications, the unemployed, one-parent families, Travellers, older people and homeless people and many other groups are the focus of the community education programme. The programme provides them with a step 'to more active community involvement or certified learning' (p. 4). 'Intensive outreach work is a key method' employed in the programme.

The guidelines had regard to the high levels of unemployment in 2012, and target particularly 'the low skilled, the long-term unemployed, under-35s and those formerly employed in construction, retail and manufacturing' (p. 5). These sectors had experienced significant job losses since 2008.

The remaining aspects of the guidelines lay down operational protocols for management, financial management, staffing, and inter-agency partnership, community literacy, programme development, non-accredited learning, promotion and outreach. Some of these are highlighted below.

A mechanism to protect or ring-fence community education funding is provided for in Guideline 14 (p. 5) which states 'any transfer of community education funding to any other programme must have prior written approval

of the Department'. Programme funding covers pay costs such as salaries for CEFs, tutor hours, pre-development work and administration as well as non-pay expenditure such as equipment and materials, overheads (rental), staff training and continuing professional development, limited provision of childcare and guidance support. Non-pay is restricted to 30% of the overall allocation. Tutor training 'has a crucial role to play in community education' (p. 6) and CEFs should support access to such training.

Community education programmes should adhere to the following principles as they develop: learner centredness, equality, accessibility and inclusiveness, recognising and accommodating diversity, quality assurance, local consultation and area-based approach and innovation.

> *As a general principle, community education should start with the lived experience of participants and be located in their daily family and social lives … tuition methodologies should focus on facilitation and group work … there should be an emphasis on group learning, as well as individual learning, as a support for community cohesion, participation and collective action.*
> (DES, 2012, p. 8)

In keeping with a key finding of the last research on community education in Donegal (DCEF, 2008, pp. 23-24, 59-60), 'neighbourhood work' was successful in engaging women in marginalised communities. It is asserted also in the Department's guidelines that 'outreach and promotion include getting to know potential participants by engaging in neighbourhood work' (DES, 2012, p. 9) whilst it is acknowledged it is time-consuming. This, as we shall see later, is where community development work also plays a crucial role. However, the community development sector experienced disproportionate cuts during the recession (Harvey, 2012).

Action Plan for Education 2016-2019

The *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* was launched in September 2016. The vision is to 'provide the best education and training system in Europe' over the next decade (DES, 2016). Whilst a better vision might have read to make our education system the most equal in Europe, that said, there is an attempt to balance education's role in meeting the needs of society as well as the needs of the economy. Education and training are key to 'personal fulfilment, a fairer society … giving every child an equal opportunity in life. No child should be left behind in economic recovery and we should use our strengthening economy to become a leader in the provision of world-class education and training' (DES, 2016, p. 1). The Plan sees education as central to economic, cultural, scientific and social objectives and crucial to 'breaking down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion' (p. 1).

Whilst the majority of the Action Plan focuses on schools in the formal sector, there are important references to lifelong learning and Further Education and Training (FET). Goal 2 and objective 2.1 aim to improve the learning experience and outcomes for learners impacted
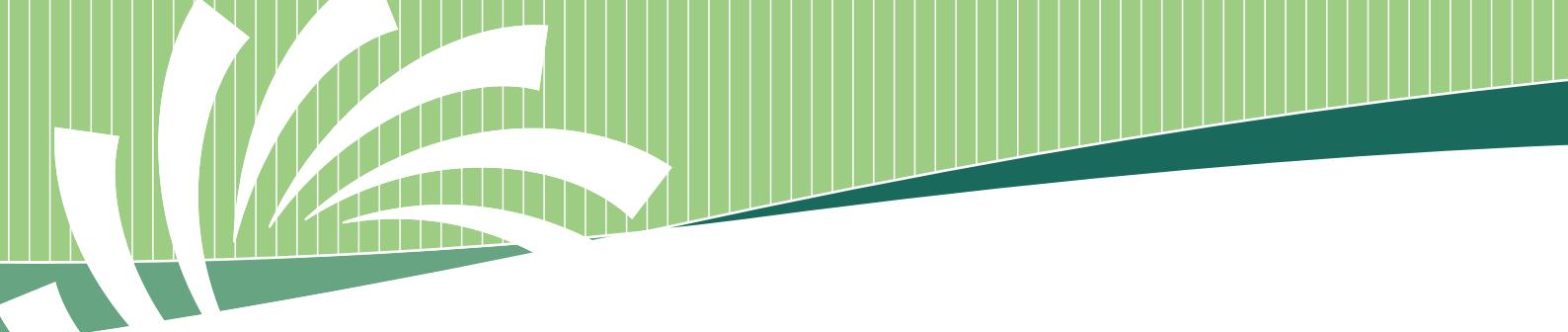
by disadvantage. The specific actions under this objective (DES, 2016, p. 30) focus on FET's role in meeting the needs of people who are unemployed and other groups impacted by disadvantage and the need for research into barriers to participation in FET.

Goal 4 – 'Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community' (p. 39) – emphasises the importance of education and training providers working together with organisations in the local economic and social spheres (p. 40). The last chapter referred to the important relationship between community education and community development. The Action Plan refers to the Further Education and Training Strategy which will be discussed in the next section. The target for lifelong learning is stated in the Action Plan to 'increase to 10% the number of those aged 25-64 engaged in lifelong learning by 2020 (from 2015 rate of 7.2%)' (DES, 2016, p. 42).

Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019

In the 10 years since the last research on community education in Donegal, the entire infrastructure of Further Education and Training has been radically altered, in part due to the economic crash of 2008 to 2014. In 2013 the government disbanded FÁS, the state training and employment agency, and allocated its job placement services to the Department of Social Protection and its training function to the 16 Education and Training Boards (formerly 33 VECs) in 2014. A new Further Education and Training Authority, SOLAS, was established to co-ordinate and fund the wide range of

training and further education opportunities in Ireland with the Education and Training Boards responsible for delivery of the majority of programmes in local areas.

The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 (DES, 2014) seeks to 'support economic development, increase social inclusion and meet the needs of all learners, communities and employers' (DES, 2014, p. 1). At the time, those working in community education were concerned that the unemployment crisis would lead to a narrow jobs-focused training agenda and may miss the important benefits of community education such as improved self-confidence, self-esteem and community/civic participation which are a gateway to social as well as economic objectives. CEFA commissioned research which asserted the social benefits of community education in the context of the labour activation challenge (CEFA, 2014). The FET strategy acknowledges the role of community education as it 'empowers people to grow in confidence in their own employability' (DES, 2014, p. 4).

The FET strategy is part of a four-strand integrated FET framework. The strategy is part of strand one along with a companion Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) research study on *Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future* (ESRI, 2014). The other strands are not dealt with here.

SOLAS are responsible under the Department of Education and Skills for the delivery of the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019. Submissions to a DES-led consultation

prior to the establishment of SOLAS recommended it consult with 'employers and other relevant stakeholders about the needs of the labour market, and should measure the outcomes that relate to personal development as well as employment outcomes' (DES, 2014, p. 25).

The most relevant aspects of the FET strategy relate to accredited and non-accredited provision on the one hand and measurement of benefits of community education on the other. This arises from the ESRI research, the conclusions of which are reproduced below.

Interviews with stakeholders revealed important challenges for ETBs and for SOLAS in balancing the maintenance of the inclusive ethos of, for example, the community education sector with the economic ethos of vocationally orientated provision such as PLCs and Specific Skills training. Thus, respondents had mixed views with respect to the extent to which accreditation could, or should, be introduced into all programmes. However, there was a consensus that all programmes should be measured against some form of outcome metric, but one which was closely related to their objectives.
(McGuinness et al, ESRI, 2014, cited DES, 2014, p. 90)

The ESRI points to the fragmented nature of the Further Education and Training system in Ireland. This fragmentation might have been addressed had the state established the National Adult Learning Council permanently and the Community Education Technical

Support Unit when it was proposed in 2000 in the White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000, p. 115). Perhaps there would now be a more coherent system and an appropriate 'outcome metric' or evaluation in place to measure the social benefits of community education and non-accredited learning which is acknowledged in the ESRI report to be very important to learners embarking on a return to education.

The issue of accreditation was seen as particular in the community education sector, where some felt non-accredited courses served a valuable role, sometimes as an entry route into accredited provision and for progression to other education and training pathways. 'The whole ethos of community education was to be non-accredited which meant that they were … to get people engaged in group work, talking, sharing, all that kind of thing. From that, you'll find that a lot of them then would move on to more accredited programmes.' (State provider group)
(McGuinness et al, ESRI, 2014, p. 78)

4. Socio-Economic Profile of Donegal

This chapter examines the status of Donegal in comparison to the Irish state on a number of indicators of human development[1] as follows: population and dependency, poverty and deprivation, vulnerable groups, health, education, unemployment, homelessness/housing/accommodation, and transport.

This chapter also places Donegal within both a local and global context. This includes developments at local, national, Ireland-Britain, EU and global levels that impact on the county, for example, Brexit and cross-border implications, sustainable development, climate change, emigration and immigration, trade, globalisation and communications.

Population and Dependency

While the population of Ireland grew by 3.8% between 2011 and 2016, the population of Donegal fell by 1.2% (from 161,137 to 159,152) in the same period (CSO, 2011; CSO 2017a). Nevertheless, the population of the county has increased in the period covered by this report.

Donegal has been particularly impacted by emigration during the last recession, particularly among the young population. Whilst it is difficult to obtain exact data for the county, the national trends show that between 2009 and 2014 there was net outward migration (CSO, 2017c). On average 40-50,000 people left each year

between 2010 to 2015. It is only since 2015 that more people are entering than leaving Ireland again. Anecdotal evidence confirms that the recession brought with it emigration as the only choice for many young people and Donegal was vulnerable to this also.

The dependency ratio is a good indicator of the level to which the younger population (0-14yrs) and the older population (65yrs+) depend on the working-age population (15-65yrs). Areas with higher dependency ratios indicate higher care needs of the younger and older population. Whilst the state dependency ratio in 2016 was 52.7, the ratio for Donegal was the third highest in the state at 60.5. A closer analysis reveals that there is a higher proportion of older people in rural areas in need of care in Donegal compared to other counties.

Poverty and Deprivation

The updated *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015-2017* continues the aim of the state to reduce poverty since the first National Anti-Poverty Strategy was introduced in Ireland in 1997. The NAPinclusion set out the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction (NSTPR) to 'reduce consistent poverty to 4% by 2016 (interim target) and to 2% or less by 2020 from the baseline rate of 6.3% in 2010' (Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 2016, p. 5). In 2016, the consistent poverty

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1. 'The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living' (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). Whilst it is referred to here, GDP or GNP have been used in the more economically wealthy regions of the global north to indicate wealth status. Both GNP and HD do not reflect on inequalities, poverty, human security, empowerment etc.
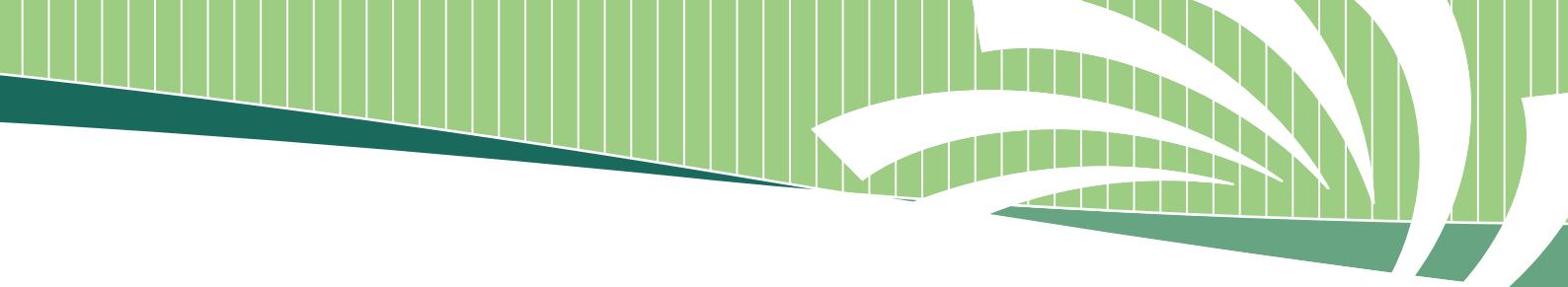
rate was 8.3% having reached a high during the recession in 2013 of 9.1%. The Sláintecare report, which will be discussed under health, stated that people at risk of falling into poverty increased from 14.4% in 2008 to 16.9% in 2015 and, furthermore, child poverty is alarmingly high at 132,000 in 2016 (Oireachtas, 2017, p. 32).

Whilst the consistent poverty level is falling post-recession, the interim target has clearly been missed and a lot of work is needed to bring the levels of poverty down in Ireland. Donegal has a higher proportion living in poverty than other counties as evidenced by the fact that Donegal is now the most deprived county in Ireland, having a deprivation score in the state at -6.4 (Haase and Pratschke for Pobal, 2017, p. 9). The very comprehensive profile in the Donegal Local Development Strategy (Grúpa Ceantair Aitiúil Treoraithe, Donegal County Council, 2016) provides details of the 2011 deprivation score for the county when it was the second most deprived county.

Vulnerable Groups

Those of our community most at risk of poverty, the 'social risk groups', include: lone parents, people with a disability, young adults, children, working-age adults and older adults (Grotti et al, 2017, p. iv). The following groups in Ireland and Donegal are experiencing, and are at risk of, poverty and social exclusion: Travellers, Roma, early school leavers, migrants, women and people on low income.

Lone parents

A recent study, *Poverty Dynamics of Social Risk Groups in the EU*, found that in Ireland 'there is a significant gap in the rate of persistent deprivation experienced by vulnerable adults, including lone parents and adults with a disability, and the rate experienced by other adults' (Watson et al, ESRI, 2018). Out of 11 EU countries, Ireland's gap was the largest and increased the most during the study's time frame of 2004-2015. In 2011 there were 4,762 families headed by a lone parent living in urban areas of Donegal (Grúpa Ceantair Aitiúil Treoraithe, Donegal County Council, 2016, p. 23). In 2016, almost 90% of lone-parent households were one-parent mothers (CSO, 2017a). The lone-parent rate for Donegal in 2016 was 20.9%, slightly higher than the figure for the state 19.9% (Haase and Pratschke, 2017). Whilst there are higher numbers of lone parents in the cities (Dublin 27.6%), there are greater challenges for single mothers in a rural county like Donegal, not least transport. This is a group for whom community education can play a significant role.

People with disabilities

In Census 2016, 13.5% of the population in Ireland had a disability. In Donegal the percentage was 14.4% (CSO, 2017a). It is only in the past few months that the Irish state has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN OHCHR, 2006). The state has yet to meet its target of employment for people with a disability in public bodies set at 3%. Community education plays a vital role in meeting the educational and social needs of people with disability and the voice of people with disability is included in this research.

Travellers

On 1 March 2017, the Irish state finally recognised the status of Travellers as a distinct
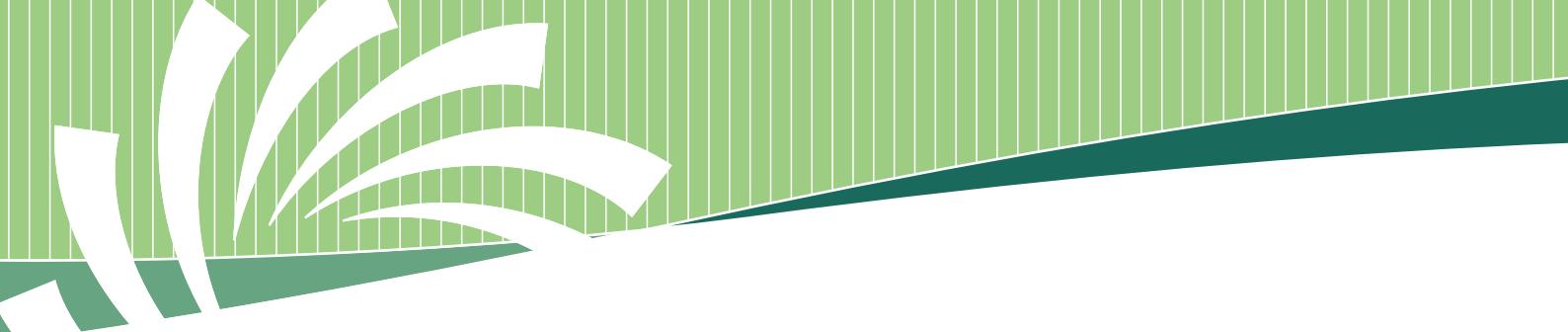
ethnic group as part of the Irish nation. This historic day has been followed up with the new *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021* (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017) which sets out commitments to action under employment/work, health, education, accommodation, culture, anti-racism and anti-discrimination for the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland.

Donegal has a vibrant Traveller community ably supported through the work of the Donegal Traveller Project (DTP) based in Letterkenny. There are 588 Travellers in Donegal according to Census 2016, but over several censuses it is argued that the census figure underestimates the actual number of Travellers in Ireland. Travellers are strong participants in community education provided by the ETB through the DTP.

Youth and elderly
According to Census 2016, 22% of the population in Donegal are under 15 (23%, 2011). This was higher than the percentage of under-15s for the state which was 21% (21%, 2011). More significantly, 15.7% of the population in Donegal are over 65 years (13.3%, 2011). This was significantly higher than the percentage of over-65s for the state which was 13.4% (13.3%, 2011). Furthermore, there are a higher proportion of elderly living in rural areas compared to the younger adults who live in more urban areas.

As Ireland's population is growing older, rural isolation of older people will continue to be a need requiring a community response. Research cited in the Donegal Local Development Strategy

(Grúpa Ceantair Aitiúil Treoraithe, 2016, p. 30) states that 'in 2031, 21.5% of the population of the Border Regional Authority area will be over 65 years of age'.

Women
At global, national and local levels, women continue to experience inequality in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres. The *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* was launched in 2017 (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017). The strategy aims to advance economic equality for women, improve physical and mental health of women, foster women in leadership, combat violence against women and advance gender equality in decision making.

The strategy includes a number of practical measures such as review of the working family payment, targeted programmes for rural women, enact the domestic violence bill, promote women's sport, an action plan for women's health, encourage men and boys to support gender equality. In Ireland, community education flourished through women's groups during the 1980s to the 2000s and continues to provide this important space for women to address issues for the advancement of women in all spheres of life.

Health
In Census 2016, 87% of the Irish population reported having 'good or very good health'. Donegal was the fourth lowest reported level at 85.6, after Dublin City, Cork City and Longford (CSO, 2017f). Whilst the overall health of the nation is very good, health inequalities resulting

from the social determinants of health need to be addressed if Ireland is to have health equality.

Responding to health inequalities and the social determinants of health was a strong element of the Sláintecare report, a landmark report produced by a cross-party Dáil committee on the Future of Healthcare (Oireachtas, 2017). The social determinants of health include: 'inequality, income, education, social position and inclusion/exclusion, employment, stress, built environment, housing, transportation, public policies, health behaviours and more' (Oireachtas, 2017, p. 31). For example, the poor face more health inequalities in a two-tier health system, 'damp housing can cause respiratory illnesses', 'poverty is linked to poor diet, housing, access to health services and much more' (p. 32).

While overall life expectancy is high (83.5 years for women and 79.3 years for men), it is lower for people with lower income (81 years for women and 75 years for men), (CSO, cited in Oireachtas, 2017, p. 30). Life expectancy is significantly lower by almost 10 years for the Irish Traveller population.

The Sláintecare report sets out a cross-party plan for a new model of healthcare over the next 10 years to 2027. Crucially, it envisions the vast majority of healthcare will be primary or community-based care. It will be a single-tier health system 'providing care on the basis of need and not ability to pay' (Oireachtas, 2017, p. 28). There is a greater emphasis on health promotion and prevention of ill-health

and this is where community education has a role at present, but is likely to have a greater role in the future in this area.

Education
Census 2016 reveals that 'over one in five persons (21.9%) in Donegal, aged 15 and over, had not been educated beyond primary level, the highest for any county' (CSO, 2017e). However, this figure was higher at 25% in 2006 as stated in the last report (DCEF, 2008, p. 32). County Donegal had the fourth lowest percentage of persons with a third-level qualification in the state. Consistent with the last report, Donegal and Laois had the lowest admission rate to third-level education in the state at 41% which was lower than the average for the state at 51% (Higher Education Authority, 2014, p. 29). Consistent with the population shift from 'west to east' in the county, there is a more disadvantaged pattern of educational access and attainment to the west of the county compared to the east (Grúpa Ceantair Aitiúil Treoraithe, 2014, p. 28).

Unemployment
The official unemployment rate in Ireland in February 2018 was 6%, down from the highest rate during the recession, 15.9% in December 2011 (CSO, 2018). The census measure of unemployment is normally higher than the monthly unemployment measure. Donegal has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the state on both measures. In the 2011 census, Donegal had the highest unemployment rate in the state at 26.2%. Whilst this reduced to 18% in the 2016 census, it was still the second highest county after Longford. The national
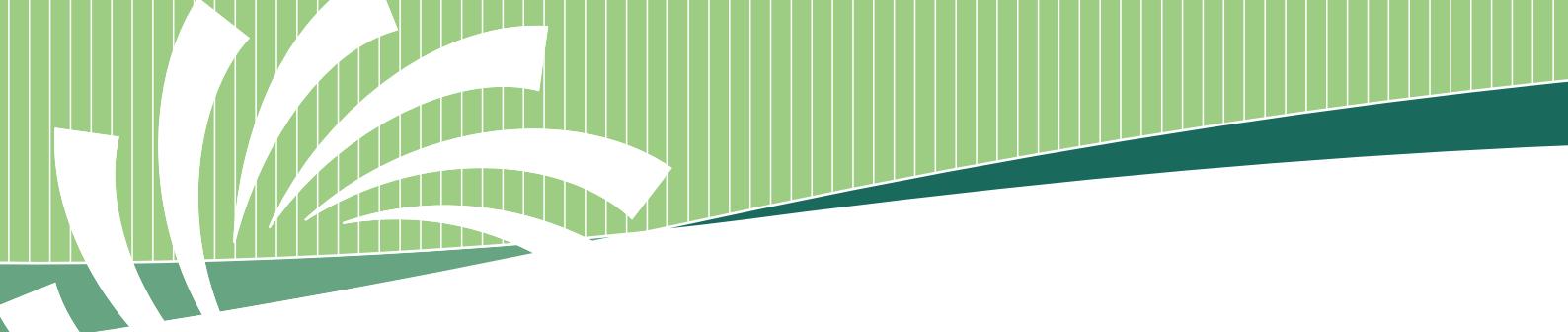
rate for 2016 was 12.9%. Moreover, there were six electoral divisions in Donegal where the unemployment rate was between 27-35%. This pattern of high unemployment is sadly similar to that reported in the previous report on community education in 2007 (DCEF, 2008).

In 2011, the Haase and Pratschke index attributed Donegal's deprivation score to low education attainment (26.1%) and high male unemployment (31.4%), (Grúpa Ceantair Aitiúil Treoraithe, 2016, p. 29). In 2016, whilst these rates have fallen since the recession, the pattern continues with the rates being 21.6% and 20.2% respectively, among the highest in the state.

Homelessness Housing Accommodation

The Department of Housing Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) publish the monthly homeless figures for each local authority area. In total there were 9,104 people homeless in Ireland in January 2018, 3,267 of whom were children (DHPLG, 2018). Twenty people were recorded as homeless in Donegal in December 2014, but this has risen to 26 in January 2018. It is likely that there are many more who are homeless who are not presenting at state-funded emergency accommodation. It is unclear if the figures include refuges accommodating the victims of domestic violence.

The concept of 'hidden homelessness' refers to people who may be staying with relatives or friends on a temporary basis. Their numbers are likely to be much higher than the official figures for homelessness published by the Department. The last census revealed that 10%

of the population were living in overcrowded conditions (CSO, 2017d).

The fact that homelessness not only exists in Donegal but is also on the rise contrasts with another finding in Census 2016 relating to vacant dwellings which revealed that 'among the urban towns (i.e. towns with a population of 1,500 or more) the highest vacancy rates were recorded in Ballaghaderreen (33.1%) and Castlerea (27.7%) in County Roscommon, along with Bundoran (29.9%) in County Donegal' and 'among larger towns (population of 10,000 or more) Letterkenny (14.9%), ranked highest in terms of vacancy' (CSO, 2017d).

Travellers' experience of homelessness is not new as the state has not met its targets in relation to the provision of culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers. Whilst local authorities have had more success in providing houses for Travellers, they have had less success in delivering serviced halting sites which are more culturally appropriate for the Traveller community. That said, in Donegal there is a positive approach by the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and Donegal Traveller Project is the voice of Travellers on this committee with members and staff of the local authority (Donegal County Council, 2014).

The homelessness and housing crisis is due mainly to the standstill in housebuilding, the lack of new builds, councils no longer building social houses, rising house prices and rising rents. Being homeless or unable to pay rent or a mortgage places considerable strain on

individuals and families. These groups need the support of community education to be empowered as citizens to pursue their right to a home.

Transport

The Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022 pointed out that there was a 'high dependency on road-based transport and the private car' (Local Community Development Committee, Donegal County Council, 2016, p. 13). Donegal is a rural county and rural isolation is exacerbated for those who do not have access to a car. The Plan calls for the development of sustainable transport alternatives to the car.

5. Findings: Purpose

The background for this research is based on a very useful model developed by Partners Training for Transformation (Partners, 2018), a triangular framework of *Purpose, People* and *Process*. The findings are presented in these three chapters according to these overarching themes. The findings from the three sources – survey, interview and focus group – will be presented under each theme. This chapter presents the findings in relation to the purpose of community education in Donegal.

Survey Findings

A total of 53 questionnaires were returned. Some of the respondents did not answer all questions, but a majority did so. The number of respondents who answered the relevant question is included in the findings outlined in this chapter. Questions 3 to 15 focused broadly on the *purpose* of community education and

the main findings from a selection of these questions are presented below.

Primary purpose

When asked: *What is the primary purpose of community education for your organisation? Please list in order of priority 1 to 4 (1 Highest priority … 4 Secondary priorities)*, 35 responded to this question. Figure 5.1 shows that the order of priority from highest to lowest is personal development, social change, community development and employment. Whilst all of these categories are prioritised, it is clear that community education is viewed primarily as having a personal development and community development purpose. It is clear, however, that the primary purpose of community education is not employment. Table 5.1 includes more detail on the responses.
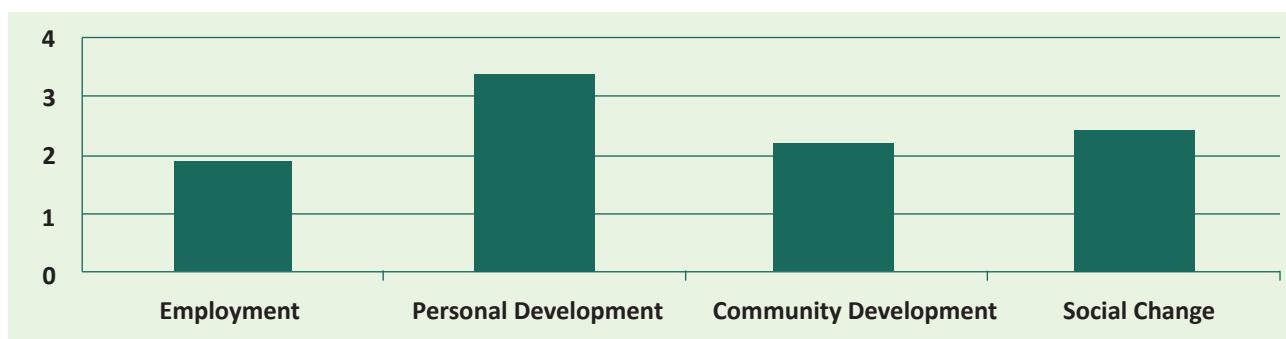
Figure 5.1: Primary Purpose of Community Education Within Sample

Level of Priority	1	2	3	4	Total	Score
(Employment) Develop participants' skills for employment	4	5	4	15	28	1.93
(Personal Development) Develop participants' self-confidence	18	8	3	2	31	3.35
(Community Development) Develop collective processes on issues affecting the community	5	7	10	7	29	2.34
(Social Change) Promoting social justice, social inclusion, equality and human rights	5	9	13	6	33	2.39

Table 5.1: Primary Purpose of Community Education Within Sample

Deciding what courses

When asked: *How do you make decisions about what courses are relevant to your group/ organisation?* 30 responded to this question. This was an open question and the individual responses were analysed. The key finding is that decisions are made on the basis of consultation with the community and courses are provided on the basis of the expressed needs and interests of the community. Ten of the responses referred to 'needs' identified in the community or group, nine referred to 'consultation' with the community or group, four referred to 'group discussion/consensus decision making', two referred to 'based on feedback' and one each for 'demand', 'community development subcommittee', 'depends on availability of trainers', 'we take a vote' and 'committee' decision.

Needs analysis

When asked: *How do you identify the learning needs and interests of your community?* 30 responded to this question. Providers identify the learning needs and interests of their communities in a variety of ways, primarily through 'communication and listening', 'consultation' as above, 'close contact and good relationships', 'direct contact with people in the community', 'we talk to community members to determine their needs and interests', 'feedback sheets', 'advocacy and through social welfare'. Some groups advertise courses initially.

We advertise a range of courses, for which we have trainers, in the community notes that go to all the local newspapers of the region … Also Facebook page, on posters

in local businesses, and in local church bulletins. When we have enough interest in a particular course, we apply to the ETB for funding.

We advertise a list of courses and depending on the demand for such courses we run them.

Other means used to decide on what courses to provide include: 'regular surveys and suggestion box consultation', 'needs analysis', 'hold focus groups in our community on a regular basis', 'community-based surveys and evaluations of all programmes available'.

Some groups focus on the needs of particular groups and communities of interest and continually enquire about needs as participants engage in their projects.

All participants complete annual service plans and we also have group consultations (Disability group).

Our learning needs are focused around our members' needs – such as health and safety issues when using tools or passing skills to others or learning from others (Men's Shed).

A combination of feedback from the community from visits to the centre for various reasons (previous courses, GAA-organised events, parents who attend the childcare centre) and also via social media. We find social media a very effective way of acquiring this information for the 34-65 age group.

Needs are identified by women in Donegal i.e. women in the home raising awareness on specific issues e.g. gender equality, human trafficking national campaign, violence against women.

Timing of courses and challenges

When asked: *What time during the day are the programmes you deliver run?* 34 responded to this question. The majority of programmes were provided in the evening, followed by morning and afternoon.

When asked: *Does this present challenges to your organisation?* 33 responded to this question. Sixteen of the responses stated that running courses at these times does not present a challenge to these providers. However, there were some challenges expressed by other respondents. These were mainly to do with 'opening and closing the centre, no caretaker', 'challenges to staffing and overhead costs as centre is open for long hours' (six respondents). A further challenge which affected timing and provision in general was 'transport' (four respondents). Responses included:

Times are arranged to suit the needs of the groups. Evenings would pose a problem due to lack of transport in the region.

Transport is the greatest challenge.

Travel may be difficult, or babysitters, as I am targeting disadvantaged families.

We try to offer a variety of courses here in this rural isolated community. No public

transport exists so it's paramount that people can attend classes in their own locality at affordable costs.

Finally, a further challenge was mentioned by a community development organisation, 'cuts to human resources and programme activities is our main challenge'. Also, two respondents relied on other groups and supports:

We depend on co-operation with other organisations for use of their space.

We are linked to a Community Development Programme (CDP) who support us with caretakers and other schemes such as Tús.

Content of courses

When asked: *Please indicate the kind of content covered in courses provided in your community education programme choosing from the list below*, 30 responded to this question. The categories most represented in the content of courses were: creative arts and crafts, health and wellbeing, leisure and hobbies, IT and computers, family, parenting and personal development. The categories less represented were: social and political studies and policies, citizenship, rights, legal, public administration, economics, business and finance. Community development and culture both had eight responses, and skills for employment and arts and media had 10 and 11 responses respectively. The low number of courses in the citizenship/rights area and social/political area is worrying, given that community education is about social change. Table 5.2 provides the detailed breakdown of frequency of responses.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Skills for Employment/Vocational	30.30%	10
Arts (e.g. History) and Media	33.33%	11
Economics, Business, Finance	12.12%	4
Information Technology, Computers	42.42%	14
Citizenship/Rights/Legal/Public Administration	6.06%	2
Social/Political Studies and Policies	6.06%	2
Family, Parenting, Personal Development	39.39%	13
Health and Wellbeing	63.64%	21
Community Development	24.24%	8
Cultural Studies/Language	24.24%	8
Creative Arts and Crafts	75.76%	25
Leisure and Hobbies	54.55%	18
Earth Sciences (Horticulture/Gardening)	27.27%	9

Table 5.2: Content of Courses

When asked: *Do you provide courses on developing empowerment tools for addressing challenging issues such as the following?* only eight responded to this question. The responses are presented in Table 5.3. Given the high incidence of domestic abuse – as annual statistics provided by Women's Aid and the Rape Crisis Centre indicate as well as the levels of alcohol addiction/abuse and related impacts on families – these areas merit further attention and course provision by the community education sector.

Answer Choices	Responses
Poverty programmes	2
Gender-based violence/Domestic abuse	2
Advocacy	5
Children's rights	2
Addiction	2
Anti-discrimination/Equality	3

Table 5.3: Provision Offered to Support Challenging Issues

Main reasons for providing community education

When asked: *Overall, what have been your main reasons for providing a community education programme?* there were 31 responses to this question which was very similar to the one on primary purpose. However, it is worth noting the range of reasons provided which are reproduced in Appendix 5 and summarised below. The main reasons include: *combatting isolation, encouraging friendships, relationships, connectedness, community building, inclusiveness, social inclusion, addressing issues of equality, encourage/support physical and mental health and wellbeing, skills development, including traditional skills and skills for leadership and employment, personal development, personal and leadership skills, preserving heritage, local culture and knowledge, general education*.

A further question was asked: *What is important to you when deciding on the community education courses or programme that you deliver? (i) Courses that offer accreditation (certificate) (ii) Courses that are requested by the target group (iii) Courses that respond to an identified need in the community.* Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the above on a scale 1 to 7 (1 being most important, 7 being least important). Thirty-four responded to this question. It is clear that the most important considerations when deciding to deliver a community education programme are (ii) courses that are requested by the target group, and (iii) courses that respond to a need in the community. This is not to suggest accreditation is not important, it is simply that it is viewed as less important in the provision of community education courses by this sample as illustrated in Figure 5.2.
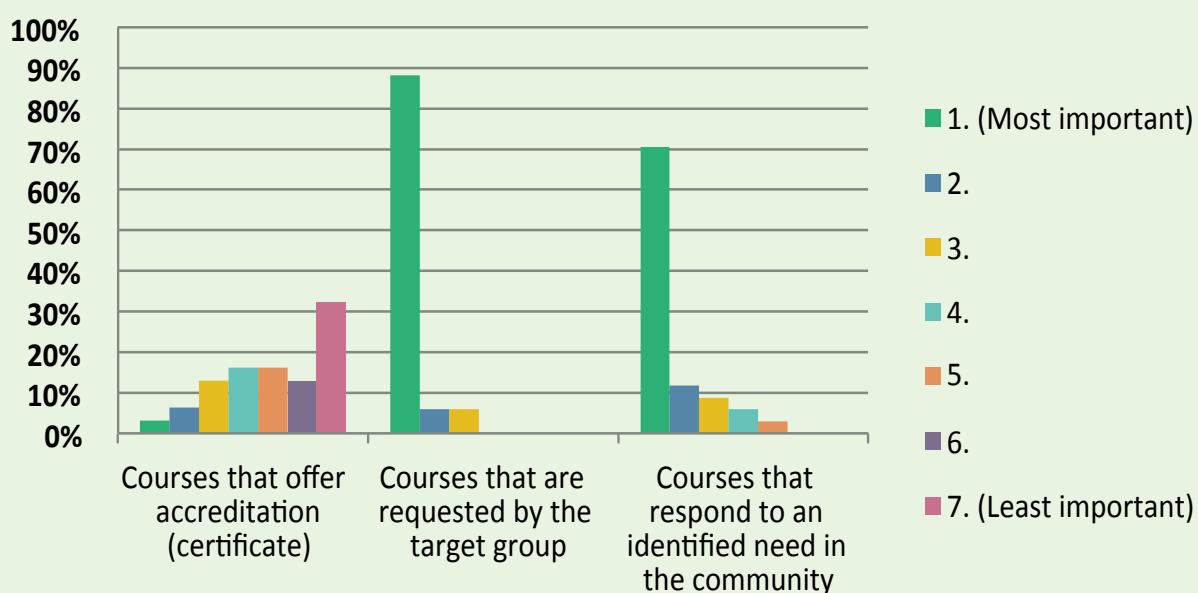

Figure 5.2: Factors that Influence Provision

Interview Findings

Five one-to-one interviews were undertaken with stakeholders in community education in Donegal representing the following: funders, people with disability, women, Travellers, and tutors.

The five interviewees held common views on the themes relevant to the *purpose* of community education. This section examines responses to individual interview questions which related to the purpose of community education in Donegal. Interview questions are included in Appendix 2.

Learning, empowering, social purpose

Interviewees were asked what they considered to be the primary purpose of community education.

I think it is about bringing the community together … if you have a rural area and there is a community education project within that rural area, it is bringing people out, it is bringing people together.

I'd say it works probably at three levels, say one-to-one, you know about personal empowerment, education, progression, a route out of poverty. Also to build the knowledge and experience and analysis of the population of Donegal on political, social and health across the whole social determinants, culturally and economically as well. To creating consciousness, that transformative piece.

For me it is not just education in the community, because I think that is different.

But for me, community education is more about the process. It is more about the how and it's more about facilitating, enabling someone to learn. It's lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning without accreditation for the most part, that's as a service provider. As an employer, it is accredited learning for community employment.

Accredited and non-accredited learning

Interviewees were asked what has been prioritised in community education in Donegal and has that changed. In response, interviewees valued the flexibility of being able to provide non-accredited education based on the needs of the community.

I think for a while a lot of it was around IT (Information Technology). I think now that there is more around, what people are looking for is around their mental health and wellbeing, you know, personal development, looking after themselves.

Not everyone is looking for a course that has accreditation at the end … I suppose we would have had a lot more focus on accredited courses [in the past]. They are just looking for a couple of hours out of the house, time for me.

One interviewee felt the ETBs were being pushed in the direction of providing more accredited programmes, probably at a national level, possibly through SOLAS. Whilst this service provider felt their client group wanted to do something on computers, they were
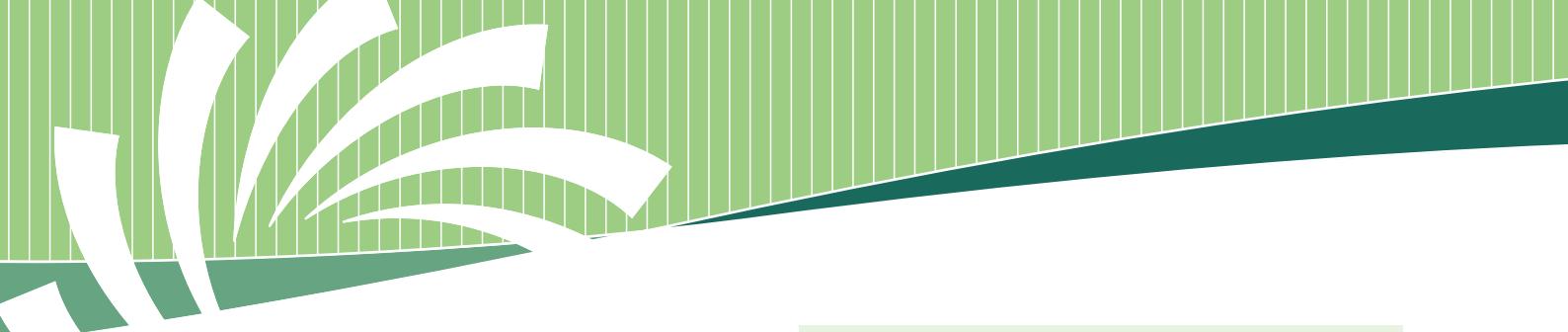
adamant it should be non-accredited training based on the needs of the client group.

The computer classes and the relaxation are two things that I see we could be doing with. It is not spreadsheets or Word, it is social media, that's what is wanted, and non-accredited, they don't want an exam.

Needs

Interviewees were asked which need(s) is community education most helpful in addressing in Donegal and which are most difficult to address.

I think a lot of it is around mental health. There is a lot of depression out there at the moment, a lot of people are feeling it and I think it is wonderful that people can access a course just to help them. It might not fix it but it certainly is having an impact … Just coming out and meeting people and talking about it, not necessarily talking about their condition, but just talking to other women.

Social Isolation. That's what it all comes down to. People need to get out or somebody to come to them. It's about socialising. Whether accredited course or leisure course. The whole isolation in this county. Somebody with a disability is already marginalised and financially, too. If you have a disability you need more money to live, a sad fact that this and previous governments did not take cognisance of at all. You need more food, more heating, more transport, there is a serious lack of transport, never mind accessible transport.

I think it is good at addressing social isolation. It is probably not as strong as we would like it to be around addressing social change.

I think it is probably addressing the needs of individuals who want to do training, be it horticulture, hairdressing, literacy, numeracy … which is valuable, it is meeting those needs. It is probably meeting needs in minority communities like Travellers or far-flung communities. It is creating opportunities for those people to participate in education and training which they mightn't do if they have to drive to Letterkenny. Regarding collective needs, I think that we have lost that and I think that there is an opportunity out of this to go back and do a bit more on that.

The observation that community education is more effective at meeting individual needs and social needs by overcoming isolation means community education plays a vital role here. However, at present it is viewed by interviewees as less effective at meeting collective needs or the need for social change at social, cultural, economic and political levels.

This was a theme which emerged both in interviews and in focus groups. Interviewees believe community education has great potential to lead to social change and has done so in the past through collaboration with community development work and the Community Workers' Co-operative. The cuts to the infrastructure of community development in Donegal have had a devastating impact and this indirectly undermined community

education as well. Having said that, there are still courses available in social analysis, leadership, equality issues, intercultural awareness etc. But participants feel there should be a lot more of these types of courses supported and made available, and more tutors trained and supported to deliver them. The ETB would also be very supportive of such development. One participant also felt the expertise exists within the county to design and deliver courses that meet the social change and consciousness-raising needs through community education.

Changes shaping community education
Interviewees were asked what was the most significant change in community education in the past 10 years.

First, the most recent change in the role of the ETBs, the fact that ETBs are now funded under SOLAS, the new Further Education and Training Authority, as opposed to directly by the Department of Education. ETBs are part of the Further Education and Training Strategy (FETS). Secondly, over the last 10 years there has been a big reduction in funding of the sector generally (community development and voluntary sector). Thirdly, I think stemming from the economic downturn, there is less value placed on community education, something that cannot be measured economically. The economic downturn was so stark and the shock of that meant all the funding changed to have a very strong economic focus and when the FETS was developed, the top priority was for courses for the economy and jobs. And that was, to an extent,

understandable. Now social inclusion is in there as a goal also.

In fairness to the ETB, over the last 10 years we have received more support. I find the adult education and Community Education Facilitators are very much on the ground now. So we are getting quite significant amounts of funding and we could not deliver what we deliver without that funding.

The biggest change would have been because of the funding. There would have been hundreds of workers funded through Peace Programmes and since that money was lost … a lot were made redundant. Prior to that there would have been a lot of activity in the whole community sector. For me, the Community Development Projects (CDPs) being merged into partnerships, we lost a lot of really good people, they [the CDPs] lost their independent voice.

I think a lot more people are aware of it. It is being publicised a lot more, community education. I suppose for a long time it was only women; there are a lot more men participating now.

The comments above indicate the impact which the recession has had on Ireland and Donegal in particular. This is expanded on further when interviewees were asked what are some of the things that have shaped community education in Donegal.

I think community education has had to respond to some of the changes in the
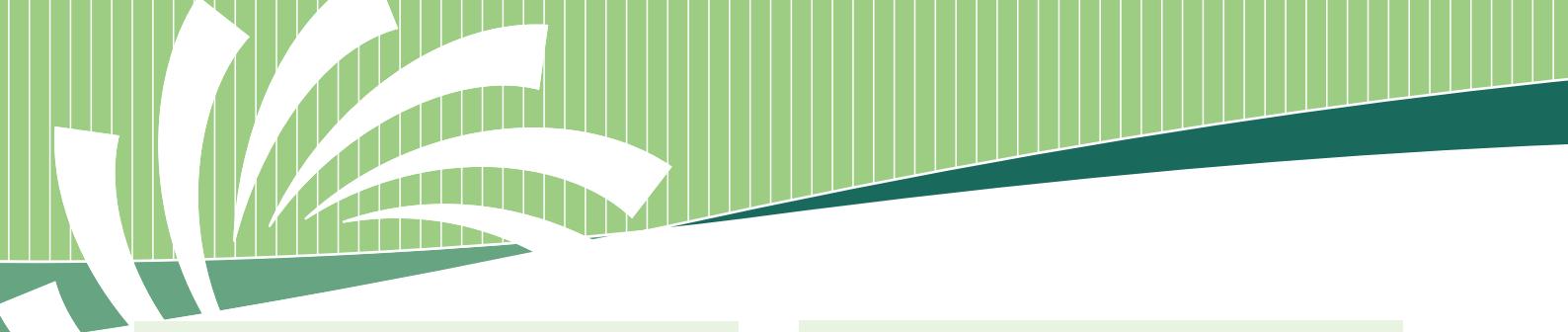
economy. The recession has certainly shaped it, the changes within what used to be FÁS and the ETB becoming the main training body, the single biggest agency responsible for education and training. Though I sometimes do wonder if that [the recession] is what is driving the accreditation business.

Fortunately, ETB staff, their heart is in community education and those of us who have worked long enough in the sector know that.

The ETB really have been a good contributor. I think a lot of it is down to good leadership and you had staff at the helm who really understood community development and community education and the language of it and had the wherewithal to connect the right people and get the participants who needed the training to come in. They had the ready-made tutors and the connections, so that was a good match really.

I think our cross-border connections also shaped it in many ways because there were so many projects funded from the Peace Programme.

Achievements and benefits

In researching the current nature of community education in Donegal, in respect of its purpose, it is important to recognise the benefits and achievements of community education in the county as these give a sense of the current purpose of the practise of community education through benefits and achievements.

I think the fact that we are able to offer holistic courses, personal development courses, for a lot of women who get so much benefit, and as I say, you only have to read their evaluation form. For a lot of women it has given them the step that they need and some of them use it as a progression route.

The Adult Education Service was built on bringing education opportunities out into the community, you couldn't have courses only in Letterkenny, Buncrana and Ballyshannon … 120 groups funded in every little pocket … the other benefit of it is the confidence, personal and collective confidence.

Tuesday and Wednesday night, Food and Nutrition; the Bicycle Project is being run by the youth project as well. We run literacy in Ballyshannon, Level 3, the women all got their awards at the ceremony last week. We run literacy Level 3 in Raphoe for women in the Finn Valley. We run football, sports and fitness for Traveller men … So at the moment we have about nine programmes running every week.

We probably have funding for the last year for 16 projects, for February/March and August applications. Service users have finished products they can take away. They can also display at the annual seminar. We make a point that four or five service users attend this.

There is a great sense of achievement and benefit for both tutor and participant when both

notice the changes over time, positive changes in people's lives. The following captures something of the essence of community education.

> *In my role as a tutor the main changes that I see from just starting getting someone into the course in the first place, for me it's the most difficult thing, recruitment … You just see people coming in heads down, lack of confidence, and going out almost transformed as people.*
>
> *I've seen women do some of the personal development courses and [one woman], she'd come in, she'd come from overseas, she had a different accent so obviously she felt alienated from [the other] parents. She shared all of this and other things that happened to her by being part of a parents' group in a secondary school where her children were struggling. Even to see their mum in school doing something positive made them lift their shoulders, 'Oh Mammy's in doing a course, you know.' And then they felt good that their children felt proud that they were doing something.*

The benefits of accreditation are not to be underestimated either.

> *Any of the ones that have achieved their certificate would say that that really meant something to them, particularly if they had left school early and had had bad experiences. It almost reasserted in their heads that they weren't a failure, that they could achieve something, it didn't matter that they were now 30 or 40 or 50.*

Summary

The purpose of community education is to bring people in the community together, overcoming social isolation and facilitating individual and collective empowerment and community networking. The majority of provision is based on the needs of the community, it is non-accredited in the main, but can lead to accredited courses also. Community education is closely connected to community development and the cuts and changes to community development have adversely impacted on the effectiveness of community education to bring about collective empowerment for social change.

Focus Group Findings

As described in the methodology section of the introduction, the five focus groups held across Donegal in 2017 provided an opportunity for providers and participants to speak about their experience of community education in Donegal. What is clear in general in the findings from the focus groups is that the work of Donegal ETB is highly valued in providing community education courses. The focus group participants spoke of the value and benefits of community education, the needs that it addresses in providing locally based and accessible community education as well as the emerging challenges for the future. What is clear is a deep commitment to really support and strengthen community education so that it may grow and flourish in the future.

The findings in this section are categorised according to the purpose and meaning of community education and how that translates in practice in Donegal. These are presented under the following headings: *meeting needs,*

overcoming isolation together, non-formal space, content of courses, local and accessible, community development and empowerment, challenging discrimination.

Meeting needs

Community education is defined by its purpose in meeting the needs of the community, particularly those individuals and communities for whom previous educational experiences have been negative, irrelevant or exclusionary. All focus groups referred to needs and distinguished between *'what people want and what people need'* (Donegal Community Education Forum)*. Community education focuses on the learners' needs *'what they want, not what somebody else has decided they should have'* (Donegal Community Education Forum)*.

Sometimes we offer stuff but maybe there needs to be more conversation about what the learner is looking for (Inishowen).

People highlight what courses they want and we do a needs analysis (Falcarragh).

We always ensure that, where Traveller women with quite large families for who childcare might become an issue when the wains are at school, we design courses to fit the needs of the community.

If a particular school or even a particular Department want intercultural training we enquire what are the training needs by doing a needs analysis (Donegal Travellers).

I must say, I very much enjoyed the courses that I have been to through the Family Resource Centre, any needs that are identified there, the co-ordinator would make an application and there's quite a number of courses running there every year, depending on what the interests are (Donegal Town).

If we remain true to serving the needs of the people within our community, whether it's a community group, an individual, or a family carer, each person has to be treated as an individual (Donegal Community Education Forum).

Overcoming isolation together

A word that kept coming up time and time again in each focus group was 'isolation', whether it was rural isolation, social isolation or being alone, this was a key theme. Community education is fulfilling a purpose in addressing isolation, it is seen as an activity which brings people together in their community and it creates community. There are many men and women, young and old, who are living in isolation, be it a young person whose only real contact is a screen to an older person who may have no means of getting around in a rural area. The first set of quotes refers to this isolation.

With post offices going to be closed left, right and centre … I heard a programme on the farmers and stuff like and the whole rural community and with the technology … more isolation again … the only communication men are going to get is if they go to a church

service on a Sunday or go to a funeral or hospital appointment, because isolation is creeping in more and more (Inishowen).

Making people more aware of what is out there and how they can participate, to give an opportunity to have the informal setting, no official meeting, listening to each other, telling stories, realising that there may be people out there who are isolated but making a welcoming place to get involved (Inishowen).

From a community point of view again, some of the issues – isolation, loneliness, mental health – it [community education] brings people together … A huge thing is emigration here, as soon as they get to 18, if they don't go to college they move away (Falcarragh).

It is more difficult for women, maybe, who are lone parents, somebody who is a widow, somebody who is on their own and the benefits of being together, that mental health, breaking out of isolation, is very important as well (Donegal Town).

The other side of isolation is the benefits which community education can generate through bringing people together. The following two quotes refer to coming together.

We talked about the synergy of groups coming together, sharing and passing on (Inishowen).

Women are restricted to caring; imagine, you could have kitchen classrooms where there could be four or five women (and children) and they could all get together in one kitchen for a class (Falcarragh).

Non-formal space

A key feature of community education is its non-formal nature which contributes to its purpose. Community education is almost the last remaining space in the education landscape where participants don't feel the pressure to complete examinations and assessments, so much a feature of the formal accredited system of learning. The findings from the focus group meetings indicate that it is crucial that this space for non-formal, non-accredited learning be preserved, whilst allowing for a community group the choice if they wish to do an accredited course. There is a view that non-formal space is under threat from the desire to increase certification. This non-formal space holds value, particularly within community education.

It comes from them and that non-formal environment where it's not imposed, it is not necessary to do accreditation but it might just seep in eventually (Donegal Community Education Forum).

We don't have any kind of accredited training and I suppose that's the difference about community education, it can have accredited and non-accredited (Falcarragh).

I think there is this traditional feeling that if you are doing education you are in a
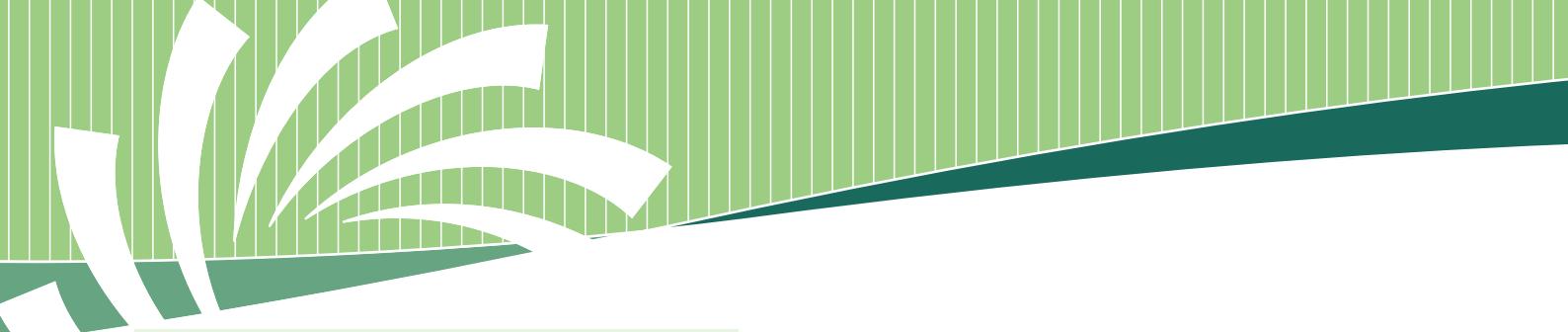
classroom situation [where] there is a teacher at the front, whereas the whole thing around community education is to be educated in numerous and various places (Donegal Community Education Forum).

People generally don't want exams. Funders now want people to be getting accredited (Falcarragh).

There are very good courses out there but some people don't feel they're confident enough to do the exams. So sometimes you lose participants because of the fear of exams (Falcarragh).

Content of courses

The range of content in courses run under the banner of community education in Donegal is quite inclusive. The courses below were all mentioned in the focus groups and they illustrate the broad purpose of community education in its content. This provides a snapshot of the range of courses delivered in the county, the majority through the ETB's Community Education Support Service. The list is not exhaustive: *social enterprise, intercultural training, food, history, quilting, stencilling, upholstery, recycling, furniture, decoupage, genealogy, creative writing, photography, farm accounts, computers, crafts, painting, human rights, art, culture, personal development, social analysis, gardening, horticulture, bicycle repair*. There will be some elaboration on those courses mentioned frequently and which reflect the core purpose of community education.

Personal development remains important as a stepping stone to gaining greater confidence in oneself which may lead to further learning opportunities, community involvement and work options.

I think we are moving (although it doesn't feel like it in Donegal) towards what we call full or fuller employment, lower levels of unemployment, so the people that remain on the register tend to be people who need the supports that you are talking about, personal development, entry-level training and pre-accreditation training to help develop a person's confidence (Falcarragh).

I have done a course on personal development which was eight weeks in Letterkenny which was brilliant (Falcarragh).

Five years ago I got involved with a homeless group, I was looking at confidence, personal development, then got involved in the board of management, the organisation (Donegal Travellers).

There have been computer courses, personal development, different things over the years which have really helped a lot of women within the group (Donegal Town).

Social analysis was a course which was mentioned frequently during the focus groups in similar ways to personal development.

My first introduction was a social analysis course and I found it absolutely brilliant.

From my experience of the course, the tutor gave me unbelievable insights (Inishowen).

I would say the social analysis course definitely rebooted me (Falcarragh).

Gardening, and the re-emergence of community gardens and growing locally, is reflected in the courses spoken about by focus group participants. There were several references to community gardens.

I think if you offer practical courses, hands-on, that can be a real key to getting people in, whether it be gardening, cooking, woodwork, those kind of things can act as a hook, the practical courses. And once they do that, they might say, I really enjoyed that, I'd like to do something else (Inishowen).

One participant described beautifully how she noticed women working away in her local community garden and took the risk of stopping and chatting to them and as a result she joined the group.

So I said, do you know what, I will walk around again, between the two things. They looked at me and I looked at them and we chatted and they said, right, we hear you are interested in gardening, would you like to join? (Inishowen).

In our own community gardening group there are all sorts of things happening in the outdoor learning environment (Donegal Community Education Forum).

Community education has the flexibility to allow for many possibilities which this participant describes in her local centre. What is noticeable here is the combination of learning the skills in crafts as well as spending time together as a group and the support which that brings.

We had a decoupage (crafts) course funded by the ETB and we built it up from then to do furniture restoration, recycling, painting and stencilling, upholstery, seat covers and stuff like that. It went really well. As a result, the girls didn't want to stop. We formed a craft club and met every Tuesday. They just kept coming. We just Google an idea and just try it and see how it goes. It wouldn't have come about if we didn't have the initial ETB money (Donegal Town).

Local and accessible

Drawing on one of the definitions of community education from *Learning for Life* (DES, 2000, p. 110) which describes community education as 'adult learning opportunities provided by the formal education sectors at community level', the purpose of community education is also very much focused on the local, ensuring that educational opportunities are located in the local area and focus on issues affecting people living in the local area. Community can mean both local geographic communities as well as communities of interest, people with common interests and concerns (*Community Work Ireland, All Ireland Standards for Community Work, 2016, p. 27*).
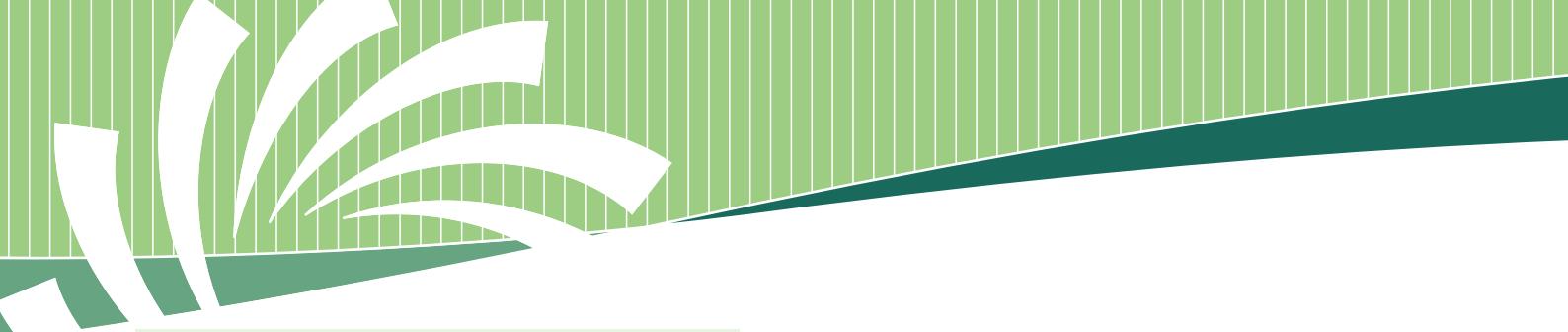
To provide accessible and relevant courses and accommodate and deliver what is needed in the local context (Donegal Community Education Forum).

The course should be locally based so that people do not have to travel long distances to learn.

The funding for the little community education courses, it has really been a great resource in the community, the availability … you know that courses are available that are local and accessible (Inishowen).

I want to participate in some courses and get some kind of a qualification, some local courses, rather than travelling to Letterkenny (Falcarragh).

Local knowledge and local relationships, that's what I would think … you can spread the message and you can ring up people and basically let them know this is on, the fact that the thing is local and people wouldn't have to travel (Inishowen).

People who identify with the area, have a sense of belonging and who can work together locally, provide a very powerful example of co-operation.

It was where a group of local people, men and women who were unemployed or who hadn't engaged for a long time, had come together to work on a piece of old waste ground and grow vegetables (Donegal Community Education Forum).

Focus group members also viewed local people themselves as a key resource, people who have many skills which could be harnessed to develop community education.

So do the Train the Trainer, to make use of the skills and knowledge available in the local area. We have a lot of people in the community with a skill but they probably don't feel comfortable teaching … they don't even realise they have a skill but local knowledge could be tapped into here (Falcarragh).

Local is also important in the sustainability sense, being able to provide for our local community for present and future generations, in terms of local produce and sustainable livelihoods. Commenting on the loss of local banking facilities, one group spoke about tourism as a way to sustain local people.

If you look at tourism, the Wild Atlantic Way brings people from different places; they all want something local, they want to know if the meat is local, if the produce is local (Falcarragh).

Community development and empowerment

All focus groups conveyed a strong awareness of the close relationship between community education and community development. Community development is defined in the *All Ireland Standards for Community Work* as: 'a developmental activity comprising task and process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice and human rights and the process is the application of principles of

participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and co-ordinated way.' (All Ireland Endorsement Body (AIEB) for Community Work Education and Training, 2016, p. 5)

To be clear, community development principles are: (i) collectivity (ii) community empowerment (iii) participation (iv) social justice and sustainable development (v) human rights, equality and anti-discrimination (AIEB, Community Work Ireland, 2016, p. 5). This definition draws on the long tradition of definitions from Community Action Network (Kelleher and Whelan, 1992, p. 1) to the definition adopted for the National Community Development Programme 1990-2011 (Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, 1999, pp. 3-4). The close bond between community education and community work/community development is both remembered and alive in these focus groups despite the destructive cuts which the sector experienced during the recession (Harvey, 2012), cuts which have yet to be properly restored.

The principles of good community development practice are closely aligned to those which underpin good community education (Donegal Community Education Forum).

I do believe community education is very closely linked to a community development approach. Where I am today is through a community development approach to education. It is about empowering me to participate (Donegal Travellers).

I think that community education has this feeling of empowerment, that we can actually do something and make a change and make a difference (Donegal Community Education Forum).

There are big picture issues as well. Community education is almost like a tool to do community development, so how do you marry the two up and look at sustainability as well? (Inishowen).

There is something else and this is the community work bit … that you are actually talking, engaging with parents, groups, families that you are supporting. It is finding community development type approaches where you are talking to people either individually or collectively about how do you progress your own learning, how do you build people's confidence, how do you take the next step (Falcarragh).

Another impact on communities … was the cuts, the whole support to community development, the whole community sector has been annihilated, cut again (Donegal Town).

Challenging discrimination
Following on from the definition and principles of community development and community education outlined above and the role of community education in 'challenging oppression and bringing about social change' (CEFA, 2011, p. 2), one group who have experienced oppression in the past and present, in every sphere of life including education, is the Traveller community.

Traveller participants in the Traveller focus group described the discrimination they experience in school, and outlined their positive experience of community education.

You were just discriminated against from the first day you went to school.

It was bad enough that the pupils would be racist towards you but the teachers were a lot worse; when you go into the Donegal Travellers Project, the women's group especially, I am going now the last five, maybe six, years and it built up my confidence … the way we were treated in school, you were put to the back of the class (Donegal Travellers).

Travellers experienced how bad it was at school. Sitting at the back of the class with colouring pencils. It was everywhere, all over Ireland. It is still there (Donegal Travellers).

There is understandable anger at this past hurt and indeed the bullying and racism experienced by Traveller children in schools today. Travellers feel they have to hide their identity to protect themselves and their children.

Children were compelled to go to school to sit in the corner and it was only for a number, for them to get these big grants then at the end of the year … The children were not being educated, it was ticking a box. The wains would have been better off at home. They'd have learned more at home (Donegal Travellers).

Community education, funded through Donegal ETB and provided through Donegal Travellers Project in collaboration with Donegal ETB, has been a much more positive experience for Travellers who have taken up education again. What has been crucial here is the community development support provided by the Donegal Travellers Project. This is a model of community education which works for Travellers and empowers them to overcome the negative experiences of mainstream schooling.

We have a lot of community education in Donegal with Travellers in partnership with ETB who have been very good and have been there when we need support with women's groups, men's groups, whatever, but we were saying if Donegal Travellers Project were not in that mix would they engage as many Travellers? Would they have as many Travellers? Probably not. We wouldn't be where we are today without community education (Donegal Travellers).

Not all schools are discriminatory or failing to protect the cultural rights of Travellers in school, for example, some schools were noted for good practice.

Interculturalism should be part of the training. I know in the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) course a small fraction of it is on Traveller culture, giving children a sense of belonging. My son's crèche also asked could they include anything on his culture in the crèche (Donegal Travellers).

Irish Wheelchair Association, Donegal – Arts & crafts

6. Findings: People

This chapter presents the findings in relation to the people involved in community education in Donegal. The chapter refers to the views expressed by funders, providers, participants and tutors in the course of the research.

Survey Findings

Questions 16 to 22 focused broadly on the *people* involved in community education, mainly providers, participants and tutors. The main findings from a selection of these questions are presented in this section. Whilst the questions enquired about these three categories, the questionnaire was sent to provider groups only.

Inclusion

In response to the question: *Does your group or community have a policy on social inclusion/ equality?* 32 of 53 responded, 28 of whom reported having a policy on inclusion, with four reporting no such policy.

Range of participant numbers per group

When survey participant providers were asked: *Over the past year, can you estimate how many people have taken part in your community education programmes?* 33 of 53 responded. The responses ranged from six organisations who had up to 15 participants to six organisations who had between 100 and 300 participants over the past year. Table 6.1 details the responses. The actual figures for overall participation in Donegal ETB Community Education Support Programme provision over the past three years are provided in Appendix 4.

Answer Choices	Responses	
0-15 people	18.18%	6
16-30 people	24.24%	8
31-50 people	6.06%	2
51-75 people	21.21%	7
76-100 people	12.12%	4
100-300 people	18.18%	6
301 + people	0.00%	0

Table 6.1: Participation in Community Education Programmes

Issues in participant recruitment

When asked: *Over the past year, to what extent have you come up against any of the following issues when trying to target/ recruit people?* 31 of 53 responded. Over half the respondents indicated that they had not experienced issues of 'transport/ childcare', 'need for extra resources', or 'lack of understanding of community education' as obstacles in their participant recruitment to any extent. However, a significant number did identify these as being obstacles to a large extent as indicated in the right-hand column (No. 6) in Table 6.2.

The detailed comments from eight respondents under '*Any other issue not named above*' reveals some issues that have arisen in the recruitment of community education programme participants. These are presented in Table 6.3.

Issues come up against in trying to recruit participants	To no extent 1.	2	3	4	5	To a very large extent 6.	Total
(i) Need for transport/childcare for participants	14	3	2	2	2	6	29
(ii) Need for extra resources to target people	9	3	5	2	3	8	30
(iii) People are not informed or do not understand community education	6	8	6	2	2	5	29
Any other issue not named above							8

Table 6.2: Issues and Challenges that Impact on Recruitment

Response	Any other issue not named above
1	Need to mentor groups on the application process for community education grants.
2	Transport.
3	Need for more vocational training that is local and accessible.
4	As our service users have physical disabilities, we always require trained staff on site and if doing activities it may require additional supports which is always a challenge.
5	People are nervous about the amount of information required to take part in some of the courses.
6	No issues.
7	Currently hosting an Art Class but when the co-ordinator asked for PPS numbers a few said they would not be returning to class. They don't like sharing personal information.
8	Promotion or advertising to create awareness.

Table 6.3: Additional Challenges that Impact on Recruitment

Specific groups including vulnerable groups

Survey participants were asked: *Over the past year, have you actively targeted specific groups under the following equality grounds?* The relative groups and responses are presented in Figure 6.1. Twenty-eight of 53 responded to this question. The trends indicate that community education providers in Donegal do encourage specific groups to engage in community education programmes. However, there is clearly a trend to target some groups to a greater extent than others in a specific way. There may be a number of factors at work here. Groups may provide courses that are open to all, irrespective of any particular ground. On reflection, it would have been better to provide an open question inviting comment to allow respondents an opportunity to expand on their responses to this question.

Clearly, older people, men and women, are the groups most targeted for community education followed by parents including single parents, people with disabilities, and young people. There is some specific focus on people of different faiths and people of different cultural backgrounds, but less specific focus on Travellers and LGBT people. However, this finding comes with the caveat that further research would be merited here.

| Women	Men	Young people	Older people	Parents, including single parents	People from different religions / faiths	People from different ethnic / cultural groups	People with disabilities	Travellers	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender people
57.14%	64.29%	28.57%	78.57%	35.71%	25.00%	28.57%	35.71%	14.29%	14.29%
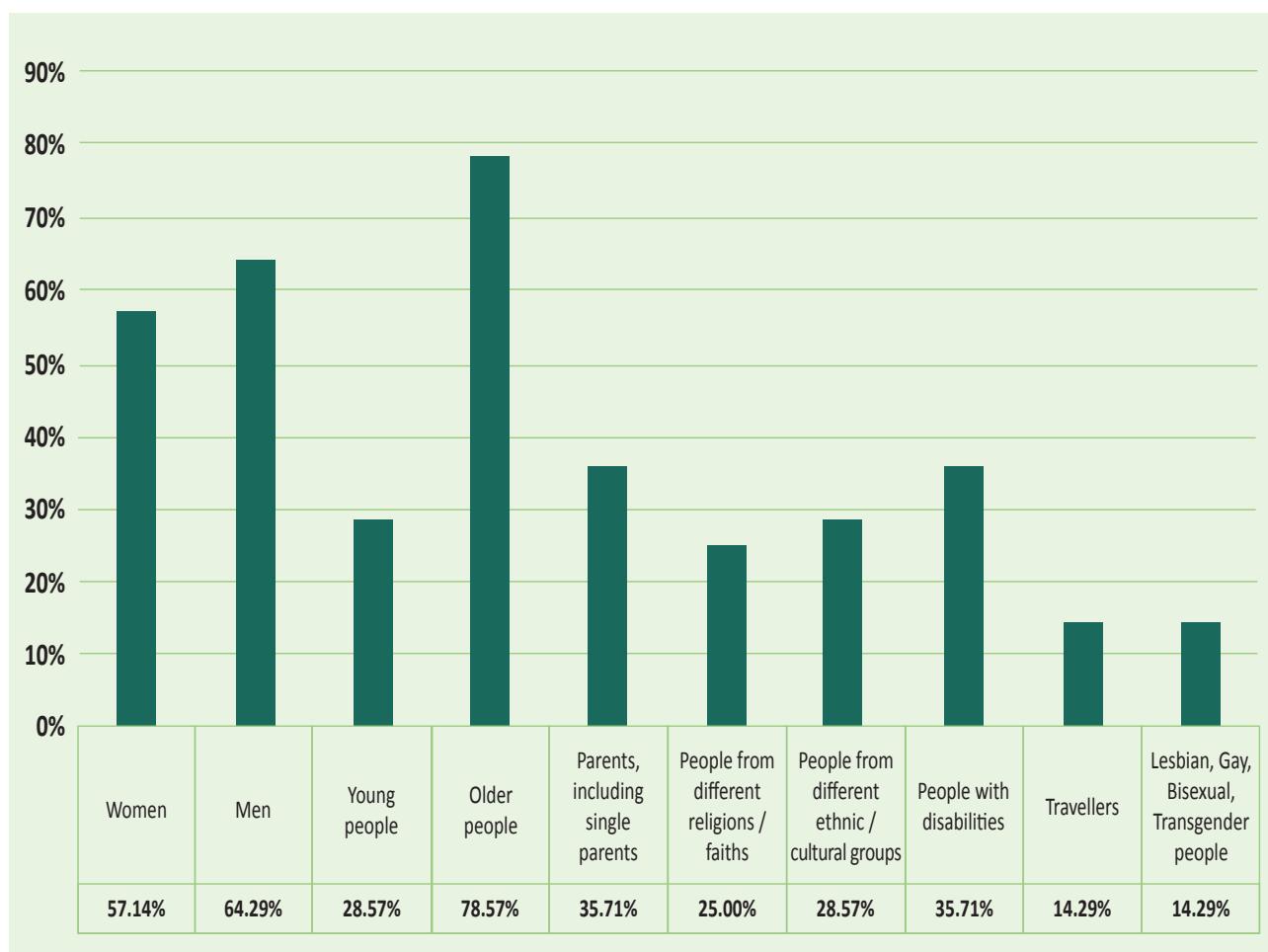
Figure 6.1: Active Targeting of Groups Under Equality Legislation Within Sample

Barriers for specific groups

When asked: *Are there groups/communities who have experienced barriers to accessing community education courses in your area?* 31 of 53 responded. Twenty responded 'No' indicating no barriers preventing participation. However, 11 responded 'Yes' and provided the following details in Table 6.4 on the groups so affected and the specific barriers they face. Older people, single parents, young people, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities were identified as groups experiencing barriers to accessing community education courses in these cases. Lack of transport, childcare and space are barriers as well as low income, isolation, language and prior negative experiences in education.

Response	If yes, which groups are so affected and what are the barriers they experience?
1	Poor history of courses in this area.
2	Older people have been targeted to participate in Active Elderly Fitness classes and have expressed difficulties with regards to transport. Single parents have experienced difficulties accessing education due to the costs of childcare and lack of public transport.
3	Low income individuals and families.
4	Young people who have left school early or dropped out of education and who find it hard to identify some direction in their lives. We find that this is a challenging group to work with. It requires a lot of pre-development work to identify them, make contact and develop a relationship with them before any progression can be made to get them back to education. Also, when they do start a course they require additional support. This may be because of bad experiences they had previously in education, mental health problems, or addiction problems. Our experience is that if many of these young people are given the chance the results can be very good, with many going on to employment or further education.
5	Ethnic communities – language barrier.
6	Not within Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) services.
7	We seem to attract a very low ratio of foreign nationals in our centre. I expect this is due to the fact there is no transport system available.
8	Entire population because of location on offshore island.
9	They did not have a place where they could feel relaxed and valued and where they could sit down and have a cup of tea. Opportunity to talk with other men in a safe environment that is supportive to whatever their needs are.
10	Disabilities, intercultural.
11	Transport, technology, childcare, financial.

Table 6.4: Barriers to Accessing Community Education Courses

Tutors

In response to the question: *How do you identify tutors for the community education programme you provide? (From the list below, please tick √ 3 that most apply)* 33 of 53 responded. The most frequent response was 'the tutor has particular skills and expertise' (25 responses) followed by 'personal experience of the tutor' (18 responses). These were followed by 'we are recommended tutors from other groups' (13 responses). The detailed responses are included in Table 6.5.

The three 'other' responses emphasised the importance of the tutor being 'comfortable with the group' and their ability to draw on past experience with groups as factors in selecting the tutor.

Finally, survey participants were asked: *What three things do you most look for in a tutor?* The most frequent responses included: knowledge (of subject), expertise, skills – in particular, ability to communicate, facilitate and engage with the group. In addition, qualities such as patience,

empathy, reliability, availability, commitment, experience, understanding of social inclusion, equality, human rights and community development principles were also looked for in a tutor. Professional qualities and reasonable cost were also factors.

Interview Findings

Five one-to-one interviews were undertaken with stakeholders in community education in Donegal representing the following: funder, people with disability, women, Travellers, and tutor.

The five interviewees held a range of views on the themes relevant to the people involved in community education in Donegal. This section examines responses to individual interview questions which related to the *people* involved in community education in Donegal, participants, providers and tutors. Interview questions referred to in this section are included in Appendix 2. Interviewees were asked who are some of the people benefiting from community education (q. 4) and who is community education for, in your view, and is there anyone it's not for (q. 5).

Answer Choices	Responses	
We are recommended tutors from other groups	39.39%	13
We draw from our database of tutors	27.27%	9
We are provided with a list of potential tutors by the ETB	27.27%	9
Personal experience of the tutor	54.55%	18
Tutor has particular skills/expertise	75.76%	25
Other (please specify)	9.09%	3

Table 6.5: Methods Used to Identify and Recruit Tutors

Participants

Interviewees felt the following participant groups in particular benefit from community education.

I suppose because we're a women's project we would never have attracted the 18-20 age category, or if we did it was very few. But I've seen a shift now. We seem to be getting retired women at the moment, or women that have been in the home for years, they've been rearing their family, possibly looking after an elderly person, who's no longer with them. The family have now all grown up. They're in second-level or third-level education. The woman finds herself at home, has lost even her confidence to come out of the home, and now has taken a huge leap to come out, and even to attend an eight-week personal development course.

People who are socially isolated. Twenty years ago I felt it was mostly a gender issue and mainly women who were down-trodden. For me it is much more about poverty as a gender issue. We have a lot more of men's groups now, Men's Sheds, since 10 years ago.

Travellers, the length and breadth of the county, and strategically, even though we are based in Letterkenny, we run programmes if we can to try and cover the county. We can't go to every village but we try and run programmes that are geographically spread. We also work with the Roma community. We tried to do a bit of work this year to see could we get enough Roma to do English classes.

Currently, the people who are benefitting, many have been early school leavers in my experience … I remember this one man saying to me, 'I'm not book smart.' So they [participants] are coming with lots of stuff on their shoulders, and it is only when they start talking to each other that they all share their common stories.

Obviously you get a cross-section of professional people who are in jobs as well who just want to upskill and want to do other courses as well. The last global development course would have had people who had retired out of the HSE, who had been teachers, mixed with ordinary housewives who maybe never had a chance [to complete formal education].

Disadvantage and marginalisation

Interviewees were also clear about who community education was for in terms of the focus of their courses.

It's for a lot of disadvantaged women as well. I know I am seeing a slight shift in that, but our main focus would be disadvantaged women. There's a lot of people out there think, well, her husband's working and might have a good job. That does not mean to say that she has money. We would see a lot of poverty and a lot of women are struggling at the present time, too, to keep a roof over their heads and to keep food on the table.
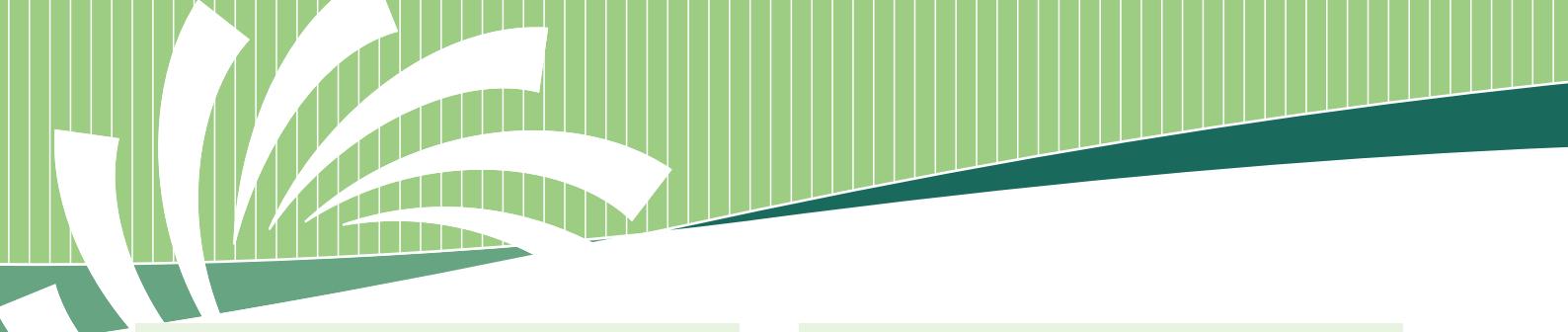
So, disadvantaged women would be our main focus group.

When asked to clarify what they mean by disadvantage, this interviewee replied:

Financial [disadvantage] yes. And even women who are living outside town, they might be living in a rural area or outside of a village, they may not have their own transport … I had a woman who was doing a course here who organised a taxi to take her from her house into the village and then organised the public transport from the village to the centre. That was a lot for her to do, but she felt really isolated.

Interviewees were also asked whether community education contributed to the participation of marginalised individuals in the community.

We have had some applications from such groups, but I would say, probably not many. When there was a direct provision centre in Donegal Town we used to do quite a bit of work with that group … Now there is a group of Syrian refugees who have just come in to Inishowen and Donegal ETB will be doing literacy work with them.

Yes we are, people with disabilities are marginalised and Travellers. I would know quite a number of people in the Travellers Project who would have availed of community education.

Yes, we have two service users here from eastern Europe.

Inishowen Development Partnership are very clear on social inclusion, very clear on involving groups that wouldn't normally be involved.

Interviewees also shared a sense that Donegal, like other rural areas, has been left behind in the so-called recovery.

The recession has done a lot of damage. The government are saying we are out of the recession. I actually don't agree with that. I don't agree that we are out of the recession. They may be getting it a bit easier in the cities, in Dublin, in Cork and in Galway. But as far as Donegal is concerned, I feel we are very isolated. There is still a very high percentage of people who are unemployed and it has a huge impact on families. We hear that every day of the week here. There is a lot of poverty here, depression. That is why the courses we run here do help.

It is for people with disability obviously, but there is nobody it is not for. We see that from the community education scheme,

someone may have left school 30 years ago, left school at 15. Since the recession we have had people changing jobs, men in construction. Some of our best staff have come through community education and they have to be heavily supported through that process. The ETB do that very well, by and large the tutors are excellent.

Older people and younger people

One interviewee felt that young people could benefit from participating in community education. This may be feasible through intergenerational projects involving older people's groups e.g. active retirement of which there are 17 in Donegal and younger people's groups, youth clubs. The involvement of younger people in community education to carry the torch in the future was a theme running through focus groups also.

I suppose this is my bugbear … In terms of the criteria at the moment, they don't allow young people to be involved in community education because it is for over-18s and my argument is, if it is community education, the best way a young person can get a role model and a mentor and learn is from adults who have skills.

If you have a group of women doing crafts or you have men in a Men's Shed for example, why shouldn't there be a mini-Men's Shed for young people who come in and get to have experience with a man who knows how to build, knows how to put two planks together, or they know how to do a

sculpture? They are going to learn not only the physical skill but also getting the insights and experience of that person's life that could be handed on.

It is also argued that opening up community education to younger participants would enable groups to meet the required number of participants more easily, particularly in rural areas and villages where it is difficult to get the numbers to sustain a course.

Tutors

The role of the tutor is viewed as critical to community education. In choosing to run a community education programme in the early days of the provision, community groups might run a taster programme with a number of subjects and tutors.

Invariably, group after group after group, it was the person not the topic that determined what they wanted to do, the tutor who clicked with them was what they ended up deciding to do. The tutor is critical and the relationship that tutor has with the group, the tutor's ability to facilitate that group, no matter what he or she is teaching them. That is critical in establishing the relationships and bringing them together as a group … and the tutor's ability to foster that confidence in the group is critical.

It is also recognised by interviewees that training needs to be provided for tutors in order to resource the community education programme into the future.
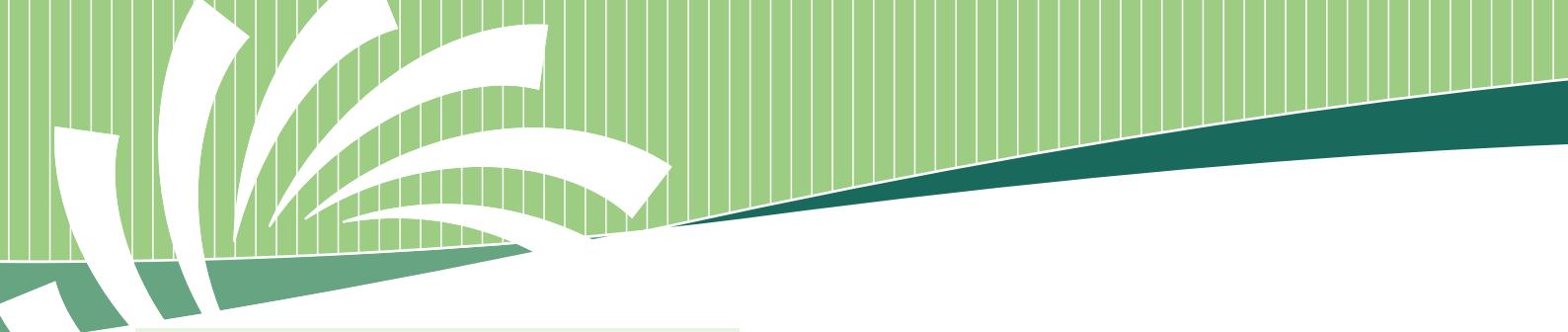
I remember doing a two-week advanced facilitation course … I think we needed to be doing more training with tutors around that kind of thing.

There is scope and willingness to provide such training in continuing professional development. It had been raised with the researchers, the fact that tutors are only paid per hour and that travel and subsistence is not paid to tutors.

What we would have done there is, if we ran a training day for tutors, say it was an eight-hour day training, we would have paid them for four hours and that is what we do with part-time tutors working in Back To Education Initiative (BTEI) or literacy … that kind of investing in tutors and investing in training because we wouldn't have the capacity to fund community development workers. We don't have that kind of money, but we could fund the training of tutors and the training of volunteers.

The tutor interviewee also argued strongly that the sector needs to be resourced to the same level as other sectors in the education system. There is no library or resources facility for CEFs in the county. Participants would benefit from having their own printed handbook, similar to a student handbook/diary in second or third level. Tutors are often paid different rates for delivering courses, with variations in rates where groups source their own tutors. Quite often delivery of accredited courses is paid at a higher rate. Under traditional DES/ETB rules, tutors are not covered for their travel and subsistence costs, or the time involved in Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) related assessment work, portfolio and folder assessment and maintenance for quality assurance purposes which all takes considerable time.

Community workers and community development training

Earlier in this section, the impact of the cuts to community development on community education were referred to in the context of changes over the past 10 years. The role of community workers in Donegal as a locally based resource who support community education is referred to further here.

We have such good networks and the Community Workers' Co-operative were able to keep it together. But the Co-op is no longer there which means there is no-one to convene and no independent voice to bring a group of community workers together.

When I meet community workers now and to me they are (I don't want to sound arrogant) they are community organisers. There is an absence of space to do social analysis or politicise students around social change … The work of community workers was boundaried … As community development became more embedded across a whole pile of government Departments, which was a good thing, the boundaries became blurred on what the profession does … the original function and role of a community worker around social justice, equality and transformation and dealing with dire issues of poverty and social injustice got slightly watered down.

We had great solidarity through the CDP network because you could discuss transformation in the various programmes, you'd learn from each other … and that [reduced] infrastructure definitely has left a vacuum. The number of CPDs has been reduced from nine to four over the last 10 years.

There was a course called the Second Chance Education Project for women and it was on facilitation and adult education. A large number of the women who did that course ended up working in community development and are still working in community development 20 years later … all those people now are older, some just retired. I do feel it is time to start investing again in that kind of course. I just don't think the degree courses have the same impact.

Interviewees spoke about both a community development higher certificate and a degree course which ran in Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) and on an outreach basis in five centres for learning. The team who ran the programme were experienced practitioners in community development. However, when four years of the programme ended, none of the staff were retained. This was considered a loss. The loss of the core team and the transfer of teaching duties (which happens within educational institutions) to personnel who have not worked in community development or may not understand community development compromises the learning. However, it is felt there is scope for engagement between the Letterkenny Institute of Technology, the

ETB and community development workers in Donegal to renewing community development and leadership education and training again. Interviewees expressed the need for such training in community development once again, to ensure that there will be community workers to follow those who have led the way over the past 20 years. In that regard there are positive signs that the Donegal Community Education Forum will take this up (Appendix 3). There are other signs of hope also.

But I do think there is a gap, we should run a community work course back in Donegal, probably diploma level and then degree level.

It makes me hopeful that four Travellers from the Donegal Travellers Project went to Maynooth and did the Traveller and Roma Community Work Course, Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) Level 7, in one module and all four have passed. There's two Travellers in the LYIT doing degrees in health and social care third year, and there's two people on the access course.

Summary

The people engaging in community education as participants represent a broad spectrum from older people to adults in the main. There is scope for the further engagement of young people in the 18 to 30 age group and consideration should be given to young people in the 14 or 16 years to 18 years group who currently are not eligible participants. Many people from vulnerable groups also participate in community education. There is a view that
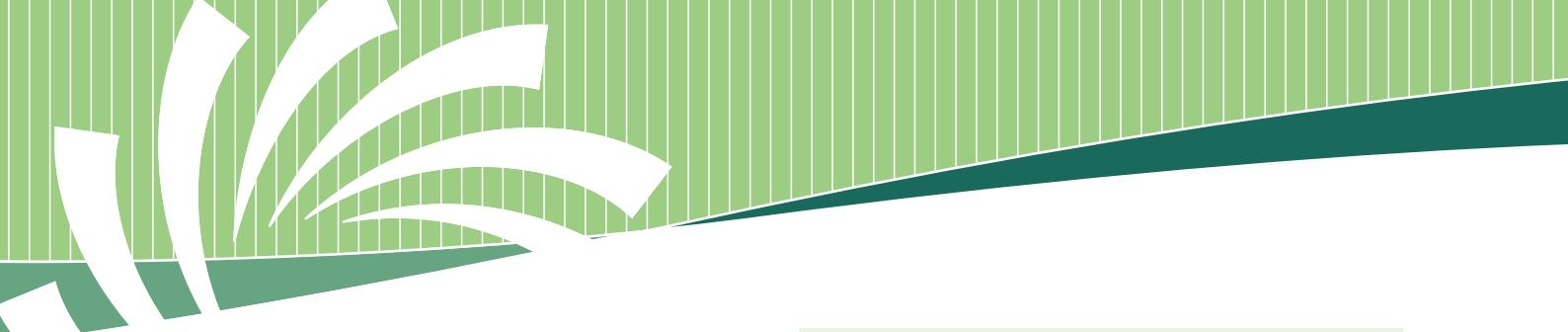
whilst funding for community education was not cut, there were cuts to the community development sector with the loss of CDPs and community workers who play a key role in engaging in the grassroots work to engage people in community education. The role of the tutor is critical to good community education and there is both a need and a willingness to support greater training and continuing professional development for community educators. Finally, there is a call for the sector to be placed on a par with other sectors with regard to terms and conditions and resource library for tutors as well as library, handbooks, resources and supports for participants.

Focus Group Findings

The findings in this section are categorised according to the people involved in community education and their experiences and issues in community education in Donegal. These are presented under the following headings: *women, men, older people and younger people, minorities and tutors*.

Women

Women have been leaders in the growth in community education in Ireland since the 1970s/1980s. One woman spoke of her desire to encourage younger women to consider doing a community leadership course as they are taking a lead in their local project. It takes a bit of encouragement to overcome the past negative experiences in education, which may have affected confidence in their ability to participate in community education.

I did mention it [the community leadership course] to some of the women who left school early. Our education system didn't value them and these women are so intelligent and they are young mothers … leaders in the future (Inishowen).

I have signed up for the social enterprise course which is the one about learning to start a business and I have actually been over talking to the women's group. I just wanted to see if we could get a group of women who would be able for it, because this time the course is only for women (Falcarragh).

The unequal treatment of women is both an historical fact and a current reality. There is increasing awareness of the need for gender equality. For example, Donegal Travellers Project are running an *Introduction to Gender Equality* course through virtual teaching with An Cosán. (There will be further discussion of the virtual or online approach in the chapter on process.) The following quotes from participants speak about the systemic discrimination which women experience in general, be it in pay or promotion, and how education of women in particular has been very valuable.

We talked a little around women and how they were under attack in the years gone by. Women are still under attack. The marriage bar was influenced by a lot of things. And we also talked a lot about the systems and structures where people are seen as the problem (Donegal Town).

Men

A key change since the last research in 2007, when men's community education was just emerging, is the growth of community education and community development with men. Much of this has been done in collaboration with the local Men's Sheds, supported nationally by the Men's Sheds Association of Ireland.

Prior to Men's Sheds, men's groups have been supported in Ireland through the Men's Development Network (MDN) based in the South East of Ireland. MDN have links with men's groups around Ireland and they organise the Men's Summer School annually for men's groups across the island of Ireland. The approach of MDN is to challenge male conditioning, which culturally prevents men from sharing their feelings, their emotions or from showing men's vulnerability. This conditioning generally results in health problems for men including alcohol-related problems which affect family members also. MDN also promote the White Ribbon Campaign nationally. White Ribbon is the world's largest male-led campaign to end men's violence against women, with a presence in over 60 countries. The Men's Sheds Association and MDN are important resource organisations for men's community education and community development.

Ireland was the first country in the world to publish a men's health strategy (*National Men's Health Policy 2008-2013*, Department of Health and Children, 2008). The Men's Health Forum in Ireland is an all-Ireland charity which promotes Men's Health Week running in June each year.

The quotes below from two male participants at the Inishowen and Donegal Town focus groups provide a sense of the valuable work happening with men in Donegal, some of it done by the men themselves voluntarily with no funding. It is certainly an area of community education which is likely to grow and will need funding support in the future.

I did my diploma in community development. I always enjoyed working with men. I enjoy them for the task that they are and the challenges they bring … and a lot of my stuff was done which I just funded myself … I did the men's health awareness at the Vintage Show in Moville and it was mobbed (Inishowen).

We have a Men's Shed on our grounds. They have done a few courses recently. We have done a horticultural course, and woodturning. We have done upholstery as well. They [the men] are mad about it. When we started off we had two men, actually at the first meeting there was only one fella came and it just built up from there and we have 10 now which is very good (Donegal Town).
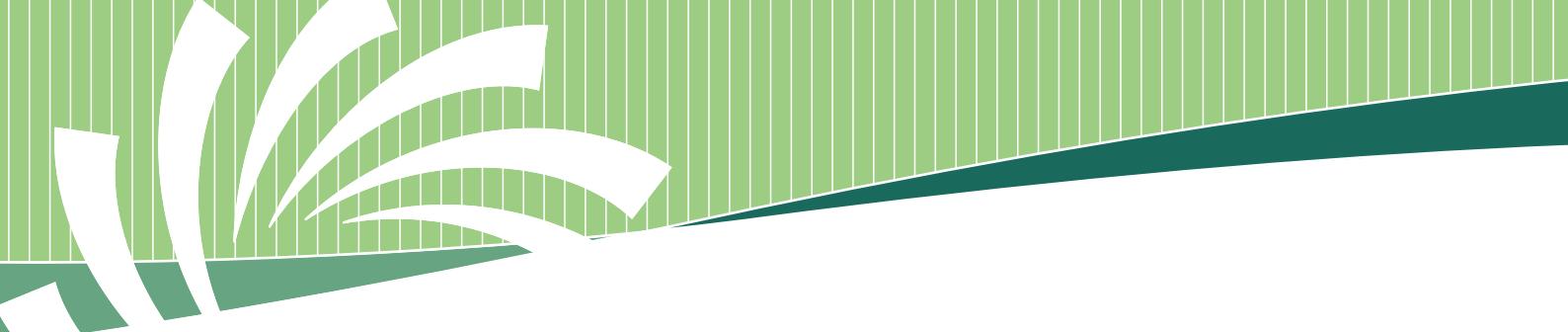
Older people and younger people

Older people comprise one of the largest cohorts of participants in community education in Donegal. Those aged 65 and over made up between 21% and 23% of total community education participants from 2015 to 2017 (Donegal ETB, 2018, Appendix 4). The focus groups identified some issues affecting older people. Whilst technology can bring benefits, it can be a barrier for many older people as these contributions show.

It's just everything now is about www [the internet]. Quite a lot of older people are not good with it. I'm not myself. Communication with people is gone. It is just www and too bad if you can't get it. So there is no conversation. They won't discuss the matter, do it that way or do without, and an awful lot of elderly people are not that confident with www. And it is holding people back. When you ring up you have to go through six options before you get to speak to someone (Donegal Town).

I would be on the Older People's Council. We'll be identifying areas where older people might need support or might benefit from support. Information Technology is one of them because now when you go into the bank, or no matter where you go, there's no communication, you use the machine, and if you can't use it, I'll show you, press button A, press button B, whatever (Donegal Town).

As the population of older people will increase significantly in the coming years as pointed out earlier (15% currently, 21% by 2031), it will be important to ensure older people are not left in isolation. Community education is supporting, and will continue to have a role to play in supporting, activities for older people in partnership with older people's groups such as the Active Retirement Groups.

The Active Retirement Group self-organise now and run activities for older people in Muff, Greenbank. We knew that there were people sitting at home all day who should have more than benefited from it, a cup of tea, movie or gardening class, whatever it was (Inishowen).

The focus group participants also spoke about young people and involving younger people in community education through inter-generational projects and specific links with youth work.

What I am hearing is, we are all getting older and where are the young people? It could be about bringing young people to meet with the Active Retirement Group to learn about different approaches. We did a few programmes there, we had young people, TYs (Transition Years), and older people, just to be part of the whole gamut of understanding. We are all dependent and we can all learn from each other, education is learning, and it was wonderful (Donegal Town).

I'd be talking about hard to reach youth, you know … that courses are available that are local and accessible (Inishowen).

In the same way that community development workers are key allies for community educators,

youth workers who are locally based would serve a similar role in engaging younger people in community education. Currently, young people aged 18 upwards are eligible for participation in ETB-funded community education in Ireland.

Street-level youth work … street work … just going out … going up to the house and tipping down to play a game of snooker, you just have to make that relationship and work with it and really encourage young people and identify a course (Inishowen).

More youth workers are needed for the actual one-to-one to go and actually tell young people what's happening and draw them in to the actual course (Inishowen).

Community education emerged from the critical tradition (Freire, 1970) where people in communities discussed the issues affecting their lives and asked questions about systems and structures which were causing poverty and inequality. The content of community education with younger people, and indeed older people, could create dialogue and critical thinking about the issues affecting our communities.

Minorities

All focus groups did refer to minority groups in the community and spoke of the importance of inclusion. The focus group with Donegal Travellers, having discussed negative experiences in mainstream schools, spoke of the positive work being done now by the Intercultural Training Team in Donegal to educate school staff and staff of public bodies about Traveller culture and, indeed, all different cultures and minority groups.

Recalling the collaboration of Donegal ETB's Community Education Support Service with Donegal Travellers Project earlier, the value of community education is evident.

Doing the primary health care training at the Mountain Top, doing the physiology, doing the law, doing literacy, confidence building, we wouldn't be skilled in the jobs we are skilled in only for community education (Donegal Travellers).

A long time ago it used to be Traveller-specific culture. We have moved away from that now to an intercultural training team made up of Black African American, Traveller, Polish. We have become trainers. So we can help if a particular school or particular Department want training (Donegal Travellers).

Community education has played, and continues to play, a role in working with communities to integrate diverse cultures in the community in County Donegal. The Donegal Intercultural Platform are represented on the Donegal Community Education Forum. Other minority groups who are vulnerable include asylum seekers/refugees.

In the early stages we mainly did work for asylum seekers (Donegal Town).

We talked about the Syrian refugees and how that came up and that fear and lack of knowledge, it's something that probably
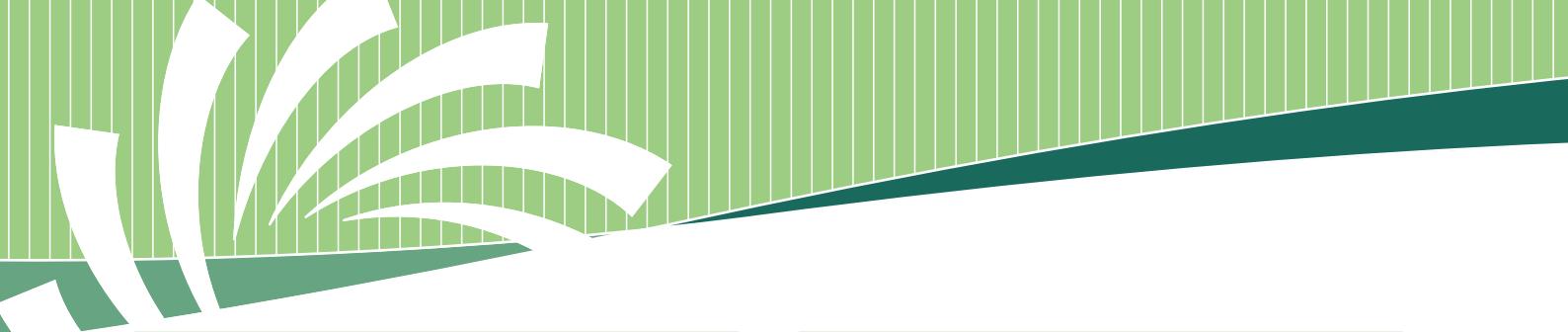
needs to be addressed. And then when you are trying to engage people and let people realise how the project might relate to them, what you are going to do and how it relates to them … breaking down barriers, explaining that it's not scary, it is a global concern (Inishowen).

Tutors

The role of the tutors as key people in the work of community education has been referred to in the survey and interviews earlier and the focus groups also made reference to the important role of the tutor.

We found that in a number of courses we run that the tutor is key to the actual courses (Inishowen).

The course they are delivering, if they can get it across in such a way that it's mostly practical, that it is what you are doing. And if there is some theory associated with that they will actually work with you on that. I know there is that push on delivering courses that lead to progress, but it really is key if the tutor can deliver the course in such a way that it is practical and based on the

actual theory and just to make that part of it (Inishowen).

This has happened us as well, where people want a course and they know a tutor and they come to us and say, we have a tutor and we'd love to do this course (Falcarragh).

In 2009 I moved home after the big crash. There was a wee course the Community Workers' Co-operative were doing in Letterkenny, it was personal development, so I signed up for it. It was one day a week, every Tuesday. It ran for six or eight weeks and it was brilliant. So I would highly recommend it, and the people that were doing it were really good tutors as well (Falcarragh).

Do I think the tutor makes a big difference, the person delivering the training? Oh yes, definitely. They can make and break a group as well (Donegal Town).

I know certainly our tutor through the Education and Training Board … they, having been empowered, can start their own business as well (Donegal Community Education Forum).

Dunkineely Community Development – Star Trails

Moville Men's Shed – Boatbuilding

7. Findings: Process

This chapter presents the findings in relation to the process involved in community education in Donegal. The process refers to the 'how' rather than the 'what' or purpose of community education. The process examines all aspects relating to how community education is managed, funded and facilitated, how participants are recruited and supported, and how tutors are recruited and supported in the programme. Process has to do with the maintenance and facilitation as such which is important to the delivery of community education in the county. The chapter refers to the views expressed by funders, providers, participants and tutors in the course of the research.

Survey Findings

Survey questions 23 to 26 focused on some aspects of the process involved in community education from the perspective of providers. These aspects were mainly to do with participant recruitment and participant supports. The main findings from a selection of these questions are presented in this section.

Participant recruitment

Survey participants were asked: *How do you recruit participants onto the community education courses that you run? (Please tick √ all that apply, please rank them in order of importance, 1 being most important.)*

Thirty providers responded to this question. The most important method of recruitment in 2017 appears to be 'notice/advert in a newspaper' closely followed by both 'social media' and 'posters in public areas'. This trend is, perhaps, a reflection of the times we live in. The second most important rankings of ways to recruit participants in community education were 'word of mouth' followed by 'community newsletters' then 'phone calls to possible interested parties' and 'neighbourhood/community work'. In terms of the third most important method used, the rankings, in decreasing order, were 'existing community work', 'email details around' and 'door to door calls'. We shall see later with the focus groups that direct communication, as opposed to online communication, is still valued in community education in engaging participants.

Neighbourhood work featured as an effective approach in the last study on community education 10 years ago, particularly in relation to engaging women in marginalised communities. Whilst 'neighbourhood/community work' did register in preferences 1 to 7, 'door to door calls' was not viewed as a means of recruitment. That said, 'word of mouth' seems to be a tried and trusted means of recruitment of participants.

Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1 illustrate the detailed results.
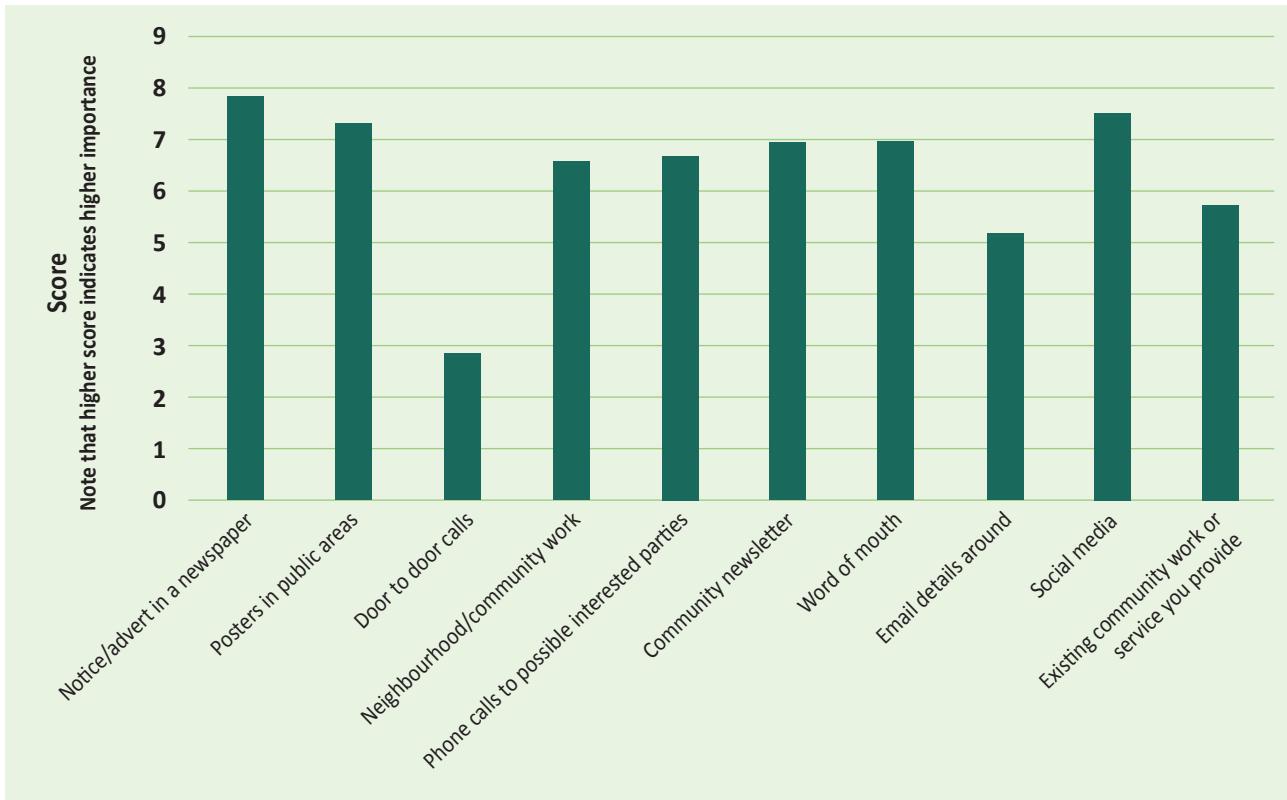
Figure 7.1: Approaches Used to Recruit Participants

Order of Importance 1 to 10 Ways of Recruitment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	n/a	Total	Score
Notice/advert in a newspaper	5	5	3	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	7	25	7.83
Posters in public areas	1	6	3	1	4	1	2	0	0	0	4	22	7.33
Door to door calls	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	12	19	2.86
Neighbourhood/community work	2	1	4	2	0	1	4	1	0	0	5	20	6.6
Phone calls to possible interested parties	0	4	5	5	1	3	2	2	0	0	3	25	6.64
Community newsletter	2	3	2	4	3	0	1	1	1	0	5	22	6.94
Word of mouth	3	2	6	3	4	3	0	0	2	0	1	24	6.96
Email details around	2	0	0	2	5	2	4	2	1	1	4	23	5.21
Social media	9	3	1	4	1	3	2	2	0	0	3	28	7.52
Existing community work or service you provide	6	1	0	0	3	3	1	2	4	1	3	24	5.76

Table 7.1: Ranking of Approaches Used to Recruit Participants

Note: whilst most important is ranked 1, the opposite applies to the score column. Higher scores indicate more importance in the score column.
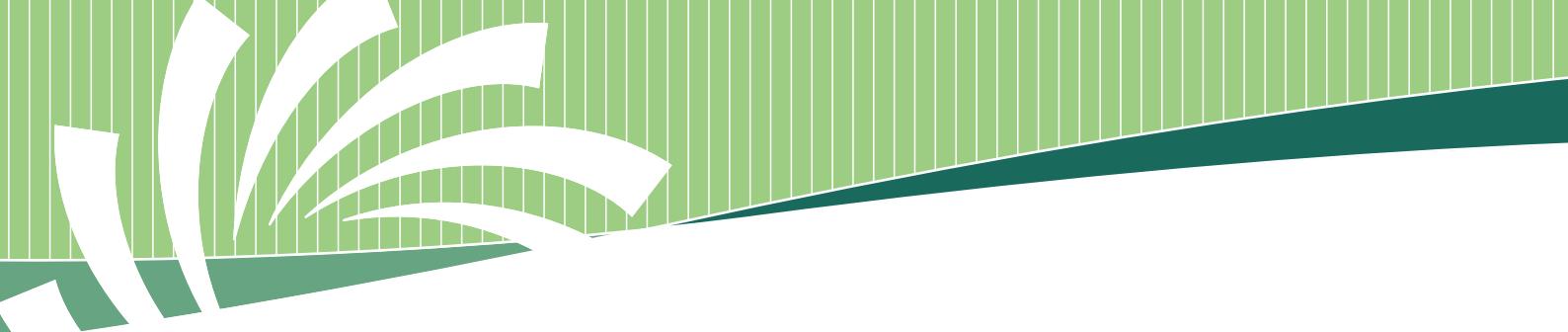
Funding

Survey participants were asked: *Over the past year, what has been your main source of funding to support you in your community education courses/activities?* Thirty providers responded to this question. As the samples were drawn from Donegal ETB-funded providers, the ETB were the main funder of community education programmes provided by respondents. Respondents were asked to tick those that applied rather than rank in order of preference. The frequency of responses for particular funds is indicated in Table 7.2.

Funding sources as indicated in the 'other' category included contributions from 'local wind farm', 'National Lottery', 'Erasmus', 'Donegal Sports Partnership', 'Donegal Local Development Company', 'Inishowen Development Partnership/Change Makers', 'Pobal/HSE', 'materials grant from National Learning Network', 'raising own funds' through small course fees/contributions, coffee mornings, concerts, local collections and donations.

There were 29 responses to the question: *Over the past year, has your funding allowed you to do the following? (Please tick √).* The funding allowed provision of a tutor and a space for community education, two crucial components, as well as developing courses to suit the needs of the community. There was less scope with the level of funding to provide for travel and childcare. Detailed responses are presented in Table 7.3.

Answer Choices	Responses
Department of Justice and Equality	1
Department of Foreign Affairs	1
Family Resource Centres/TUSLA	5
ETB community education grants	27
One-off grants (e.g. Katharine Howard Foundation)	5
PEACE IV	0
LEADER 4	1
SICAP	6
North West Regional Drugs Taskforce	1
Other state funding	4
Other funding	7
Other (please specify)	14

Table 7.2: Main Sources of Funding for Courses/Activities

Answer Choices	Responses
Provide a room for delivering community education	20
Provide staff to organise community education	13
Provide travel/childcare for participants	2
Actively target individuals to take part	12
Provide an external tutor to deliver community education	26
Develop courses that suit your needs	16

Table 7.3: What Funding Support Helped Achieve

Additional supports

Twenty-three respondents answered the question: *Are you providing additional supports to facilitate community education programmes in your area e.g. Transport, Childcare?* Fifteen responded 'No' while eight are providing additional supports. Four respondents are providing transport (albeit on a limited basis in a widespread area). One respondent is providing childcare through the pre-school facility, and one each providing for 'staffing costs', 'community volunteers' and 'one-to-one' support to participants.

Interview Findings

Five one-to-one interviews were undertaken with stakeholders in community education in Donegal representing the following: funders, people with disability, women, Travellers and tutors.

The five interviewees held a range of views on the themes relevant to the *process* involved in community education in Donegal. This section examines responses to individual interview questions which related to the process involved in community education in Donegal. The themes are: leadership and funding, promotion and engaging participants, administration and reporting, and evaluating benefits of community education.

Interview questions referred to in this section are included in Appendix 2. The most relevant questions relating to process were questions 9, 10, 14 and 15 and will be referred to as they arise in the section.

Leadership and funding

The changes in structuring of Further Education and Training at national level with the amalgamation of FÁS and VECs and the establishment of SOLAS are viewed by some as having the potential to have a negative impact on community education. There is a concern that an economic and labour market training paradigm which was the remit of the former FÁS will come to the fore in Further Education and Training. Community education works from a social purpose paradigm and sees education in a much broader sense than simply preparation for employment.

I don't think nationally there is any genuine understanding of community education or appreciation of its value.

The role of the Donegal Community Education Forum was referred to in the course of interview responses. The Forum was viewed as useful and it certainly could have a greater role in the future. These responses from interviewees centred around the role of the Forum in minding the vision for community education in the county. The research initiative taken by the Forum was viewed very positively and could provide an opportunity for the Forum to refocus on its leadership role. A number of suggestions were put forward in this regard.

I think it is one of the things which we could have done collectively [social change education and political education]. It was one of the reasons we had the Community Education Forum active for a few years and

then it kind of petered out and we brought it together again, about a year or two years ago.

The Forum could expand, we need a few members to be from the minority communities or people with disability. We need to bring people around the table, participants who have come through community education programmes themselves which they can talk about, rather than just us as professionals. If we are not political with a small 'p', how can we expect to create social change on the ground through our programmes? That would be a nice thing to do for the Community Education Forum because that builds a team or a movement around that whole Freire sort of approach across everything. It is a great opportunity.

I think the Forum should be broadened and it should meet four times a year. I think they should have to have at every single meeting a presentation of a community education programme … I think the community education group should have some sort of capacity building for a day around what I was saying about sustainable goals (part of a broader vision); it needs to have a connection to what it is trying to achieve for everybody in Donegal.

Promotion and engaging participants

Interviewees were asked what was special or distinctive about the way community education happens in Donegal.

I think the ETB is really supportive. If you go to them with an idea, it's an open door and I think that they're very collaborative.

A lot of the courses we are running are non-academic, and that's what a lot of women are looking for right now. So for me, the most important thing is they [the women] don't need to have any particular level of education to access the courses we are delivering here.

When asked what was meant by non-academic, the interviewee explained as follows.

You are not going to be asked to write an essay when you go home … I know one of the courses asks you to keep a journal but that's a private, personal thing. You are not going to be judged on what you have written. You are not going to be judged on your handwriting. You are not going to be judged on how you have actually written it.

Engaging participants is a key aspect of the process of community education in Donegal. The work involved on the part of promoters and tutors is not to be underestimated. There is a lot of work that goes into getting one participant through the door and this often involves a lot of outreach work. It also draws on the significant skills which community education tutors bring to their role in teaching.

Just getting someone into the course in the first place, for me that's the most difficult thing – recruitment – people just don't put

themselves forward for things. It requires a lot of word of mouth and pushing … obviously, then, having funding from the ETB helps, and having that logo doesn't do any harm.

You just see people coming in heads down, lack of confidence, and going out almost transformed as people … You'd have people saying things to you like, 'We didn't think we would bring so much of ourselves into the course, we just thought it was going to be an academic exercise.' But a lot of these community education type courses are really giving people an opportunity to reach in to who they are, who they really are as a person. And you know, it isn't about grammar and it isn't about how they express it on the paper, it's the concepts and the ideas and the reaffirmation of who they are and what they can contribute to their community.

Good facilitation is also viewed as key to the process of good community education.

We did a bit of a focus group on what they got out of the course and one of the participants said to me, 'The very first day I knew this was going to be good because of the way you facilitated the first session and it made me feel in safe hands here.' Safe space, trust; the ground rules, the basics of facilitation.

Interviewees were asked what needs to happen if community education in Donegal is to thrive

and grow stronger and the following responses were given.

More awareness would help things. It is important. Not everybody wants to go down the road of accredited courses. So I suppose to ensure that the government continue to have the funding there, to fund the likes of the ETB which then support the local community groups.

I would be hopeful that there will always be post-holders like the people there now, it is human nature, they will work to a prescription, but they will find ways to help us.

If you look at the census figures, 14.3% of the Donegal population identify themselves as having a disability compared to 13.6% which is the national average. And 30% of people with a disability who want to work can't get it. The public sector hasn't even met its own disability employment quota of 3% and now they are looking to increase it to 6%. Employers are afraid of disability. That needs to change.

Administration and reporting

Interviewees were asked what challenges they faced in their role vis-à-vis community education. Issues around the administration of courses raised important concerns. These were shared by all the interviewees and as we shall see in the section on focus groups, these concerns are shared by funders, providers and participants alike. There is a sense that the level of administration of community education
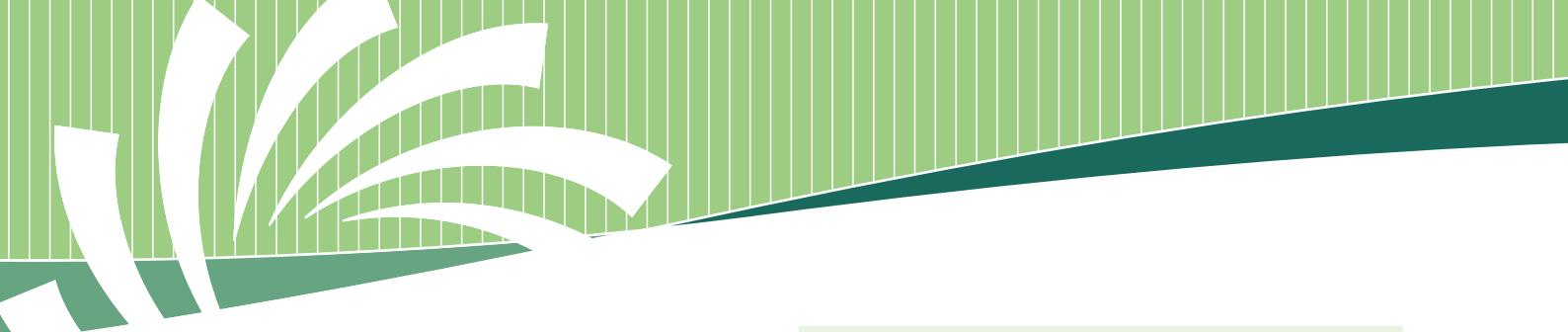
has increased and aspects of it are creating difficulties. The state is developing ever more sophisticated IT tracking and performance indicator systems to track public funding and the community education sector has not been immune to this. The main concern centres around obtaining participants' private information, date of birth and Personal Public Service (PPS) number.

I could talk about the paperwork. I see that there's a lot. It used to be years ago participants would come in and do the eight-week programme, I'd fill out the template sheet, do an evaluation sheet and that was it and then report back to the ETB. There is a change now in that there is a lot more information required by the funders in terms of the individual's background. What was new in terms of our Autumn programme is they were looking for their PPS number. Now a lot of participants were very suspicious about that … Then it had to be all set up on a database and emailed through, looking for date of birth, looking for phone numbers, that is a lot of private information that is now required of each and every participant.

One of the changes that is adversely affecting the delivery of programmes is this requirement for PPS numbers, people don't like it. They don't understand why it is necessary and why it is necessary to give it each time to apply for funding because it means a lot of form filling and there is a lot of unease about it. We have had people refuse to give it and I have informed the ETB that they have not given their consent

and therefore it [the PPS number] has not been given … we normally get 75% of our funding up front, we did not get 75% until we had in all of the completed forms and we were halfway through most programmes and we had spent quite a chunk of money ourselves. For a group like ourselves, we can probably absorb it for a while, but smaller groups they won't be able to absorb that. So as I said, the amount of paperwork that now goes into a funding application is huge.

This concern is exacerbated by the new EU General Data Protection Regulation which comes into force on 25 May 2018 (Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, 2018). A participant has the right not to give this personal information. However, as we shall see in the focus group testimony, a learner can only be registered/recorded if they provide date of birth and PPS number. Funding is provided on the basis of recorded participants. This would appear to present a conflict between the data rights of the prospective participant and the data practices and responsibilities of the provider.

I do have concerns and I think the ETB may well have concerns and everybody else with the new data protection regulations being introduced in May.

My colleague was at a data protection seminar at the start of the week and actually, under the data protection procedures, if somebody does not want to give their PPS number, we've been informed they don't have to.

The issue of requesting personal data and how it acts as a barrier has been raised by the ETB at the highest levels nationally, but the state has proceeded with the practice for the community education programme as well. The ETB predicted that people would refuse to provide PPS numbers as the following quote indicates.

> *We already had a group who said: 'I have been getting funding now from the ETB for a number of years and now we have to fill in all this information and I want to tell you, I am not going to ask the people in the group for that personal information, these are my friends, neighbours, therefore we won't be applying for funding.'*

A further issue is the considerable resource demands on community groups of complying with increased administration. There is no denying the need to account for public funding and particularly the need to actually track if equality is being achieved in terms of participation in education for example. No-one would deny that it is important that state supports go to those most in need, to ensure people who are unemployed, low-income families, people depending on benefits, are being supported during hard times. However, imposing a system to gather this information which has not been discussed with people or with frontline workers who know the issues involved doesn't seem to be a good way to go about it. The issues here are 'trust' and 'privacy' as we shall see from the focus groups also. These interviews suggest the current

state practice of requesting PPS numbers from participants on informal community education courses is causing considerable disquiet and perhaps it is time to convene an expert group involving civil servants, IT experts, frontline staff and participants to discuss a bespoke system for community education.

Evaluating benefits of community education

A related issue which one interviewee commented on was the difficulty in documenting the benefits of community education. This relates in some way to the previous issue and the tendency of the state to invest in recording systems which deal only with numeric quantitative measurable data on programme outcomes. There have been calls for the development of qualitative measurement systems e.g. *social return on investment* measures which have been developed (New Economics Foundation and Office of the Third Sector (UK) 2009, cited in CEFA, 2014, pp. 32-33; CEFA, 2011, p. 14).

> *I think one of the biggest challenges for anybody involved in funding community education as we are is the difficulty of documenting the benefits of community education. It's that old chestnut again, how do you document if someone has an increase in self-confidence … I remember speaking at a conference a number of years ago. I was saying the Department should do a longitudinal study of a number of people and follow them through and see how or what that experience [of community education] has meant to them.*

The Community Education Facilitators' Association has been calling for years for 'systems that will measure outcomes and progression, setting qualitative internationally comparable indicators' (CEFA, 2011, p. 14).

The challenge expressed by the interviewee is a valid one and would seem to influence state policy in regard to future planning. A recent review of Further Education and Training by Dr John Sweeney of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) refers to measuring community education benefits, specifically self-confidence.

> *The programme [community education] guards the need for non-accredited provision. Its informality is considered essential to enticing some people distant from the labour force to take a first step to becoming attached. However, it is not (yet) demonstrable whether in effect it builds confidence in learning and leads to greater ambitions.*
> (Sweeney, NESC, 2013, p. 45)

Whilst Sweeney does point to the value of community education: *In bringing people with literacy deficits and low levels of formal educational attainment to re-engage with learning, adult literacy and community education programmes make a significant contribution to workforce development* (p. 56), the phrase 'not yet demonstrable' suggests that because it cannot be measured in numeric rates or percentages then there is no evidence for confidence building. However, there is ample qualitative research evidence and numerous case studies which prove that community education does build confidence.

> *Personal development outcomes are very high for community education, showing that providers and groups are achieving a central goal for it, which is to enhance the self-esteem and confidence of learners (experienced by 85% of learners).*
> (AONTAS, 2010, p. 14)

Focus Group Findings

The findings in this section are categorised according to the process involved in community education, the 'how' as opposed to the 'what' of community education. These are presented under the following headings: *co-ordination and leadership, outreach and networking – engaging participants, through the door and conversation, facilitative process and venue, administration process, participant numbers and online blended learning.*

Co-ordination and leadership

The role of the Donegal Community Education Forum was referred to in the course of the research involving focus groups. There was a sense here that the Forum has a key role to play in co-ordinating and leading community education in the county whilst it is managed, funded and delivered through the ETB Community Education Support Programme in the main and other funders.

> *When this research was undertaken 10 years ago, there was a Community Education Forum in the county which looked at these issues – transferability, good experience,*

good knowledge – but now we are all in our wee silos, all protecting our own wee pot of money, all doing our own thing … I think this is something the ETB should look at in terms of how do we get together all the providers even if it is only once a year (Falcarragh).

I think it is having that Forum for discussion where we are talking about common purpose that is really important (Donegal Community Education Forum).

The ETB staff working in adult education and in the Community Education Support Programme are commended for their openness in their work which is very much valued by community groups.

I feel from an ETB perspective that it's that dialogue and collaboration with the community groups that gives me so much hope … when there's a problem, by being on the phone to people, we have teased it out and discussed it and got around it (Donegal Community Education Forum).

It is important, too, that regular evaluation needs to happen so as to avoid getting into a rut of providing the same course year on year, the 'same old, same old' as one focus group mentioned. The importance of evaluation, and always asking 'why we are doing this', is evident in these quotations.

We talked about the centres that are local that need a shakedown; further education needs a shakedown as in how they provide education to the places where they are located. The model I suppose is: how is it

there are people in the same positions for years who keep doing the same process over and over, and to really ask the question, why? (Falcarragh)

Allied to this there was a view that a 'providers' Forum' should be established for the purpose of reviewing and evaluating provision of community education and planning for the next year.

It would be worthwhile to have a providers' Forum to discuss good ideas, things to avoid; sharing tutors, materials, notes, methods, approaches; and to address questions like tax for facilitators and tutors (Falcarragh).

I think this sort of process should happen more often. Conduct annual surveys with communities, after all, the more you keep talking and the more you hear from the people, the more they'll avail of your courses (Falcarragh).

Outreach and networking – processes to engage participants

The issue of outreach and networking as processes to engage participants was important to all focus groups. In particular, the Inishowen group did some valuable analysis of outreach and networking as processes to engage people in community education. Outreach and networking are recognised by Inishowen Development Partnership as important in their work with communities in the area.

I think it is important to remember to go out, because we don't do that enough, go to where the audience are (Inishowen).

You nearly need to go to a captive audience. I did the men's health awareness at the Vintage Show in Moville and it was mobbed, it was mobbed because the population was there, the footfall was there and we were in the big tent (Inishowen).

Networking can work at different levels. The focus group felt that 'parish' is an important focal point for people in Donegal – probably through faith communities and the GAA, soccer and sports clubs, people identify with their parish. Networking between diverse groups and sharing information about courses could take place more at parish level, whereas networking at the level of common interest could happen at regional level e.g. community gardens in various towns and communities in Inishowen.

There's a real need to be able to look at what's successful when we start to network and get information out. I think the parish works on a lot of levels and then maybe at Inishowen level you get the common interests (Inishowen).

Telling people in the community about courses which would benefit them could also be done through existing processes e.g. the Community Welfare Officer or Citizen's Information Office. There is some frustration at top-down imposed network structures at the local level, yet these structures could be used to facilitate sharing of information.

Person in the community as a signpost, a network in the community, there are people

whose job it is to be doing that, that they can refer to each other (Falcarragh).

Where is the community coming together? I know this is a bit larger again, but even the new structures, where we used to have the community and voluntary sector, everybody, I can understand. I am part of that. Now there is the Public Participation Network (PPN). What does that mean? Is that for me? (Donegal Town).

In the context of dealing with the issue of suicide and self-harming, a local Family Resource Centre hosted a two-day training course for a group of local service providers – Gardai, community leaders and families affected by suicide. The value of the network in this context is spoken of here.

What came from that was okay. The two days finished, but as a result of what we discussed it very quickly became a network, a community network, and as a result of that there have been other occasions when we have got together (Donegal Community Education Forum).

Through the door and conversation

The issue of engaging participants in community education is very much on the minds of all providers in the focus groups. As well as outreach and networking, the groups emphasised the importance of local notes in newspapers, local radio, parish bulletins, fliers and of course social media. 'Word of mouth' is still seen as very important. Other suggestions included 'announcements' at other events such as 'Bingo'. Conversation and personal

communication are viewed as necessary and effective in engaging participants in community education to bring people through the door.

I think it was about getting people through the door. It involves 'hooks', programmes that are attractive. The other thing was 'going out the door' ourselves, not just staying inside the door, do that thing of attending other people's open days or festivals and go to non-traditional places. The importance of connecting with wider public events where people casually come past you whether it be a festival stall, things that maybe we tend not to do enough of; it's about rethinking how we are going about communicating with others outside (Inishowen).

Finding ways to make it very non-threatening and user-friendly, that personal connection is critical to that as well … so that people feel they can connect back to somebody and have a chat, it gets you through the door sometimes, that chat, and for some people that's the hardest part (Inishowen).

The focus groups identified creative ways that work in engaging participants in conversation about an issue which could be used to engage specific groups in community education courses also.

The men were standing in a queue to sign … we had an information thing about health and wellbeing and a conversation with one or two people, that's all it was you know (Inishowen).

There was a long conversation towards the end as regards the lack of communication which has evaporated, particularly with modern technology, and we need to engage more with individuals and families (Donegal Town).

It's around community leaders maybe being able to identify gaps in their community and having that conversation with individuals, this is something that could bring people together, and it's pre-development kind of work as well (Donegal Community Education Forum).

Facilitative process and venue
The focus groups also considered processes such as the facilitation and teaching which works for community education courses as well as the venue for community education courses.

People might wonder … is it the same as an old school thing … this idea here [sitting around a table] is a nice format. It's not formal and nobody is up there telling you, that kind of thing, so it is more interactive, more friendly (Inishowen).

Smaller providers who aren't core, they need something [funding] for the venue and the tutor and maybe something towards the materials (Falcarragh).

Transport is a challenge in rural Ireland and I think we would have the very same challenge in getting the numbers and getting a proper venue. There's a café which we used and a number of years before that

it was a restaurant, because schools are not convenient, you know, for the traditional night classes (Donegal Town).

It is important that the education takes place in an environment where participants will feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging. Schools might not be the best venue due to previous negative educational experiences, whereas community venues where the groups feel comfortable are generally better for community education activities.

We find it is hard to get the cost covered [funding] if we don't have a space. The venue and environment are important … the venue is important for the sense of belonging (Donegal Travellers).

I think it's easier for people to come to a community setting than, say, going to an education centre or school. Some people that have not had the benefits of a high level of education in their earlier years would find it much easier going to a community centre. They would not find it as threatening (Donegal Town).

Administration process
There were a number of issues relating to administration of community education in Donegal, one of which also emerged in the interviews, namely PPS numbers, date of birth and other private details required of participants. The other issues could be grouped under participant numbers and payment of tutors/taxation issues. All focus groups focused on the personal details issue and numbers to some extent whereas tutor payments and tax were raised by one focus group.

There is disquiet at all levels, including the ETB, in relation to the requirement for community education participants to provide their PPS numbers. Whilst participants would have the right not to provide such information under the General Data Protection Regulation directive, the reality is the ETB will not be able to record them as participants and as a result, funding, which is based only on recorded participants, would be affected, i.e. it would reduce if a participant chooses not to provide the details.

Our participation would be seen to drop, even though in reality the participation hasn't changed, if the system won't allow us [ETB] to record without the PPS number and the date of birth. In their [SOLAS/DES] 'reality', the participation has dropped even though in our 'reality' it hasn't. However, eventually funding will drop (Donegal Community Education Forum).

I am afraid to mention it, but the fact that we are moving into a more bureaucratic type of community education system is something that we can't ignore. Especially the more details being required and PPS numbers for people who are coming in at the entry level and the reticence in putting forward personal details from the likes of older people who are very aware of the media saying, don't be giving your details away and here we are, asking for

it! Also people who may be on welfare systems and not wanting their details to be known. I think that we need to be very cognisant of that in the area. Going forward, I think it will be a challenge to keep those basic programmes going that have been going so well up to now. It's definitely an issue we need to address (Donegal Community Education Forum)

There are countless quotes from every focus group on this issue. There is resistance to it, especially for courses that are not directly relating to employment. There is a sense that this is a residue issue from the amalgamation of FÁS and the VECs.

The requirement for PPS numbers is the old FÁS legacy. FÁS were used to dealing with people this way, the PPS number was your identity … the ETB recognise that this is ridiculous. For accredited courses it is one thing, but for recreational, and more so for creative, courses where you are trying to build up people's confidence … why is a PPS number required? (Falcarragh).

I think what they need to do is they [ETB] need to be able to differentiate between people who are undertaking skills-based training – and in that line I can understand where they are coming from because now they are the agency under SOLAS that has that responsibility so I can get that – and, say, the participants that aren't looking to do that. Say it was an information session on autism … why is somebody's PPS number required? Where is that relevant? (Donegal Town).

A final issue which may impact on tutors and which adds to the administrative workload on all providers are the tax regulations concerning payment of tutors. Tutors who may be providing a number of hours teaching courses in different venues would have been paid the gross amount in the past and the tutor would be responsible for their own tax affairs. However, if the tutor is not a registered self-employed person, then the provider will have to deduct the tax at source and pay the tutor through the payroll. This effectively could mean the tutor has several employers. This level of administration may affect tutors' willingness to teach courses in the future.

In the past with the ETB courses, a tutor would sign a contract and you paid them and they were responsible for their own tax affairs. Now it is becoming a major issue because you have to put them through your own payroll and pay them on your books. It's a major issue for tutors because they might work for four or five different organisations. It would be better if there was just one (Falcarragh).

It is causing us a problem as the tutors, not that they are getting a lot of money, don't want to teach now (Falcarragh).

Participant numbers and online blended learning

There is also the challenge to have adequate numbers to make the community education courses viable. The ideal number would seem to be 12 people. This can be a challenge for
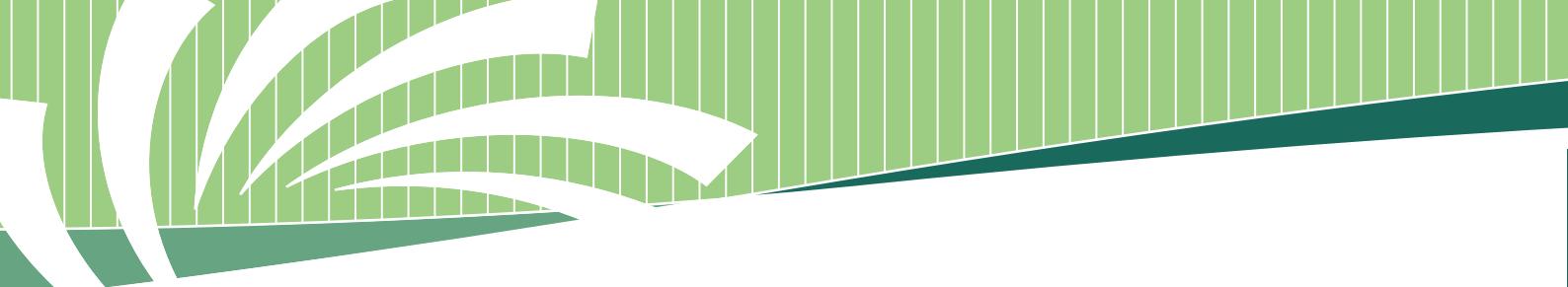
rural areas. One of the ways that this is being overcome is through the possibility of online provision which is being piloted by providers in Falcarragh. This requires broadband connectivity at the community hub where the participants can meet and listen to the online class and discuss the material.

One woman was saying there was nothing in the area she was interested in, the only thing is IT and she wanted to do social science.

The flip side is we need a number of people to sustain a course. We do distance learning with An Cosán, they do the lectures in Dublin. The difficulty with the course is that it costs a lot more than non-accredited courses. But

it does mean, if we got two people here, two or three in Letterkenny, another four or five somewhere else, that's a class.

There was a community development Level 5 course, also in Dublin, and all the lectures were done online, and a group used the computer facilities in Letterkenny Unemployed Centre. They didn't have to leave the county so we are looking at trying to do that … There is no tutor cost, there is no transport issue, we are having to buy computers for people that they then sign for and borrow so everyone is online.

We are not convinced about it but we are going to have a go at it and see (Falcarragh).

8. Recommendations: Purpose, People, Process

This chapter draws together conclusions based on the main findings from the research on community education in Donegal in 2017 and makes recommendations for consideration by the Donegal Community Education Forum, Donegal ETB's Community Education Support Programme and all stakeholders involved in community education in Donegal.

Think Tank

One of the terms of reference for this research was '*the facilitation of a think tank with the key stakeholders to inform and develop future community education programmes and practice, and explore how community education can best be used as a tool to develop critical thinking, social analysis and collective action*'. To this end, a think tank was facilitated by the researchers in Letterkenny on 20 March 2018. There were 18 attendees, three of whom had participated in the focus group/interview phase.

Following introductions and clarification of the role and engagement with community education, the summary findings were presented under the headings: purpose, people and process. After the input on findings, the following questions were posed for small-group discussion. The full responses are included in Appendix 3.

What makes you hopeful about the findings?
What surprised you about the findings?
(What wasn't mentioned, what is missing?)
What are the key issues/concerns?
What were the things you feel you have a bit of energy about from this morning's session?

The outcome of the think tank was to focus on three actions to move forward. These were: (i) Shared Vision Values and Core Principles of Community Education (ii) Role of the Community Education Forum (iii) Community Education Course Design – Creative and Imaginative Approach.

The preliminary discussions of think tank participants are included here.

(i) Shared Vision Values and Core Principles of Community Education

- There is a need for time and space (like today) to explore shared values within the community education sector.
- Propose training for providers and participants.
- Make sure there is equality of access, participation and outcome.

(ii) Role of the Community Education Forum

- Ownership of all engaged in community education.
- Equal membership and countywide.
- Provide details in the preamble of the research regarding its membership and role.
- Circulate it and its terms of reference.
- Launch of research could coincide with relaunch of the Donegal Community Education Forum.
- Role in following up on recommendations coming out of the research.
- New membership – how to include the learner's voice as well.
- Maintain an online space.
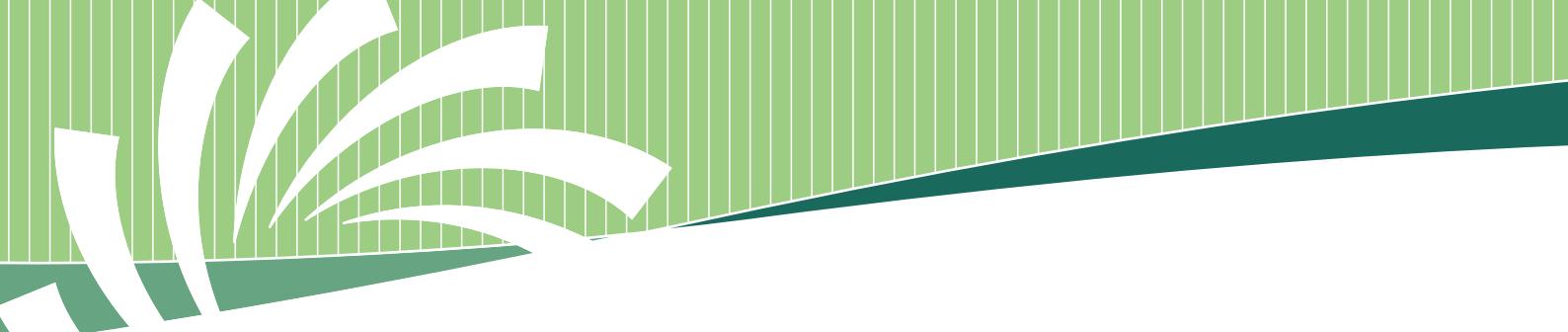
**(iii) Community Education Course Design –
Creative and Imaginative Approach**

- Major award in community development (Level 5).
- Positive civic engagement.
- Some topics to include: Intergenerational, Community Arts, Arts for Social Change, Social Enterprise, Social Analysis (Gender, Patriarchy), Public Sector Duty, Global Development/Environmental Pillar.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The findings of this report suggest that community education is thriving in Donegal. It is fulfilling an important role in bringing people out of isolation into the community. It is diverse in the issues and content of its courses. It is holding the space for non-formal education whilst providing opportunities to participants to do accredited training also. It is served by a dedicated team in Donegal ETB, and tutors who are core to its delivery across a large county. It focuses on individuals and communities in the broadest sense, but especially it is for those affected by poverty, exclusion, racism and disadvantage. There is a consciousness about place, the local as being important, but at the same time an awareness of the global – not least the challenge of climate change – and that community gardens are perhaps an important signpost to a sustainable future.

There is a consciousness about place, the local as being important, but at the same time an awareness of the global – not least the challenge of climate change – and that community gardens are perhaps an important signpost to

a sustainable future. There is an appreciation of the contribution of our older citizens and activists and what they can teach the young and there is a strong desire to engage the young in community education, too. The role of women as leaders in community education is now being complemented by the greater involvement of men in community education. Community education has been the lifeline for Travellers and other minorities and individuals for whom the mainstream education experience has been a negative experience. There is concern that the state is placing a heavy burden of bureaucracy on small community groups in ways that are ever more invasive and demanding. People are treated as economic units or numbers rather than citizens by such systems. It is difficult to sum up all that has gone before in this report, but this is the sense of the nature of community education in Donegal in 2017.

Yet for community education to continue to thrive and grow stronger it needs minding, it needs nurturing, protection and leadership. Above all, community education and all involved must come together around a shared vision and a shared strategy for its present and future. This final chapter attempts to put forward some suggestions towards that end.

Drawing together the findings of this research, there are a number of recommendations which are offered here to the Donegal Community Education Forum and Donegal ETB's Community Education Support Programme and indeed to all stakeholders in community education in Donegal.

1. Vision, Principles and Values

1.1 The think tank recommended that space and time are needed to look again at the vision for community education in Donegal. This would involve remembering roots (AONTAS and Freire understandings of community education). It may focus on purpose, people and process involved around the vision. There was a desire expressed in the findings for a vision which places community education in a broader context, a global context, whilst remaining grounded in the local.

1.2 The aim of this work is to develop a shared vision and to promote and support the vision through training events for funders, providers, tutors and participants.

1.3 A time frame and resourcing of this vision work will need to be put in place, inviting those who led out on this at the think tank to move forward on this action and supporting them in doing so.

2. Governance and Leadership

2.1 The think tank also recommended that the Donegal Community Education Forum be relaunched. The research was viewed as an opportunity to do this. There is energy and enthusiasm to relaunch the Forum and the important role and work which the Forum can oversee.

2.2 The work under this recommendation should examine the terms of reference for the Forum and clarify its functions, roles and responsibilities and membership. It should also involve clarifying the role and responsibilities of the ETB in keeping with its statutory role and obligations vis-à-vis the Forum. The role of the ETB's Community Education Support Programme within the Forum should also be defined.

2.3 This work should have regard to the national context and policy framework for community education outlined in the documents referred to in the policy chapter of this research (chapter 3).

2.4 It is recommended that membership of the Forum be expanded as appropriate to ensure participation of all stakeholders including funders, learner/participant representation, tutor representation, and provider representation.

2.5 It is recommended that the Forum meet regularly at least three to four times per year.

2.6 A time frame and resourcing of this governance and leadership work will need to be put in place, inviting those who led out on this at the think tank to move forward on this action and supporting them in doing so.

3. Teaching and Resourcing

3.1 Donegal ETB should allocate the maximum resources in terms of human resources (CEFs and Administration) and financial resources to the Community Education Support Programme.
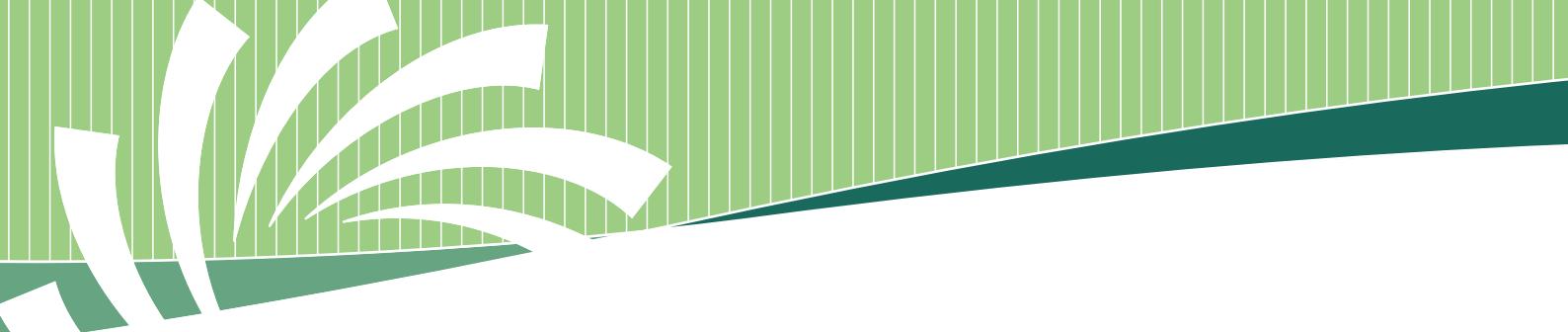
3.2 It is recommended that tutors be paid for assessment work and provided some cover for costs of unpaid work related to their ETB tutor role in community education e.g. a training allowance for in-service training or continuing professional development. It is acknowledged that this may involve a national decision at DES or SOLAS level and may be pursued at the national level and/or at local ETB level.

3.3 It is recommended that investment in tutor training and continuing professional development be prioritised. This would include induction training for new tutors/community educators and ongoing training for existing tutors/community educators e.g. advanced facilitation training to equip tutors with knowledge and skills to deliver courses based on need and issues relevant to communities and in keeping with the vision and strategy of community education in Donegal.

3.4 It is recommended that the level of resources available to community education in the county be enhanced on a par with other sectors in education, for example the provision of a library, resource room, and the provision of participant handbooks for community education courses.

4. Annual Providers' Forum

4.1 A Forum of providers of community education should meet annually over one day to review the learning year that has passed and plan for the learning year ahead.

4.2 The Forum agenda may include the following: vision and strategy context, what works in terms of engaging participants, content of programmes (range of issues covered), tutor engagement, evaluation, administration, networking sharing of good practice (what works), planning for learning year ahead.

5. Community Education and Community Development Collaboration

5.1 The think tank recommended the design and development of a major award in community development at Level 5 (QQI).

5.2 The course content to include core modules on community development principles, social justice, human rights, equality, and policy.

5.3 The think tank recommended the content also include Intergenerational, Community Arts, Arts for Social Change, Social Enterprise, Social Analysis (Gender, Patriarchy), Public Sector Duty and Global Development/Environmental Pillar.

5.4 It is recommended that collaboration be revived to include community workers and community educators with a view to re-establishing a strong voice for autonomous community development in County Donegal, as existed prior to the economic downturn and prior to the closure of the Community Workers' Co-operative in Donegal.

5.5 A time frame and resourcing of this collaborative work involving community

education and community development will need to be put in place, inviting those who led out on this at the think tank to move forward on this action and supporting them in doing so.

5.6 A concern expressed in the course of the research was the lack of community workers coming on stream to replace community workers in the coming years. It is recommended that LYIT, as a member of the Forum, engage with the community education and community development sector in Donegal to address this education and training need through the further development of an appropriate professional qualification in community development.

6. Administration

6.1 Given the findings of this research that there is a lot of concern expressed about the nature and amount of information being sought from community education participants and that this concern is shared by all – the ETB, providers and participants – it is recommended as follows:

• The matter be raised at the highest levels in the ETB and communicated to SOLAS and the Department of Education and Science.

• The concern is specifically the requirement to provide a date of birth and a Personal Public Service (PPS) number in order to be a state-funded participant of an ETB Community Education Support Programme course, particularly non-formal courses. The practice should be reviewed by an expert group. The expert group to include

civil servants, IT experts, frontline staff and participants to discuss the impacts of the current system, its rationale, and development of a more acceptable and workable bespoke data system for community education. The system should meet the equality data tracking objectives of the state as well as the privacy rights of the citizen.

• The communication of the above concern raised should be supported with the evidence from this research.

6.2 It is recommended that guidelines be developed for providers and tutors regarding the taxation treatment of payments to tutors who are not self-employed. The issue may also be discussed at national level, for example through the Community Education Facilitators' Association, with a view to streamlining practice which would minimise the administrative demands on providers and tutors. One suggested solution to avoid tutors effectively having many employers (the community education providers in that area) is for each ETB to act as employer for the tutors in their region. This suggestion should be discussed at local and national level.

At the outset of this research, the researchers remarked upon the fact that there were quite a number of Forum members, providers and tutors who were involved in community education and community development when the last research was carried out 10 years ago and they are still involved, they still

have a passion for this work. This experience is something to value. Organisations refer to their organisational memory and the loss that is sustained when staff leave or retire. Thankfully, community education in Donegal has not sustained such a loss. Also, new members bring their experience from other contexts as well as an invaluable fresh perspective to long-standing practice. The Donegal Community Education Forum has a timely opportunity now to plan for the next 10 years of community education in Donegal. By 2030, what will we have achieved? Will we have halted climate change? Will we have an equal health system and education system? Will we have ended homelessness?

Community education will have a role to play in answering these and many other questions.

All the participants to this research are to be commended for their commitment to community education in Donegal. One of the questions posed in the interviews was: *What makes you hopeful about community education in Donegal?* The commitment of participants in this research, their energy and enthusiasm and determination to nurture and support community education to thrive and to grow in the future is noteworthy. This is certainly something to be hopeful about. By working in solidarity together, community education in Donegal will indeed thrive and grow stronger.

Community education: supporting growth and development

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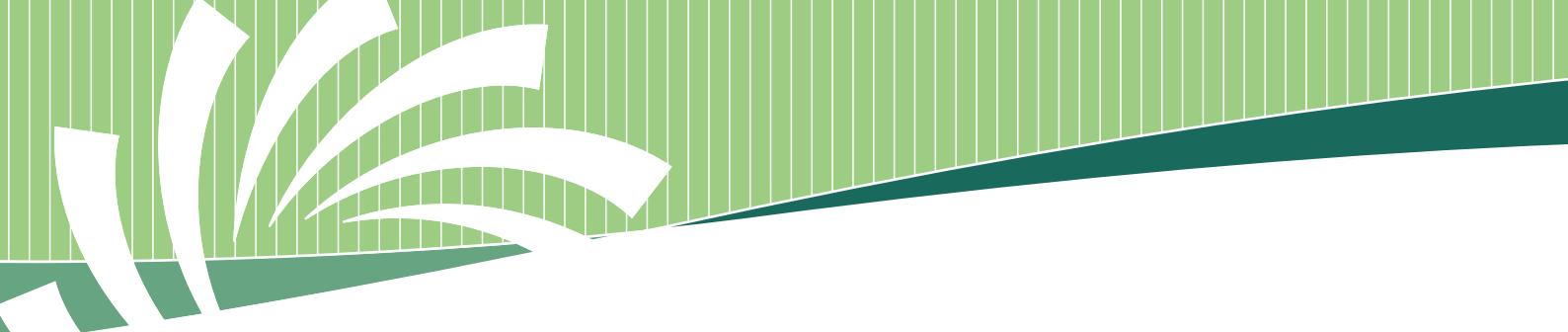
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Community Education in Donegal

October 2017

The Donegal Community Education Forum and Donegal Education and Training Board are undertaking a research study on community education in County Donegal.

It is 10 years since the Forum commissioned Claire Galligan to carry out research on the nature of community education in Donegal. In the last 10 years Ireland has experienced one of its worst recessions with high unemployment, emigration and in recent years a housing and homelessness crisis. These and other issues have also affected communities in County Donegal.

The Forum now wishes to enquire about the current state of community education in the county and has contracted researchers/facilitators Liam McGlynn, IT Blanchardstown, and Jacqui Gage, Partners Training for Transformation, to carry out the research.

The research involves focus groups with providers, participants and tutors, interviews with stakeholders and a questionnaire survey for community groups/providers.

We would very much appreciate if you would take some time to complete this questionnaire. It is divided into four sections which address the main areas of focus in community education programmes; (i) General Details (ii) Purpose (iii) People (iv) Process.

The Forum would really value your input to the research. It is important that the voice of participants, providers and tutors involved in community education be heard in this process.

Please return the questionnaire by closing date of **FRIDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2017** by email to liam.mcglynn@itb.ie or by ordinary mail to the address below.

Liam McGlynn
Room A15, A Block
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
Blanchardstown Road North
Dublin 15

Alternatively, there is also a 'surveymonkey' online version of this questionnaire which you may wish to complete at the link below.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/69NY6B9-DonegalCommunityEducationProviderSurvey2017

Once again, thank you for your input to this research.

Yours faithfully,
Liam McGlynn & Jacqui Gage

etb
Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Dhún na nGall
*Donegal Education and
Training Board*
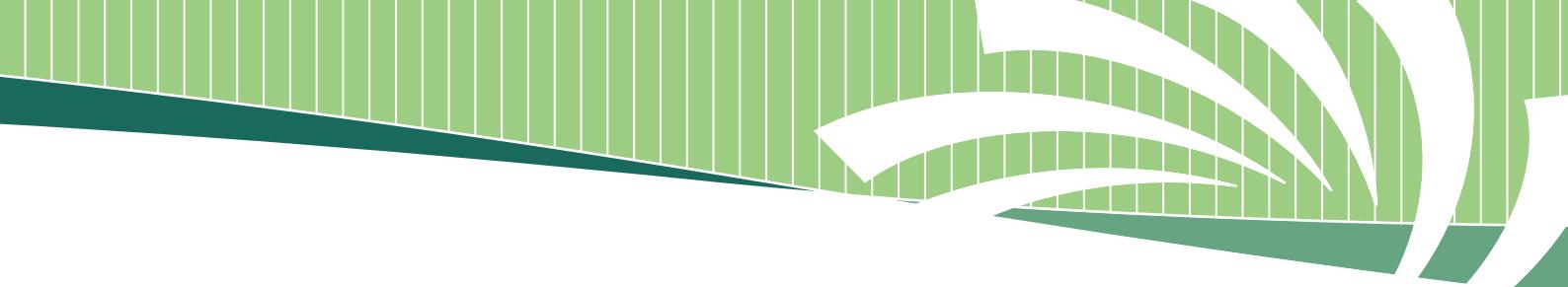
COMMUNITY GROUP/PROVIDER QUESTIONNAIRE

Q. 1 GENERAL DETAILS

Name of your group:

Contact name:

Contact address:

Contact phone number:

Contact email address:

Q. 2 WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DEFINES YOUR ORGANISATION?

Statutory Organisation ☐

Charity (Not for Profit) ☐

Non-Government Organisation ☐

Voluntary Group ☐

Community Development Organisation ☐

Family Resource Centre ☐

Other (Please specify) _____
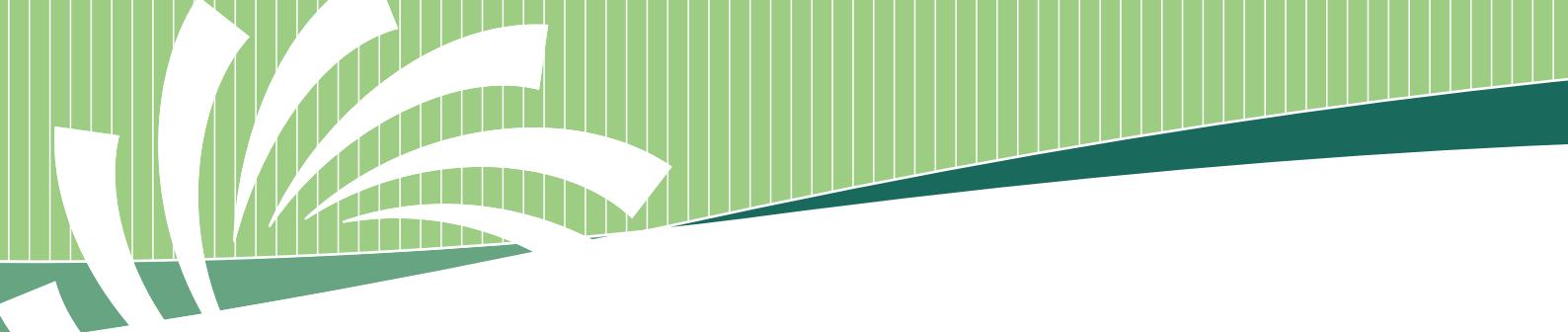
PURPOSE

**Q. 3 WHAT IS THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION FOR YOUR ORGANISATION? PLEASE LIST IN ORDER OF PRIORITY 1 TO 4
(1 HIGHEST PRIORITY … 4 SECONDARY PRIORITIES)**

(Employment) Develop participants' skills for employment

(Personal Development) Develop participants' self-confidence

(Community Development) Develop collective processes on issues affecting the community

(Social Change) Promoting social justice, social inclusion, equality and human rights

(Additional comments you may wish to include)

_____

_____

Q. 4 HOW DO YOU MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT COURSES ARE RELEVANT TO YOUR GROUP/ORGANISATION?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q. 5 HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY THE LEARNING NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF YOUR COMMUNITY?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q. 6 WHAT TIME DURING THE DAY ARE THE PROGRAMMES YOU DELIVER RUN? (PLEASE TICK √ AS APPROPRIATE)

Morning ☐   Afternoon ☐   Evening ☐

Q. 7 DOES THIS PRESENT CHALLENGES TO YOUR ORGANISATION? (PLEASE EXPLAIN)

_____

_____

_____

Q. 8 CONTENT OF COURSES. PLEASE INDICATE THE KIND OF CONTENT COVERED IN COURSES PROVIDED IN YOUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME CHOOSING FROM THE LIST BELOW.

Please provide an example of a popular course in your area. If possible, using percentages, please indicate what are the most common types of courses run in your area, for example 20% Health and Wellbeing, 10% Crafts etc to add up to 100%.

Skills for Employment/Vocational   (Example)_____ ☐

Arts (e.g. History) & Media   (Example)_____ ☐

Economics, Business, Finance   (Example)_____ ☐

Information Technology/Computers   (Example)_____ ☐

Citizenship/ Rights/Legal/Public Admin   (Example)_____ ☐

Social/Political Studies & Policies   (Example)_____ ☐

Family, Parenting, Personal Development   (Example)_____ ☐

Health and Wellbeing   (Example)_____ ☐

Community Development   (Example)_____ ☐

Cultural Studies/Language   (Example)_____ ☐

Creative Arts & Crafts   (Example)_____ ☐

Leisure and Hobbies   (Example)_____ ☐

Earth Sciences (Horticulture/Gardening)   (Example)_____ ☐
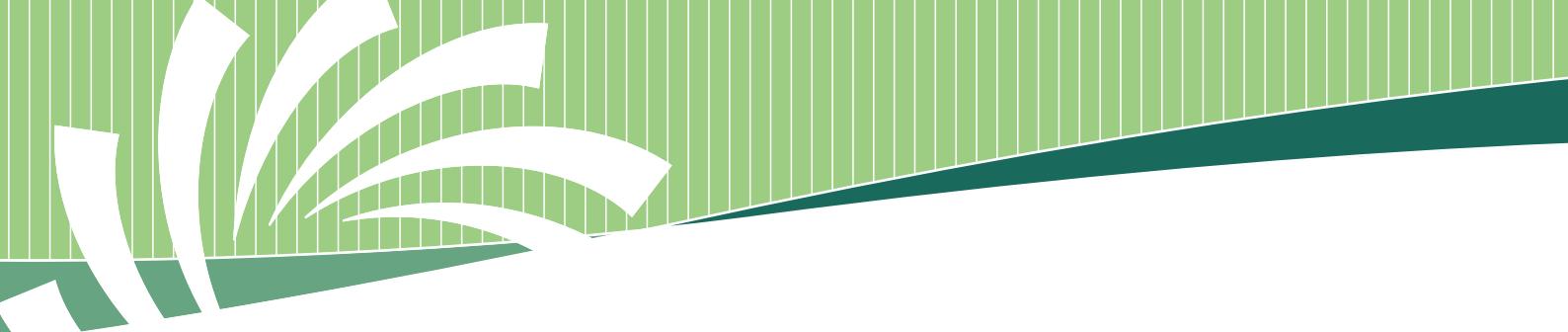
Q. 9 CONTENT OF COURSES. DO YOU PROVIDE COURSES ON DEVELOPING EMPOWERMENT TOOLS FOR ADDRESSING CHALLENGING ISSUES SUCH AS THE FOLLOWING? (PLEASE TICK √ WHERE RELEVANT).

Poverty programmes   Example)_____

Gender-based violence/Domestic abuse   (Example)_____

Advocacy   (Example)_____

Children's rights   (Example)_____

Addiction   (Example)_____

Anti-discrimination/Equality   (Example)_____

Q. 10 OVERALL, WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR MAIN REASONS FOR PROVIDING A COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME?

1. _____

   _____

   _____

2. _____

   _____

   _____

3. _____

   _____

   _____

Q. 11 WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU WHEN DECIDING ON THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION COURSES OR PROGRAMME THAT YOU DELIVER? (PLEASE CIRCLE IN EACH CASE)

(i)   Courses that offer accreditation (certificate)

Of no importance   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Of great importance

(ii)   Courses that are requested by the target group

Of no importance   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Of great importance

(iii)   Courses that respond to an identified need in the community

Of no importance   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Of great importance

(iv)   Other, (Please specify) (for example, a social welfare requirement for participants to attend)

_____

_____

Q. 12 PLEASE OUTLINE EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION ACTIVITIES/ COURSES THAT YOU HAVE PROVIDED IN THE LAST YEAR.

	Duration 0-12 hrs	Duration 12hrs +	Approximate No. of Participants
1._____	_____	_____	_____
2._____	_____	_____	_____
3._____	_____	_____	_____
4._____	_____	_____	_____
5._____	_____	_____	_____
6._____	_____	_____	_____
7._____	_____	_____	_____
8._____	_____	_____	_____
9._____	_____	_____	_____
10._____	_____	_____	_____

Q. 13 WHAT SUPPORTS OR RESOURCES ARE YOU AWARE OF TO RUN COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN THE COUNTY? (PLEASE LIST THESE)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Q. 14 DO YOU FEEL THE FULL RANGE OF SUPPORTS ARE <u>AVAILABLE</u> AND <u>ACCESSIBLE</u> FOR THE DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q. 15 HAS YOUR ORGANISATION DELIVERED A COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ANOTHER AGENCY E.G. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, TUSLA, PRIMARY HEALTH CARE TEAM?

_____

_____

_____

_____

PEOPLE

Q. 16 DOES YOUR GROUP OR COMMUNITY HAVE A POLICY ON SOCIAL INCLUSION/EQUALITY?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q. 17 OVER THE PAST YEAR, CAN YOU ESTIMATE HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE TAKEN PART IN YOUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES? (PLEASE TICK √ ONE)

0 -15 people ☐   16 – 30 people ☐   31 – 50 people ☐

51 -75 people ☐   76 – 100 people ☐   100 – 300 people ☐   301 + people ☐

Q. 18 OVER THE PAST YEAR, TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE YOU COME UP AGAINST ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES WHEN TRYING TO TARGET/RECRUIT PEOPLE? (PLEASE CIRCLE)

(i) Need for transport/childcare for participants

   To no extent   1   2   3   4   5   6   To a very large extent

(ii) Need for extra resources to target people

   To no extent   1   2   3   4   5   6   To a very large extent

(iii) People are not informed or do not understand community education

   To no extent   1   2   3   4   5   6   To a very large extent

Any other issue not named above:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q. 19 OVER THE PAST YEAR, HAVE YOU <u>ACTIVELY</u> TARGETED SPECIFIC GROUPS UNDER THE FOLLOWING EQUALITY GROUNDS? (PLEASE TICK √)

Women ☐ Men ☐ Young people ☐ Older people ☐

Parents, including single parents ☐ People of different religions/faiths ☐

People from different ethnic/cultural groups ☐ People with disabilities ☐

Travellers ☐ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender people ☐

Q. 20 ARE THERE GROUPS/COMMUNITIES WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED BARRIERS TO ACCESSING COMMUNITY EDUCATION COURSES IN YOUR AREA?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, which <u>groups</u> are so affected and what are the <u>barriers</u> they experience?

1. _____

   _____

2. _____

   _____

3. _____

   _____

4. _____

   _____

5. _____

   _____

Q. 21 HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY TUTORS FOR THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME YOU PROVIDE? (FROM THE LIST BELOW PLEASE TICK √ 3 THAT MOST APPLY)

1. We are recommended tutors from other groups ☐

2. We draw from our database of tutors ☐

3. We are provided with a list of potential tutors by the ETB ☐

4. Personal experience of the tutor ☐

5. Tutor has particular skills/expertise ☐

6. Other, please specify ☐

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q. 22 WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU MOST LOOK FOR IN A TUTOR?

1. _____

    _____

2. _____

    _____

3. _____

    _____

PROCESS

Q. 23 HOW DO YOU RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS ONTO THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION COURSES THAT YOU RUN? (PLEASE TICK √ ALL THAT APPLY, PLEASE RANK THEM IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, 1 BEING MOST IMPORTANT)

	TICK	RANKING
Notice/advert in a newspaper		
Posters in public areas		
Door to door calls		
Neighbourhood/community work		
Phone calls to possible interested parties		
Community newsletter		
Word of mouth		
Email details around		
Social media		
Existing community work or service you provide		
Other (please state)		

Q. 24 <u>OVER THE PAST YEAR,</u> WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MAIN SOURCE OF FUNDING TO SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION COURSES/ACTIVITIES?

1. Department of Justice and Equality ☐

2. Department of Foreign Affairs ☐

3. Family Resource Centres/TUSLA ☐

4. ETB community education grants ☐

5. One-off grants (e.g. Katharine Howard Foundation) ☐

6. PEACE IV ☐

7. LEADER 4 ☐

8. SICAP ☐

9. North West Regional Drugs Taskforce ☐

10. Other state funding ☐

11. Other funding ☐

If 'Other funding' please specify _____

_____

Q. 25 OVER THE PAST YEAR, HAS YOUR FUNDING ALLOWED YOU TO DO THE FOLLOWING? (PLEASE TICK √) If you did not tick √ any of the below, please outline how your group dealt with these issues.

1. Provide a room for delivering community education ☐

2. Provide staff to organise community education ☐

3. Provide travel/childcare for participants ☐

4. Actively target individuals to take part ☐

5. Provide an external tutor to deliver community education ☐

6. Develop courses that suit your needs ☐

7. Other, please specify: ☐
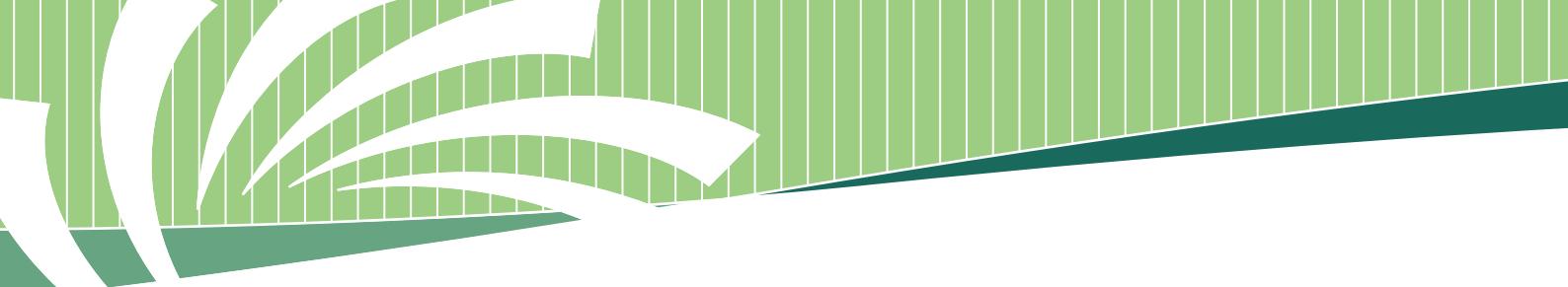
Q. 26 ARE YOU PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS TO FACILITATE COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN YOUR AREA E.G. TRANSPORT, CHILDCARE? (PLEASE SPECIFY THESE) (LINKED TO QUESTION 16 ABOVE)

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Q. 27 WE WOULD WELCOME ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ABOUT COMMUNITY EDUCATION NOT COVERED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

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Community Education in Donegal Interview Questions – One-to-one Interviews

Change

1. In your experience, what's the most significant change in community education in Donegal? (Over past 10 years or less)

2. From where you are, what are some of the things that have shaped community education in Donegal over the past 10 years?

Achievements and Benefits

3. What are some of your most significant achievements of community education in the past year? What achievements of others are you aware of?

People

4. Who are some of the people benefitting from community education?

5. Who is community education for, in your view? Is there anyone it's not for?

Purpose

6. What is its primary purpose? Are there secondary purposes?

7. What has been prioritised in community education in Donegal? Has that changed?

8. What are some of the changes that have most affected community education in Donegal? What effects have they had?

9. What are some of the challenges you face in your role re community education at this time?

10. Is there anything special/distinctive about the way community education happens in Donegal?

Needs

11. Which need(s) is community education most helpful in addressing in Donegal? Which are most difficult to address?

12. Are you aware of community education contributing to the participation of marginalised individuals in the community? (Examples?)

Relationship to Community Development

13. Have you seen examples of how community development supports the work of community education, and/or vice versa?

Future of Community Education in Donegal

14. How do you see community education developing in the coming years? What makes you hopeful? What are you most concerned about?

15. If community education is to thrive and grow stronger in Donegal, what are some of the things that need to change?

What makes you hopeful about the findings?

- Community education contributes to the lives of marginalised people in terms of positive mental health.

- It wasn't all about employment.

- The values of the ETB in terms of leadership.

- There is genuine partnership between the ETB and the community and voluntary sector.

- There is a strong community ethos in Donegal which underpins the history of volunteerism in the county. We hope that won't be lost, even with infrastructure being cut away.

- The interests of under-18s in the county should be nurtured/developed rather than happening in the shadows. We are hopeful that the research is reflecting this.

- The desire for increased community development courses on the ground.

- The desire for investment in tutors – people value that important role.

- The solidarity of community development and community education is evident in the research.

- Second Chance Education model would be good to look at again.

- People turned up to personal development courses; it grew from grassroots and people replicate this all over the county.

- We need a fresh perspective.

- There are causes of hope; there is acknowledgment that the Community Workers' Co-operative's voice is sorely missed in the county since it closed in 2014.

What surprised you about the findings? (What wasn't mentioned, what is missing?)

- The role women have played in community education wasn't acknowledged.

- Childcare not mentioned as much.

- Need to acknowledge that when we engage women, a wider impact emerges – when we educate a woman, we educate a family. There are more outcomes with women. Women's Sheds produce collective outcomes; Men's Sheds produce individual outcomes.

- Surprised that domestic abuse doesn't get mentioned.

- Social impacts, naming the ones that are shared and remain invisible.

- The lack of policy workers – the withdrawal of policy workers, they have all been pulled (in CDPs and the Community Workers' Co-operative). Funders don't value it, they don't see policy work as important anymore. The government do not provide funding for it, you are to do as you are told, you are a service deliverer.

- Community development and Túath not mentioned.

- It was surprising that Gaeltacht participants were hard to engage. (Is it the PPS numbers?)

- It was surprising to see the inclusion of young people in community education. There are vast resources currently dedicated to school completion programmes and these should be evaluated before including young people in community education.

What are the key issues/concerns?

- Community work/service delivery. Classic community work based on value set of community development based on social change.

- Younger workers come into a 'service delivery model' of community work; that is the fault of the state which sets it up that way.

- The issue of ageing community workers. Think tank would like to see that skill set passed on to the younger community workers.

- Community Workers' Co-operative's role is missed. The key networking role. Organisations are not working from that social change perspective.

- Retired professionals are not seen as a target group, yet they are looking for intelligent conversation and would like to be challenged and are active in their community. They are not a homogeneous group of people. There are 17 Active Retirement Groups in Donegal. There are older activists also.

- Linking community education to global vision. We don't have a shared vision of community education, it is all over the place. Cross-cutting themes. Community education as an agent of change.

- Community education needs to be planned strategically – whatever happens here or comes out of this, we need to have a strategy along the lines of 'Do we have a sense of where things should go in 20 years and what are we trying to facilitate?' In other words, a strategic coherent plan for supporting sustainable vision.

- There is a concern about the lack of a culture of evaluation. There is no documented evaluation of community education anymore, rather it is key performance indicators and learning outcomes that have to be ticked as predetermined outcomes. What is happening to tutor evaluation?

- Form filling and PPS numbers can exclude, it doesn't help and it is a perceived barrier.

- There is so much now coming from the top down. People on the ground used to have more control, now it is top-down and we have to go with it. It is a big issue on the ground.

- Advocacy training needs to happen.

What were the things you feel you have a bit of energy about from this morning's session?

If there was one thing that this group might make some progress on what would it be? This is the key issue we need to pay attention to (what, how and who).

Group A

- Find some parameters – Paulo Freire ideas on Providers and Participants as a Collective.
- People who are making decisions and those facilitating it should revisit Paulo Freire again – go back to the core and think about why we do it and what should be present there, i.e. facilitators need to learn the Freire ideology.
- How are we going to name what we mean by community education?
- What I'm hearing is a desire for a shared framework.
- Summary: Community education, what is it, how do we do it, what outcomes, what is at the heart of community education? It's about the tutor facilitator doing it from a perspective of social inclusion.

Group B

- Share some values and articulate these e.g. inclusion, personal relationships and the wider world and keep going back to these. What inspires me/not just to make money. People should be clear about these and go back to them. So, articulate shared values and create a space for that.

Group C

- Equality legislation. One is in breach of it if you have a two-tier system in your classroom. The nine grounds for unlawful discrimination listed in equality legislation should always be applied and upheld. Insist the government give a temporary PPS number to asylum seekers?

Group D

- Some 16-18 year olds should be able to access community education. They are falling through the gap if not at school. They should have a plan for academic progress and career guidance.

Group E

- Progression within and beyond community education.
- We can mentor and support each other (inclusive action) to encourage more progression, and have a more co-ordinated approach that would help achieve better outcomes.

Group F

- Government has decimated community development.
- Empower the sector, empower the younger ones to try to understand the systems and structures.
- Bring back the Community Workers' Co-operative and education for social change.

Group G

- Updated major award in community development.

Group H

- Community arts/arts for social change.

Group I

- Evaluation and monitoring – capturing intangibles, social impact v economic impact. We hear outcomes are quoted, but we don't hear what processes worked well to lead to those outcomes.

2017		Male	Female	Total
1	Total Number of	**1121**	**3843**	**4964**
2	Number of participants by age profile			
	16-17	0	0	0
	18-20	23	66	89
	21-24	25	76	101
	25-34	110	343	453
	35-44	186	689	875
	45-54	241	882	1123
	55-64	263	899	1162
	65 and over	273	888	1161
Total:		**1121**	**3843**	**4964**

2016		Male	Female	Total
1	Total number of	**1222**	**3364**	**4586**
2	Number of participants by age profile			
	16-17	0	0	0
	18-20	61	54	115
	21-24	38	58	96
	25-34	114	317	431
	35-44	190	590	780
	45-54	299	836	1135
	55-64	317	739	1056
	65 and over	203	770	973
Total:		**1222**	**3364**	**4586**

2015		Male	Female	Total
1	Total number of	**1002**	**3550**	**4552**
2	Number of participants by age profile			
	16-17	0	0	0
	18-20	19	41	60
	21-24	33	79	112
	25-34	81	326	407
	35-44	202	625	827
	45-54	223	836	1059
	55-64	251	885	1136
	65 and over	193	758	951
Total:		**1002**	**3550**	**4552**

(Donegal ETB, 2018)

Appendix 5. Main Reasons for Providing Community Education

R	First Reason	Second Reason	Third Reason	Fourth Reason
1	To combat isolation	To encourage friendship	To pinpoint problems for older people	To encourage physical and mental health
2	To empower the community	To provide educational opportunities for the community	Be supportive of the community's needs	
3	To provide opportunities for people to have valuable experiences together	To improve traditional skills	To develop interest in local history and archaeology	
4	To combat social isolation	Courses needed for employment		
5	Expressed need from community	Area of relatively low educational qualifications	High levels of unemployment	High levels of social isolation
6	Social inclusion and mental health/wellbeing	Befriending	Capacity building	
7	For younger people to improve their chances of employment, further training	To help young people develop personal and leadership skills	To provide an outlet for the more marginalised in our community, opportunity to develop their skills in a friendly non-threatening environment	
8	Personal development	Confidence building	Access to further education	Community awareness of local issues
9	To promote community inclusion for people in recovery from mental ill health	To improve confidence and self-esteem for people in recovery from mental ill health	To bring people together who are isolated	
10	To cater for whatever community needs that we have the resources to meet	To provide life-enriching experiences for members of our community	To provide an alternative outlet for social interaction and the consolidation of relationships and friendships	Overall, it is a vehicle for community building
11	Service users' choices	We can offer support to those with physical disabilities	Accessible premises	Fun, confidence building
12	Learning new skills	Meeting new people	Networking with men or women (out of the pub)	Good for the idea and background of this shed
13	Learning new skills	Promotion of dying traditional crafts	Confidence building	Furthering education in the hope of employment
14	Providing accessible and affordable courses	Develop new skills in participants	Encourage and strengthen community spirit	Improved wellbeing, support personal development
15	Stimulation for elderly	Inclusion for a slow learner in group		

R	First Reason	Second Reason	Third Reason	Fourth Reason
16	To promote community involvement			
17	Social inclusion for the elderly	Health awareness (cookery) for families	Employment prospects (future course/skills development)	Confidence
18	Personal development/ confidence	Education	Combat isolation	Future employment
19	To enable parents to develop their capacity to support and improve their children's learning experiences	To promote parents' self-worth and self-confidence		
20	We've been requested it by a group			
21	Social inclusion	Isolation of older people	Services available to older people	End-of-life issues
22	A meeting place to have a chat	To get people back into education		
23	Social interaction	Wellbeing	Health benefits	Happiness possible
24	To provide a social setting for people to meet	For people to meet and develop skills		
25	To provide education for socially disadvantaged	To help combat social inclusion	To provide skills to the unemployed	To bring people of the area together
26	Personal development for participants	Employment of participants		
27	Promote the value of traditional skills/crafts	Promote mental wellness through social inclusion	Promote community relations	Develop a place to share stories of local culture and heritage
28	Preserve heritage	Activate and encourage community spirit		
29	Raising awareness on women's equality			
30	Bring affordable education to our community	Participation	Social outing and meet people	Enhance personal development and skills
31	Requested by clients while in hospital	Clients expressed a desire to learn new skills	Exploration of an activity which can enhance wellbeing	Hope for client to continue exploring art in the community
32	Upskilling opportunities for participants	Additional employment opportunities	Community networking and meeting opportunities in a rural area	
33	Many people of 40+ have literacy difficulties from school/childhood and need to gain knowledge and confidence in relaxed environment	To assist acquisition of skills and awareness of other cultures, sharing stories, cooking, respect for religious festivals e.g. Ramadan	Opportunities to relax and enjoy themselves	