Education as a Driver for Change

<u>Part 3</u>

Enthusiasm for education!

Training for providers of adult education to increase their competence in performance of offers, in which educationally disadvantaged people participate

Results and reflections

Manual 3

Contents

Part 1

General Information and Introduction

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The main aim of the **in.education** project is to increase the enrolment in education of educationally and socially disadvantaged people where access hasn't been made via the usual channels. Three different strategies have been developed and tested. The results will be summarized and presented. The products are intended to contribute to the further professionalisation of adult education.

Strategy 1:

Aims to activate new multipliers or intermediaries from the social environment of educationally disadvantaged people, which is a major influence on entering an educational process. **in.education** develops special training for the new multipliers to raise awareness, to help them to understand the importance of their role and to support them in becoming active within their own social environment.

Strategy 2:

When it comes to education, people think mostly in terms of formal schooling including degrees and certificates, or completing an apprenticeship. The main aim of this strategy is to acknowledge informal competences, non-formal and informally achieved skills and knowledge from the everyday life of socially and educationally disadvantaged adults. The recognition of those skills will empower socially and educationally disadvantaged adults and lead to better participation in educational processes.

Strategy 3:

This strategy is aimed at employees of adult education organisations. We take a closer look at implementation systems in adult education and analyze how they are matched to the needs of socially and educationally disadvantaged adults. We analyze already existing offers for educationally disadvantaged groups and compare them with the findings of current science and research.

To provide access to new learning opportunities and to create a stimulating learning context is the focus of the transnational partnership **in.education** with the following partner institutions:

ISOP – Innovative Sozialprojekte GmbH
Dreihackengasse 2, 8020 Graz, Austria

Campaign for Learning, United Kingdom
24 Greencoat Place Westminster, London SW1P 1RD

Galway and Roscommon Education & Training Board
An Coiléar Bán, Athenry, Co. Galway, Ireland

Zentrum für Soziale Innovation, Austria
Linke Wienzeile 246, 1150 Wien, Austria

The empowerment of people in diverse societies to step into lifelong learning is one of the important roles of adult education.

in.education faces this task through the above mentioned three strategies:

- o **Strategy 1**

  Attract and activate new multipliers (persons from the social environment of educationally disadvantaged people)

- o **Strategy 2**

  Overcome participation barriers and promote learning and training activities

- o **Strategy 3**

  Promote innovation and quality at an organisational level

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creates a manual on each of the three strategies. Based on the experiences of the project, these manuals aims to inspire the work of those involved in adult education.

Educationally disadvantaged people

have, as a result of one or several factors, no or limited access to education. The conventional categories of description such as gender, age, ethnicity, health impairment, unemployment or social affiliation are no longer enough to capture the whole group of those affected. Other factors need to be considered, such as a learner friendly environment, empowerment of individuals and the support available for people during the learning process.

This is related to the changing dynamic of European societies: the economic, financial and labour markets, the socio-political patterns and priorities, on which political measures are focused. In recent years this has led to a growing rate of educational disadvantage.

With regard to the participation rate of adults in training and education, disadvantaged groups often tend to live in restricted environments. These may be social environments in which education traditionally has less significance than in others. However, they may also include those who disengaged with formal education due to increasing socioeconomic pressure.

The aim of **in.education** is to accompany people on their way from a disadvantaged to a non-disadvantaged position, and to work in an appropriate and supportive manner to reach this goal.

For further information about educationally disadvantaged people please take a look at **manual 1 and manual 2** which can be downloaded from any of the following links:

isop.at/in.education

www.gretb.ie/furthereducation/erasmus

www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/Projects/in_education.asp

Introduction IO 3

People with low basic skills or skills that are not prioritised in the labour market have specific needs that should be understood as a prerequisite to step into lifelong learning. Practical experience shows that adult education organisations may not be sufficiently prepared to provide tailored offers that give proper regard to diversity, implementation and participants' existing competences.

Organisational frameworks, the expectations of trainers, the materials used, the content and pace of the learning contents etc., may not match the needs of socially and educationally disadvantaged people. If something is not working, the participants themselves may be blamed because they arrive late, attend irregularly or do not fulfil the learning assignments, or deviate from the topic and so do not reach the goals of the offer. When organisations analyse inadequate participation numbers or results not reached, they often do not focus on their own structural processes. It seems to be easier to ask: "who is to blame?" insead of asking: "what is to blame?"

It is the task of functional quality management and management of professional development to deal with the challenges of diversity: on the one hand to fulfil the organisation´s purpose, and on the other hand to take responsibility for the development of European inclusion process.

in.education seeks to build on our experiences during the activities we ran during IO 1 and IO 2 (see Manual 1 und Manual 2: isop.at/in.education). These results, together with a research in adult education organisations in Great Britain, Ireland and Austria, were the basis for the development of training for employees and managers in organisations dealing with those target groups. It was our goal during the training to make barriers visible and to work on changes and solutions together with the participants.

Manual 3 reports models used in the partner countries and the experiences gained. This Manual offers a short report of the research results and gives an overview including recommendations.

Part 2

Background Study

In the framework for the third phase of the **in.education** project, the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) conducted a background study to provide an insight into the learning experiences of adult education providers offering training for educationally disadvantaged people. The findings of this study were envisaged to influence the training programmes for adult education providers developed and implemented in this project phase by the other three partner organisations in Austria, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

The starting point for this study was desk research which helped to identify key dimensions at an organisational level which should be taken into account when providing training for educationally disadvantaged people.

Eight key dimensions were identified in this desk research:

1. Organisational background
2. Location
3. Public relations
4. Curriculum development and methodological approach
5. Support offers
6. Staff
7. Quality management
8. Partnerships and co-operation

To shed some light on the learning experiences of adult education providers in these eight dimensions gained from working with educationally disadvantaged people, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted. Interview guidelines were developed based on the key dimensions identified. Interview partners included managerial staff of adult education providers in Austria, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

With regard to the interview partners, it should be noted that it was planned to interview managerial staff from organisations which successfully expanded or shifted their focus towards this target group as it was thought that they would provide the best insights into the learning experiences for catering for this target group at an organisational level. Unfortunately, it was not possible to establish contact to these kinds of organisations in all three countries. The interview partners in Ireland and the United Kingdom were rather organisations that had always had a certain focus on educationally disadvantaged people. In Austria, where interviews were conducted with staff of adult education providers who had "discovered" educationally disadvantage people as a target group within the last two decades, it was not easy to gain insights into the learning processes at the organisational level either as the interview partners tended to report well-established and successful practices rather than to elaborate on the necessary preconditions for these practices or to discuss trials and errors in the development of these practices.

Nevertheless, combined with the comprehensive literature review, the interviews undertaken within the framework of this study provided a deeper understanding of the requirements at an organisational level to best cater for educational disadvantaged learners - beginning with engaging them to participate in training, but also engaging them to stay in training until completion and to possibly continue with further education and training.

The main findings of the report are as follows:

1. Organisational background

Although all the organisations included in this study have a mission statement or guiding principles, they differ quite a bit with respect to their content. In general, guiding principles should be defined in a way that they include the target group, assuring them that their needs and interests would be well covered by the organisation. Furthermore, it is not enough to have these formally written down, more importantly they need to be reflected in the actions of all members of staff. The interviews were not able to illustrate whether this was the case or in how far this was assured at the organisational level.

2. Location

Location is a factor that could constitute a barrier for educationally disadvantaged people's participation in education or overcome several barriers. Training provision for this target group should be available on their door steps (regarding proximity and accessibility) to avoid it being a barrier in itself. Furthermore, to overcome the stigma attached to reading and writing difficulties in adults, providing courses in "cultural locations" – places frequented by the target group in their daily lives like community centres – could reduce the fear of being exposed. Despite the common assumption that adult education should be delivered in a completely different setting to school, some people still associate learning with school and for them, this would be the ideal location for basic skills courses. As a result, there is no one "right" or "wrong" location for training, important is to consider the exact group one is dealing with.

3. Public relations

Building trust with the potential participants is key when targeting educationally disadvantaged people. Although resource-intensive, organisations need to inject enough efforts and resources into appropriate approaches to contacting the target group directly, especially through proactive outreach. Intermediaries are also essential in recruiting educationally disadvantaged people to training. Although more public relations strategies can be used with this target group, these should be appropriately differentiated for the different groups of intermediaries. Whereas the interviews provided a wide array of methods for engaging this target group, building trusted relationships requires time and effort, which often contradicts the logic of short-term project cycles and insecurity on future funding; therefore more continuous, long-term public relations efforts as well as more awareness-raising is necessary, if educationally disadvantaged people are to be given a chance.

4. Curriculum development and methodological approach

Although it is widely acknowledged that educational offers for disadvantaged learners must be well-fitted to the needs of this target group, structured procedures to involve this group in formulating their own learning needs and goals as well as in designing courses are hardly in place. They occur mostly informally and are often at odds with other organisational requirements regarding accreditation and quality management that favour a certain amount of standardisation. As a result, a lot of responsibility is shifted to the trainers and tutors and their flexibility to react to their learners' needs within a pre-defined framework of a specific training course.

5. Quality management

Involving educationally disadvantaged people poses not only a challenge in the development of curricula, but also in quality management processes of adult education providers. Tested and structured methods to collect feedback from this target group and processes that guarantee that their feedback would be incorporated into the further development of educational offers still seems to be lacking. Further efforts are needed to ensure that the voices of disadvantaged learners are also included in quality management processes.

6. Support offers

Educational guidance and support services like learning and social support are receiving an increasing amount of attention from adult education providers. A lot of effort is being made to engage educationally disadvantaged people in educational offers that fit their specific needs and supporting them during their participation in an offer. In future, a stronger emphasis should be placed on establishing these services at an organisational level, independent of specific educational offers - as it is frequently the case for advice and guidance services but to a lesser extent for social or learning support.

7. Staff

Adult education providers put a strong focus on qualifications and competences of tutors and trainers working with educationally disadvantaged people. In Austria and elsewhere, this goes hand in hand with the development of standardised and accredited training for trainers working with certain target groups (e.g. people with basic skills needs). As a next step, it should be considered, that some appropriate qualifications and competences are also relevant for other staff members who are also in direct contact with this target group including switchboard operators, receptionists, secretarial staff etc. Besides the formal qualification of staff members, their composition with regard to diversity should also more strongly be taken into account. Similar to the formal education system, the composition of teaching staff in the adult education sector does not reflect the diversity of the learners. Therefore, emphasis should be given to increasing the diversity of staff with regard to their social background, ethnic origin and gender.

8. Partnerships and co-operation

Partnerships and especially co-operation are indispensable when dealing with educationally disadvantaged people as they not only help in advertising courses and providing premises for training, but they also provide opportunities for exchange of ideas on, among others, the content of the course as well as doubling up the efforts in sensitising the wider population about the topics of adult education. Consequently, these relationships need to be well-sought and nurtured over the long-term rather than being called on project-by-project basis. Such collaborations are usually based on individual contacts and as such can be challenging to the knowledge management at organisational level.

Although only a fairly limited number of interviews were carried out in the framework of this study, these interviews give evidence that even organisations that have been dealing with educationally disadvantaged people consistently, over a very long time, are still making progress in identifying and eliminating barriers for this target group's participation in (further) education at the organisational level. This reflects the assertion that providing offers for educationally disadvantaged people needs constant reflection and revision of an organisation's practice.

At the same time, the interviews reveal that even adult education providers that have been working with educationally disadvantaged people for many years do not seem to have a comprehensive understanding of the significance of the organisational level in recruiting and catering for educationally disadvantaged people. In all three countries under scrutiny aspects like public relations and formal qualification of trainers receive extensive attention while others like the way an organisation is perceived by others are underexposed. Specifically, appropriate mechanisms to empower educationally disadvantaged people through their meaningful involvement in the design and further development of educational offers seems to be lacking. Establishing participatory processes in this regard is presumably very demanding but could result in courses that better meet and cater for the needs of educationally disadvantaged people.

Part 3

Country Reports

Austria

Initial position

For us, the most important point was to find a way, in which representatives of our target group themselves define and express their needs in terms of educational participation. Participants from different basic-skills courses developed appropriate material on this. We organized interviews with our target group, other participants established digital stories. Both forms reported authentic educational biographies as well as educational needs from educationaly disadvantaged people. Around the results and statements made during the trainings we defined the contents of the workshops.

Structure

- Number of Participants   15

- Design   two divided groups, each with one half-day, 4 hours

- Main part   one big group, one whole day, 8 hours

- Transfer/Feedback   individual transfer-talk at the end (1-2 hours)

- Extent of Training   from 12 to 14 hours

Goals
We wished to achieve an increased awareness towards the needs of educationally disadvantaged people and the importance of the structural and systemic framework on reaching educational goals. We aimed to reflect on one´s own actions as a trainer or even as an organisation towards the learners. The common thread running through the workshops was: what are the needs of educationally disadvantaged to come and stay with us?

Contents
Origin profession and professional identity of trainers and the impact of this on learners. How does educational dicadvantage emerge? What factors hamper or increase learning results of educationally disadvantaged? What allocation of roles is the target group confronted with and how can we address it? Who are the people involved in the context of educational disadvantage and what possibilities for action do they have? What are my own possibilities for action within my role and function to increase the quality?
What the learners told us: how they found our offer, what they expected from trainer´s, what, from their perspective, a learner friendly environment was; by whom they were supported; what their goals are.
The UN categories towards the right of education: availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability and how these are implemented in the adult education section. To find solutions for these practical fields (use of easy language, public relations, long waiting times, welcoming culture, etc.). Defining, how to develop tasks within one's organisation. Think about transfer.

Methods

Professional input, discussion, analyze, market place, slow dating, partner work, securing the results.

Participants

- Trainers   10 (basic skills, educationally disadvantaged young people, non-formal education, educationally disadvantaged adults, formal education)
- Programme managers   2 (non-formal education of migrants, non-formal education, young adults in education/apprenticeships)
- Multipliers/intermediaries   3 (neighbourhood work, social counsellors, church]
- Organisations   11, 1 student, 1 job seeker

Workshop 1, halfday (14:00 – 18:00 Uhr)

Time	Topic	Method/Goal/Comment	Social-form	Material
14:00	Welcome, programme, transfer dates	Content and organizational information	Plenum	Folder
14:15	Information about in.education	Development of strategies to increase participation in education for educationally disadvantaged in 3 countries. Strategy 1: new intermediaries, Strategy 2: special offer for educationally disadvantaged to bring them back into learning, Strategy 3: sructure and system, trainers/organisations	Plenum	Manual 1 Manual 2
14:30	Self-image of trainers : "My understanding of roles"	choose cards (examples like; learning companion, coach, educator, etc.) and find your top 3. Explain your decision	Individual	Corkboard, Facilitation cards
		Exercise 1: we try to separate the 3 different levels (participant, trainer, provider/organisation) from each other. This way we get a clearer picture of educational disadvantage. Start with: who am I, what is my role? At the same time we get to know each other. We try to work out the influence profrssional identity has in terms of interaction with participants.		
		Discussion: why did I choose this role? What does it mean to me? What is my definition of education?	Plenum	Summary on Flipchart
16:00	Input	What are the factors that hamper or increase the step into learning? Input Brüning/Kawan	Plenum	Sheet OECD Brüning
		Exercise 2: we clarify that educational disadvantage is not a minority topic		
16:45	Market place	How did the participants find our offer? What do they need from their trainers, what is a learner-friendly environment? Who supported them? What are their goals?	Individual	Interviews, Film
17:30		Summary and discussion	Plenum	Flipchart
		Exercise 3: we try to identify the needs of the participants. These are often not articulated directly but we have to read between the lines and transfer it into our own organisation-reality		
17:45	Feedback / end		Plenum	

Feedback
(1= excellent, 5 = poor)

Rating of content: Average 1.8
Rating in total: Average 1.4
Qualitative statements: lots of input; too little time; precious discussions and authentic
                              contributions; very well facilitated; excellent discussion
                              contributions; very practical orientated and diversified; good
                              exchange; pleasant discussion rounds; very competent speakers; very
                              sound and pleasant; wonderful group; very respectful interaction
                              during the workshop.

Results

- Education means to accompany people….
- Work individually to go into depth …
- Take the social context into account …
- Increasing diversification/heterogenity …
- Needs organisational and administrative diversity…
- Concrete actions have always to be seen in interaction with the identity of our own organisations…
- Changes of target groups within the organisations can cause instability/insecurity…
- The fear of loosing quality through flexibility …
- How do people learn, is one of the key questions…
- Where does my responsibility start and end …
- New target groups replace traditional target groups…
- Distribution of resources. It would make sense to distribute resources for individual needs rather than for standardized principles …
- Again and again: be aware and think about your own concepts – these should correspond to the needs of the participants…
- Change your own expectations; increase your frustration tolerance…
- Explain your own thoughts to your colleagues, which will increase acceptance and is a prerequisite for a common development…
- We act in so many different roles for educationally disadvantaged – endless multitasking…. There ae hardly any explicit jobs
- Important to work on relationships…
- Overregulation; what is important is determined externally, which reduces the personal freedom…
- Everyone has their own way, there is no one solution that suits all …
- Differences between urban and rural areas…
- Education can lead to social migration and is not always accepted in one's own social environment…
- More and more we should decrease but we don´t …
- And how are people to be motivated? ...
- Gaps in our educational system, we would need acceleration tracks to negotiate traffic …
- How can organisations co-develop with new challenges …
- Very often I have to do my own coaching …
- I do not get not enough expert input from my employer …

Ireland

Introduction:
Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board ran a number of different workshops for participants from a variety of diverse organisations. Three pillars were identified and participants from each pillar attended workshops specific to their needs.

Overall Aim:
To develop a programme to increase awareness of educational disadvantage, to highlight some practical implications for organisations dealing with the public and to identify changes that may be necessary at a systemic level. To demonstrate how becoming literacy-aware, benefits both the organisation and the educationally disadvantaged.

Participants:
To meet the objectives of the project three pillars were identified:
Pillar 1:   **Educational Providers**; to make changes at a systemic level
Pillar 2:   **Organisations linked to Educational Providers;** to support community organisations
Pillar 3:   **Organisations not linked to Educational Providers;** to raise awareness of literacy

Pillar 1: In the Irish context educational providers cover many strands of the education spectrum from adult basic education, traineeships, apprenticeships, vocational training, back to education initiatives and special educational needs. Thus the following educational providers were contacted to participate in the workshops: GRETB Training Centre, Community Training Centres, Resource Centres and National Learning Centres. The participants were tutors, managers, and guidance counsellors.

Pillar 2: The focus of this pillar was developing links with organisations who in their remit aim to identify opportunities, including educational opportunities, for the socio-economically and educationally disadvantaged. The following organisations were contacted and participated in the workshops: Galway Rural Development, Galway Traveller Movement, Galway County Council. The participants were front line managers and coordinators.

Pillar 3: Literacy awareness among the general public and organisations within both the public and private sector is still relatively low. It was felt that a workshop dedicated to those organisations would be very beneficial to organisations. These organisations included; Department of Social Protection, Roscommon Integrated Development Company, TUSLA Family Support, School Completion Officers, and Disability Support Groups.

In total there were 19 organisations and 54 participants.

Programmes:
Three distinct programmes were developed, one for each pillar.

In Pillar 1: Educational Providers; The aim was to effect change at a systemic level to increase participation and completion rates through encouraging enrolment by developing an understanding of what makes training attractive and retaining learners by supporting and recognising skills learners have that can be developed to help them complete the training.

In Pillar 2: Organisations linked to Educational Providers; the aim was to support organisations who as part of their role refer people to educational providers, to improve their understanding of educational disadvantage, to help them recognise educational disadvantage and to assess the extent of same and as a result make more informed decisions to refer clients to appropriate educational providers who best meet their needs.

In Pillar 3: Organisations with no link to Educational Providers; the aim was to raise awareness of some practical implications for organisations dealing with the public, to demonstrate how becomming literacy-aware benefits organisations and the people they are coming into contact with. This was linking back to intellectual output 1 of this project.

Content:
The content of the workshops was based on current practices in place for all three pillars. Five workshops in total were carried out; two for pillar 1, one for pillar 2, one for pillar 3 and one that was an all-encompassing seminar.

The focus differed for all three pillars. In pillar 1 an overview of the project to date was given to identify opportunities for change and there was an interactive session on the language experience approach and multi-sensory approach. Pillar 2 concentrated on literacy awareness, the language experience approach and developing a process to identify the educational competencies of their clients. In pillar 3 the main focus was literacy awareness.

Literacy Awareness: The definition of literacy has changed over time and this was explored. Literacy now is seen as having the skills individuals need to participate fully in society. This involves much more than reading and writing, but also listening, speaking, numeracy and everyday technology. One inspiring participant shared their experience of their realisation of being under qualified when time and time again they were not considered for promotion. On inquiring as to why they were not considered they were told one word 'education'. This prompted a re-evaluation of their situation and a return to education. Since then they have suceesed in both their profession career and public service.

Literacy in an Irish context was explored through the findings of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).This highlighted that 18% of Irish adults had a literacy level at or below level 1. Causes and effects of unmet literacy needs were identified. Difficulties experienced were elicited and discussed to form an understanding of how this impacts on a daily life.

At this point organisations had an understanding of what literacy meant and the focus shifted to becoming a literacy-friendly organisation. Participants were asked to audit their organisation to determine how literacy-friendly they currently were and where improvements could be made e.g. clearer communications through plain English, and including it in Continuous Personal Development for staff. The benefits to both the organisations and their clients were identified as fewer mistakes, fewer complaints, better experience and outcomes, supporting strategy for inclusion and equality and becoming more effective for more people.

Language Experience Approach: is based on the belief that students learn more effectively when the material they are using is relevant and the vocabulary and style of language is familiar. A major purpose of this approach is to impart the understanding that anything that can be said can be written, and anything that can be written can be said.

In an educational setting a learner is asked a number of open ended questions to generate a discussion. The tutor records verbatim what the learner says. This generates a body of text in the students own vernacular which can be used for beginner readers. The beginner reader can learn to read the text as they know what has been written and therefore predict; willingness to predict is an important part of student reading and should be encouraged. The length of the generated text can vary depending on the learner's ability and what they can manage successfully.

Generating a text in the students own vernacular in this way gives a sense of ownership for the student. It also provides instant reading material and the student will feel, possibly for the first time, connected to the written word. When the student is comfortable this activity can be developed upon by breaking up paragraphs into sentences, breaking sentences into individual word to assist with spelling and as a basis for a writing activity where the learner records the dialogue.

Exploration of Learning Styles: It has long since been recognized that the traditional teaching style of the More Knowing Other teacher is not effective for all learners. This is due to the fact that everybody, regardless of intellect, has a different learning style and multiples intelligences of varying strengths. Given that there is such

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a variety in how people acquire knowledge and skills it is crucial that educators recognize that learning takes place in a number of ways and that they must ensure they are accommodating all learning styles. The three main learning styles are Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic.

Visual learners learn mainly through observing, memorizing, reading and writing. To accommodate visual learners you can look for smaller words within a word, highlight words learners find difficult to spell, set tasks to find text in social environment and asking learners if the word looks right. Another technique for assisting visual learners with difficult spelling is Look, Say, Cover, Write and Check.

Auditory learners learn mainly through talking to self and others, reading aloud and being read to, memorizing sequences, singing and listening. To accommodate auditory learners you can exaggerate pronunciation to highlight silent letters, associate the word with another form or where it can be heard more distinctively and use of rhythm in speech and in sounding out syllables.

Kinaesthetic learners learn mainly through hands on activities and problem solving by physically working through it. To accommodate kinaesthetic learners you can incorporate movement around the learning environment, use of tasks which allow them to express themselves and regular pair/group work with varied partners.

Feedback:
There was a common thread running through the feedback from each workshop in that it was very informative and once again highlighted the literacy and numeracy experienced by Irish adults. Most of the participants highlighted the fact that they felt isolated in their work and welcomed the chance to take part in the workshop and share their experiences. The workshops were interactive by design and this allowed a frank and open discussion on a wide range of issues being experienced and a sharing of ideas.

The participants in pillar one, were particularly interested in the integration of literacy in course content and also the impact technology is having on the delivery of their programmes. They felt a need for continuous professional development in this area is essential to keep abreast of new technologies. Some organisations were not or had not engaged with blended learning. The options available were explored and some found that it would be suitable to some of their participants. In particular the language experience approach was well received and practitioners were inspired by its simplicity and potential.

Participants in pillar two were particularly interested in understanding how to identify literacy and language proficiency. This has become a prerequisite for them for funding for their social inclusion programmes. With this in mind an Initial Skills Screening Tool was developed to assist them in their work. See appendix

The objective of the workshop for participants in pillar three was to provide an in-depth presentation in plain language of the level of literacy, numeracy and IT literacy in Ireland. Most of the participants had some knowledge but for others they were surprised at the level of literacy and numeracy levels that exist in Ireland. The workshop gave them a greater understanding of the causes and effects, particularly in today's technology rich society.

They felt that they could make changes in relation to their publicity material and how to be more sensitive to their clients. Some were not aware of the services available to those who are educationally disadvantaged and this information on these services proved to be invaluable. One organisation felt that they were referring clients to courses whether they were suitable or not due to their lack of information on literacy levels. The workshop gave them a greater insight into the importance of correct placement of clients to ensure the re engagement is made as easy as possible.

"A beginner reader is not a beginner thinker"
Frost and Hoy 1985

United Kingdom

Introduction:
The Campaign for Learning is running a series of workshops for participants from organisations delivering learning to disadvantaged adults and bodies that support this delivery.

Context:
Adult learning provision in the UK has decreased substantially under the current Government's austerity programme. Funding for adult learning has decreased by nearly 25% and numbers of learners have dropped from 3.3 million in 2013 to 2.6 million in 2015. The impact has been particularly severe on lower level courses, where numbers have dropped by over 21%. Reduced funding to support lower level learners has led many institutions to reduce or close their programmes for lower-skilled adults.

The exception is adult basic skills (now termed 'English and Maths'), which remains a priority for Government funding. Adult English & Maths numbers have dropped only slightly, and account for nearly a million of the adult learners above. Providers in the Further Education sector are very concerned about to offering good quality English & Maths provision – not least because the national Inspection body, Ofsted, has recently downgraded several prestigious institutions because of poor English & Maths.

Aim:
We concluded that the biggest current problem for UK organisations working with disadvantaged adults is providing consistently good quality English & Maths tuition and support, to enable disadvantaged learners to progress in learning and work. So we designed our programme to help with this, aiming:
- to stimulate organisations to reflect on their existing practice
- to highlight effective practice and encourage new approaches in working with adults with English or Maths support needs
- to help organisations identify system changes that might improve their provision
- to encourage delivery organisations to engage with policy in this field.

Participants:
To meet the aims of the project, our participants come from two groups:
Group 1: leaders and managers from organisations delivering learning to adults
Group 2: staff from other organisations that support this delivery (eg education and training Trade Unions, guidance organisations, adult learning bodies, examination boards).
We expect that members of Group 1 will be able to make changes at the individual organisational level, whereas members of Group 2 may be in a position to influence changes either in organisations or in the national system, and help promote best practice more widely to benefit disadvantaged adult learners.

Programme:
We had planned separate workshops for these two groups, but after talking with partners we decided to offer broadly the same workshop content on effective practice to mixed groups, as Group 2 bodies felt they would benefit from working alongside colleagues involved in delivery, in order to understand the issues they face in more detail, and Group 1 organisations hoped to raise awareness amongst their Group 2 colleagues and to work with them to influence policy.

For organisations with a particular interest in policy we also ran a seminar on Government policy on English & Maths, for which we were fortunate to secure the senior civil servant in charge of national

post-16 English & Maths policy, who analysed the impact of recent policy developments and discussed the Government's future plans with our participants. This was a highly valuable discussion, which was followed by discussion with participants of the implications of policy changes for best practice.

After discussion with representative bodies, we concluded that because of time pressures on leaders and managers from delivery organisations, we should run workshop and seminar sessions of 2-3 hours, with follow-up reading and recommendations for further work.

Because the quality of English & Maths provision is a very sensitive issue for organisations in the UK at present, and we want to encourage participants to be open about the challenges they face in providing good quality tuition and support, we decided to keep our effective practice workshop sessions small (no more than 10 participants) and to run them under the Chatham House Rule to ensure confidentiality. The policy and the Trade Union sessions (see below) had more participants (15 and 16 respectively).

We have run 4 sessions so far, although one was hit by a train strike and only one participant was able to attend! We therefore made this a one-hour 1:1 session, and the participant attended a later session as well. Other participants plan to attend one of our sessions in September. Three sessions took place in London, and one at a dedicated conference on English & Maths in Liverpool for an education & training staff Trade Union. We have arranged to run further sessions in Bristol and Birmingham in September, ensuring access for delegates from as wide a range of organisations across the country as possible.

37 participants attended our sessions; 4 came to more than one session, so 33 individuals have taken part so far. One participant attended for a total of 8 hours, 1 for 6, 1 for 5, 1 for 4, 26 for 3 hours and 4 for 2 hours, bringing the total number of participant hours to date to 109.

Content: Effective practice workshops:

Our workshops begin with an opportunity for delegates to identify their challenges in providing good quality English & Maths tuition, which we try to address during the session. This means that workshops are partly tailored to participants' needs, but share core content:

1. **Designing an ineffective system:** We begin by considering how our organisations would run if we wished to ensure that English and Maths provision had NO positive impact on learners! We then compare this with the systems in our own organisations, highlighting for example:
    - Deficit models of English & Maths support and the stigma that results
    - Some learners' negative previous experiences and danger of repeating these
    - English & Maths that is not connected with vocational learning or everyday life
    - Spiky profiles and failure to recognise learners' existing skills
    - Pressures on both vocational and dedicated English & Maths staff
2. **Who needs what:** We consider the pressures on organisations to meet various needs – of funding bodies, inspection bodies, staff, employers and learners – where these coincide, & how to 'top up' learning to meet needs of specific stakeholders
3. **Learning to Learn:** We look at Learning to Learn approaches and the research evidence showing their effectiveness in helping disadvantaged learners in particular to build their skills and confidence. We look at best practice in giving learners responsibility for their own learning, including through group work, coaching approaches and effective use of technology.
4. **Building on Success:** We look at the skills learners need to build up in the context they need them, using a 9 Box Matrix approach.

5. **Barriers:** Discussion on the barriers that exist in our organisations or from outside pressures that may prevent us from implementing effective practices and what we can do to address these.
6. **Best practice case study:** We read and discuss an article by the Principal of a College who has made major changes to the way her organisation works and spent substantial money on staff training and resources specifically in order to improve the organisation's English & Maths offer for disadvantaged learners. We consider how far her recommendations are desirable and what they will achieve, and to what extent it would be possible to do this in our own organisations.
7. **Resources:** We share useful resources and approaches, which we are collating.

Content: Policy seminar:

16 people attended our policy seminar, including College managers, representatives from qualification awarding bodies and Trade Unions, a University researcher who specialises in best practice in the teaching of Maths, the author of a Government review into English & Maths teaching and the head of a national numeracy improvement body.

The session started with a presentation by the senior civil servant in charge of English & Maths on how current policy has developed and what the Government plans in future. Participants debated the impact of these policies, and the best ways to develop policy approaches that skill up and empower the largest numbers of disadvantaged adults and young people with English & Maths support needs. The discussion took place under the Chatham House Rule to encourage all present to speak freely.

A particular challenge for English & Maths policy at present is the requirement for anyone who has just missed a school leaving certificate pass (GCSE grade A* to C) in English or Maths to continue attempting to gain the same qualification, when providers argue that 'Functional Skills' qualifications which relate English/ Maths learning to a vocational area and to everyday life are more useful and accessible. This was one topic discussed, but concerns also centred on planned reform of Functional Skills, staff training, funding and how English & Maths are developed in apprenticeships and other workplace learning. We followed up the seminar with an email exchange of resources and information. The civil servant also arranged to visit workplaces with a participant to see the policy in practice.

Outcomes and Feedback:

Our sessions have been very well received, with scores between 8/10 and 10/10, and participants particularly appreciating the chance to discuss issues confidentially within a small group of people working in a variety of contexts. The opportunity to mix groups of learners from Group 1 and 2 in Sessions 1 and 4 proved successful, and several participants commented positively on what they learned from others in the group as well as from the trainer. All felt they were going away with useful strategies to discuss at management level in order to improve their offer to disadvantaged adults.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Our experience to date strongly supports GRETB's recommendation that providers need to be offered something new (but in ways recognise and respect their existing expertise and do not call it into question!) We have found participants keen to learn and highly aware in many cases that their existing structures do not always offer the best opportunities for learners who struggle with English & Maths. We have also found time of year to be a significant factor, and our decision to run short (2-3-hour) sessions justified by the reactions of busy organisational leaders who felt they could not afford to take a longer time away from their institutions.

Part 4

Recommendations

For organisations to help educationally disadvantaged adults benefit from the education system:

1. Make sure you find out as much as you can about the social environment of the participants.

2. Educationally disadvantaged people often can´t be reached directly, but can be contacted through members of their social environment or relevant multipliers. Build up a network within the social environment of your target group step by step.

3. If working with new multipliers, be sure to schedule enough time to inform and support them. New multipliers can only share information when they are fully informed. Because of this, it is important to: build up contacts, keep in regular touch with them, share experiences, network and build a co-operative relationship.

4. Build links with organisations outside education that come into contact with people who are educationally disadvantaged to:

   - raise awareness of educational disadvantage and its impact to help people access services without barriers,

   - provide training specifically adapted to these organisations in order to meet their requirements,

   - build networking opportunities to help deepen understanding and improve liaison,

   - develop channels for providing information on educational opportunities and for obtaining feedback,

   - equip appropriate organisations with tools to make informed decisions when referring learners to education providers (see for example Appendix 2).

5. Bear the following questions in mind: Which sections of our target groups are we addressing? Which sections are we not successfully engaging? Who do we need to build up contact with? How can we reach them?

6. Recognise that not all communities value education in the same way. Key questions are: What does the group identify as its needs? Are these the same for all sections of the target group? How do socio-economic and cultural factors affect how education is perceived? Use this understanding when communicating with potential learners.

7. Talk with learners individually to explore the personal benefits of education for them.

8. Make sure all communication is clear, concise and in plain language (links: Ireland: NALA plain English[1], England:- Plain English Campaign Crystal mark[2] & Austria: Leichte Sprache[3])

9. Recognise that the learning journey starts before the first class. Dedicate sufficient time to

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[1] www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Writing%20and%20Design%20Tips%202011_1.pdf
[2] www.plainenglish.co.uk/services/crystal-mark.html
[3] www.leichtesprache.org/

allow exchange of information between learners and the organisation before commencement.

10. Take responsibility for ensuring that frontline staff are trained to interact with disadvantaged learners in appropriate ways.

11. Make sure that learners are welcomed and made familiar with the environment, facilities and personnel to feel part of the organisation from the beginning. Participants need to know who to go to if they have a problem, where their classes will be held etc.

12. Aim to replace experiences of exclusion with experiences of inclusion for disadvantaged learners. This includes accepting informally acquired competences from various learning environments.

13. If potential participants do not take up a place on a training course, for whatever reason, provide them with other educational and guidance opportunities.

14. Analyse the organisational process from first contact to course commencement. Avoid barriers such as long waiting times, large groups, costs, inaccessible locations etc.

15. Provide continuity for participants; avoid cancellations or any unnecessary changes to the programme.

16. Make counselling available to educationally disadvantaged people to discuss any area which may affect learning.

17. Ensure that learners have autonomy to take control of their learning and become active participants. Tutors should encourage two-way interactions with learners to build on their experiences and the knowledge in both the design and delivery of the course.

18. Monitor effectiveness of inter-departmental communication and sharing of information to ensure needs of learners are met effectively.

19. Give tutors sufficient time for preparing and adapting course material and opportunities to network with colleagues to exchange and develop new ideas and teaching practices.

20. Ensure you fulfil your responsibility to offer continuous professional development to all staff so they can keep abreast of current practices, trends and research. In turn, ensure that tutors have scope to influence the development of the organisation.

21. Offer resources to participants while on the course and afterwards to support them with their current and future education.

22. As experts, provide critical analysis and constructive feedback to funders on what is realistic in terms of timeframes, outcomes and progression.

23. For continuity and quality of provision, ensure you address the precarious working conditions of many tutors.

24. Ensure you have good and reliable systems – but make room for creativity and innovation.

Part 5

Conclusions

1. Every educational organisation has different goals and needs and these should be recognised. Many are experiencing challenges in following their mission statements - for example through recent diversification of the target group, reductions in funding etc.

2. There is a proven need to raise awareness, as there are still misunderstandings about educational disadvantage and a reluctance to accept published statistics. Educational disadvantage is not an individual problem but a structural one influenced by personal experiences (systemic and institutional discrimination combined with personal factors).

3. Providing training to a variety of partner organisations proved very productive in our project. People are eager to deepen their understanding, and it is our responsibility as education providers to enable this.

4. Building a co-operative relationship with other providers gave a platform for sharing and developing best practice. Face to face meetings were most effective in encouraging organisations with limited knowledge of educational disadvantage to participate.

5. Due to the sensitive nature of reflecting on individual and organisational practice, it is important to establish trust and confidentiality. Interactive training sessions were more productive as they removed barriers for organisations to participate.

6. Potential learners may not be in a position to engage at a given moment, but the door must be left open for when they are able to do so. The learner's needs, background and existing skills are factors to consider in order to achieve the best option for each individual.

7. When deciding where to run training, it is important to consider accessibility, geographical location and the target group's perception of the venue.

8. Everyone in an education organisation should sensitively consider how they relate to the participants, so as to minimise barriers - and bear in mind that these barriers are constantly changing.

9. Learners may not be aware of their competencies. It is important to acknowledged these and encourage learners to build on them.

10. It must be recognised that the needs of learners, organisations and funders do not always coincide. There is a conflict of interest at times, which creates an additional challenge for organisations and individual staff.

Part 6

Appendices

Austria

These are some examples of interviews with participants talking about their own experiences, wishes, needs etc. to be able to learn and to participate in educational programmes.

Wie kamen Sie zu dem Kurs, wie haben Sie davon erfahren?

*Die **Caritasbetreuerin** hat recherchiert, sie hat gemeint, das wäre etwas für mich, sie hat **einen Termin** gemacht.*
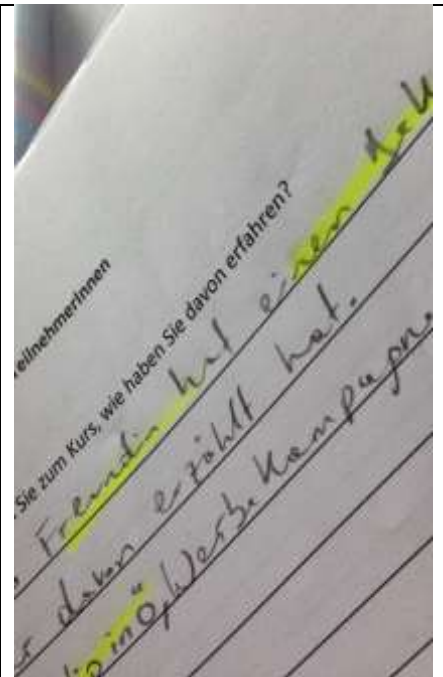
*Eine **Freundin** hat einen **Bekannten**, der ihr davon erzählt hat.*

*Ich war bei meinem **Berater**, hat er einen Termin ausgemacht.*

*Ein **Freund** hat den Kurs gemacht.*

*Das **AMS** schickt mich zu ISOP und Herr R. macht für mich einen Termin bei Frau A.*

*Ich bin zu dem Kurs gekommen, weil **ein Freund** gesagt hat…*

> *my supervisor – an acquaintance – a friend – friend – counselor – made an appointment for me*
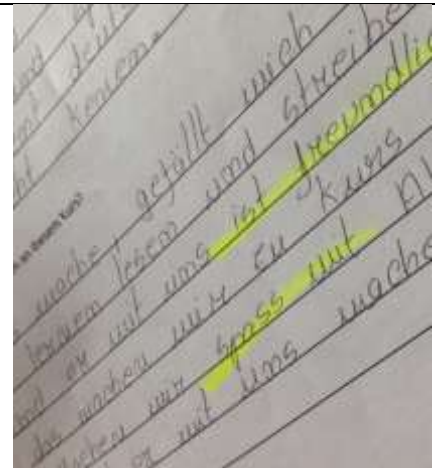
Kommen Sie freiwillig in den Kurs?

*Ich komme **freiwillig**, weil ich will Deutsch lernen.*

***Freiwillig**. Ich bin auf Arbeitsuche, **andere Kurse** habe ich nicht abgeschlossen, die waren **zu schwierig**.*

***Freiwillig**.*

*Ja, ich komme sehr gerne, nette und entspannte Atmosphäre. Ich lerne jetzt endlich lesen! Das **Lerntempo** ist nicht zu schnell.*

> *voluntary – voluntary - other courses were too difficult – the pace is not too fast*

Was sind Ihre Gründe, diesen Kurs zu besuchen? Warum gerade jetzt?

*Ich habe **nicht gewusst**, dass es Lese-Schreibkurse gibt. Meine Betreuerin hat das für mich herausgefunden.*

*Schreiben und lesen lernen. Arbeit stand zuvor im Vordergrund. Ich bin Saisonarbeiter. Im Winter **habe ich Zeit** für einen Kurs.*

*Ich liebe es, diesen Kurs zu machen, weil ich lesen und schreiben lerne. Wenn ich es **zu Hause alleine** mache, ist es **nicht** so gut wie im Kurs.*

*Ich möchte Deutsch lernen. Ich habe **keine Arbeit** jetzt.*
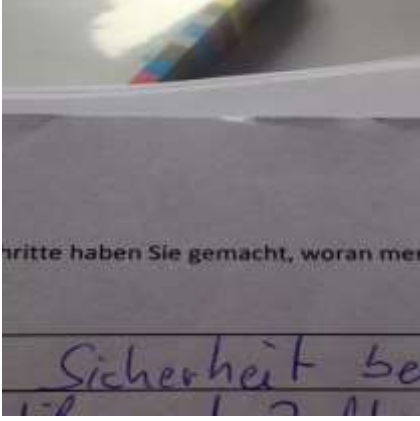
*Ich möchte mich auf eine **Ausbildung** vorbereiten.*

*Ich möchte Schreiben und Lesen üben. Ich will **in den Kurs seit 3 Jahren** kommen, aber sie haben gesagt, **es geht nicht**.*
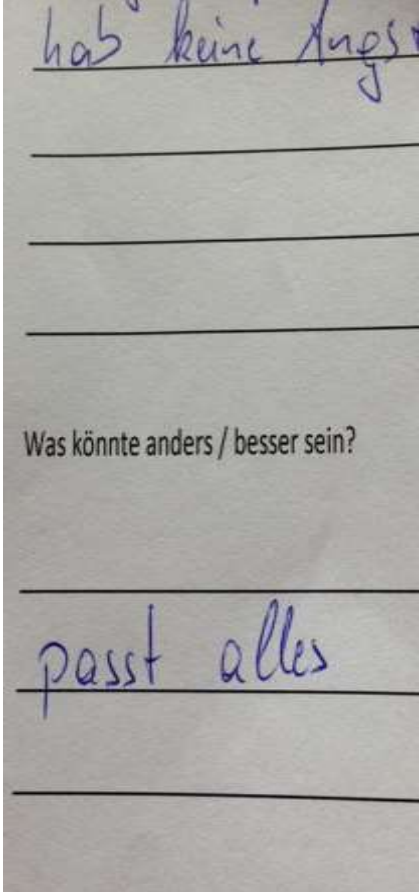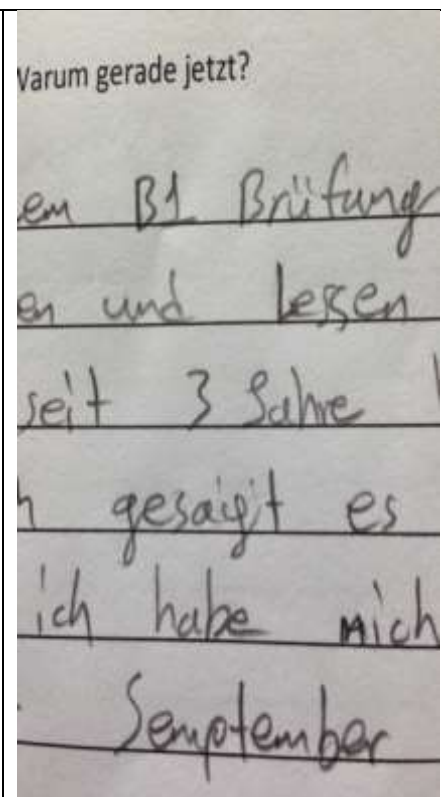
> *I didn't know that there are such courses – I'm seasonal worker, in winter I have time for such a course – I would like to do an apprenticeship – I want to learn German, have no work now*

Welche Fortschritte haben Sie gemacht, woran merkt man das?

Grammatik. Rechtschreibung. **Trainieren***.* **Mehr** *Sicherheit.* *Worte, die ich nicht kenne.* **Spaß** *beim Lernen.*	

more safety – fun while learning – new words, better grammar, spelling

Was gefällt Ihnen am besten an diesem Kurs?

Individuelle *Betreuung.* *Zum ersten Mal* **ohne Angst vor Versagen***, Lernen ohne Zeitdruck, keine Prüfung.* **Gemeinschaft** *mit anderen.* **Fixer** *Termin.* *Ich habe etwas zu tun. Eine Mischung aus* **Arbeit und Freizeit***.* *Der Lehrer ist ganz* **positiv***. Er unterrichtet gut.* *Es gibt oft etwas zu lachen. Ich habe* **keine Angst mehr vor dem Lernen***.* *Sie sind nett und lernen mit uns,* **bis wir es kapiert** *haben.* **Spaß** *machen gefällt mir.* *Er ist freundlich und* **er macht das gerne***!*	

Individual care - for the first time without fear of failure, learning without time pressure, no check - community with others - I have something to do - a mixture of work and leisure - there is often something to laugh about - I have no more fear of learning - they learn with us until we get the point

Was könnte besser sein?

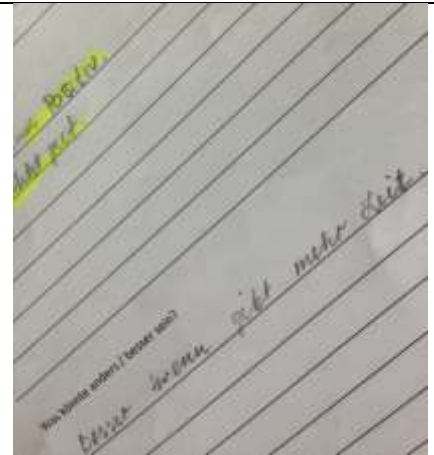*Ich will besser mit der **Zeit** zum Lernen umgehen.*

*Es ist besser, wenn es **mehr Zeit** gibt.*

*Ich will **drei Mal pro Woche** kommen.*

*Mehr schreiben, mehr lesen, mehr lernen, **mehr Zeit**.*

***Passt** alles.*

*Es sollte immer **derselbe Trainer** sein.*

more time – more time – three times a week is better – always the same teacher – everything fits

Copyright ISOP

Ireland – Initial Skills Screening Tool

Question	Guidance	Profile Indicator	Level	Comments
Using a notepad or simple form ask the person to write down their name, address, date of birth and telephone number for you.	Asking for simple written material that should be known is a reasonable indicator of the ability to write, at least for everyday purposes such as form filling.	Written with ease i.e. no hesitation, result legible, follows normal conventions for layout e.g. capitals used correctly etc ------------------------------- Some letters/words badly formed, written in all capitals ------------------------------------- Unable to write name and address	3 2 1	
What is your particular interest in this course and where do hope it will take you?	This will set the tone of sharing and also bring a little informality to the process.	Motivated with a clear goal ------------------------------------- Building on informal learning ------------------------------------- No real knowledge of course or reason for doing it	3 2 1	
When did you leave school?	Leaving below 15 is likely to indicate that no courses were completed and may have had several periods of non-attendance leading to low skills levels.	16 or older ------------------------------------- 12 to 15 ------------------------------------- Below 12	3 2 1	
Have you got any qualifications or certificates?	Junior Cert Leaving Cert Leaving Cert applied (LCA) QQI	Junior Cert/Leaving Cert/LCA. Higher/Lower ------------------------------------- Any other qualifications ------------------------------------- No qualifications	3 2 1	
Have you completed any training courses?	Clear indicator or some commitment but not necessarily of num/lit skills levels. Some lit/num may have been gained but no guarantee.	Full/part time training ------------------------------------- Some training since leaving school ------------------------------------- Never attended any training	3 2 1	
Are you working? If yes, describe the job If no, have you worked in the past? What did you work at?	Clear indicator or some commitment but not necessarily of num/lit skills levels. Some lit/num may have been gained but no guarantee.	Full/part time employment ------------------------------------- Some employment since leaving school ------------------------------------- Unemployed since leaving school	3 2 1	
Do you have any certs from work / or work training courses e.g. Safe Pass	If yes some literacy skills may have been used to achieve it. Check for duration of the course. May need to probe if short courses.	Yes ------------------------------------- No - but did a course ------------------------------------- None	3 2 1	
Are you involved in community or voluntary work or activity?	Check if role involves reading and writing – committee work. Provides an opportunity for informal engagement.	Yes – with a clear role ------------------------------------- Yes – no clear role ------------------------------------- No	3 2 1	
Can you use a computer, smart phone? If yes, what do you do?	Use of PC for games, chat and looking at websites would indicate some literacy skills. Texting using apps or games would suggest some numeracy skills.	Can use PC/phone – e.g. for games, chat, looking up web ------------------------------------- Not much ------------------------------------- Never use	3 2 1	
Do you feel confident handling money, understanding and paying bills? Using an ATM?	Confidence in paying bills indicates skills in both lit and num. Confidence in understanding how bill was calculated.	Yes – very confident ------------------------------------- Sometimes ------------------------------------- Not confident at all	3 2 1	

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| Ask if they feel that they can succeed with current skills set or would they need help with their literacy | Have a clear understanding of the entry levels and course requirements and discuss these with learner. | A clear yes
----
Need some help

Need a lot of help | 3

2

1 | |
| **Interviewer**
Overall impression during interview | Reasonable indicator of some literacy skills.
Did the answers given and the discussion generally use a reasonable range of vocabulary? Were complete sentences used or just one / two word responses? | A reasonable range of vocabulary
----
Complete range of sentences
One or two responses

No engagement with discussion | 3

2

1 | |

Record how many were scored at each level to give an indication of this person's level:

	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Total number			

Literacy Level Indicator:

Level 3	**Unlikely to have significant literacy / skills needs, but may struggle at a higher level.**
Level 2	**Likely to have literacy difficulties in one or all of the following e.g. reading, writing, spelling, numeracy & IT**
Level 1	**Likely to have significant skills development needs around one or all of e.g. reading, writing, spelling, numeracy & IT**

Note:

The aim of this initial skills screening tool is to help assess the literacy skills before entry to a programme of learning. This tool should be used as part of the general interview process. **This is just a checklist and not a formal assessment tool**. You may have to rely on your own professional judgement - some of which will be subjective to determine the level.

gretb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin
*Galway and Roscommon
Education and Training Board*