
AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival

Information Day Report

19 January 2011

AONTAS: The Voice of Adult Learning
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Co Reg: 80958 Ch Reg: 6719

The Adult Learners' Festival 2011 is kindly sponsored by





1. THE ADULT LEARNERS' FESTIVAL

The Adult Learners' Festival is a nationwide celebration of adult learning coordinated by AONTAS: the Voice of Adult Learning. It is about:

- **Celebrating** adult learning and the achievements of adult learners
- **Showcasing** the work of adult education providers
- **Promoting** the work of AONTAS and the adult education sector
- **Ensuring** that adult education is placed firmly on the political agenda

The 2011 Festival takes place from the 21 – 25 February. In the last four years, the festival has become a firm fixture on the adult learning calendar with events taking place nationwide, including anything from information sessions, taster workshops, sample lectures to small gatherings of people who love to learn. Events are organised by all kinds of organisations throughout the country e.g. VEC, Libraries, Universities, Museums, Galleries, Workplaces, NGOs and much more! Since its inception in 2007 the Adult Learners' Festival has seen over **34** STAR Awards awarded to adult learning initiatives as well as **762** local events and **4** national policy events take place throughout the country.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE ADULT LEARNERS' FESTIVAL INFORMATION DAY

The Adult Learners' Festival Information Day was held on Wednesday 19th January 2011 in The Gresham Hotel in Dublin. The meeting aimed to encourage organisations to become involved in the Festival by organising an event or activity. The Information Day promised:

- the chance to learn more about the Adult Learners' Festival
- networking opportunities
- event and activity ideas
- how to promote adult learning using new and traditional media

The environment in which organisations are working is dramatically different to previous Adult Learners' Festivals. There have been drastic cuts to community organisations, increased unemployment and a huge demand for adult education. All of this has led to organisations trying to meet increased demand with fewer resources.

The Information Day focused on the importance of collaboration when working at local level and organising festival events. It also created an opportunity to develop the capacity of event organisers in publicising their work through a presentation on promoting adult learning using new and traditional media.



The meeting used discussion groups to facilitate networking and the exchange of ideas. 42 participants were seated in 5 colour coded round tables of 8-9 participants with an AONTAS staff member.

85% of participants had never been involved in previous Festivals which is a shift from last year and shows that new organisations and groups are interested in taking part. Of the 15% of participants who took part in previous festivals they were involved in a number of different ways including former event organisers, STAR Award nominees, and Local Links.

3. CONTENT OF THE DAY

The morning commenced with an overview of the Adult Learners' Festival and the key messages for the 2011 Festival from AONTAS Director, Berni Brady. Niamh Farren, Communications Officer, provided an input on the Festival Themes and the resources available to event organisers. This year's festival themes are:

- Celebrate Learning : The STAR Awards Ceremony
- Green Learning Day
- Learning Communities
- Learning for Work
- Raise your Voice for Adult Learning!

Niamh emphasized the importance of collaboration when holding an event, pointing out that it can result in better outcomes for learners. Niamh noted the importance of documenting and evaluating an organization's work during the Festival. She highlighted the AONTAS promotional strategy which will include international, national and local dimensions. A key part of the AONTAS promotional strategy is the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter. 2011 also sees the return of the ['Event in a Bag'](#) which is choc full of resources to help participants promote their events. Please see Appendix 2 for Niamh's presentation.

Following her presentation, Niamh invited participants to outline their experience of organising an event in previous years and share ideas about what they can do for the 2011 Festival within their groups. The short discussion focused on the following two questions:

- 1. For those of you who have organised events last year (or in the past) what worked well and what would they do differently?**
- 2. For those who haven't run events – What kind of event could your organisation run? How could AONTAS help your organisation participate fully in the festival this year**



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The groups came up with lots of ideas for events and new ways to collaborate and showcase adult learning.

Schedule Launch of publication/video during the festival

Third level certificate/course - invite a learner who is already involved to talk to the group

Celebrate women's day earlier

Guided tour of the local museum/art gallery

Show the festival poster on the organization/group/centre premises

Visit to the Oireachtas

Script for a play, submitted to the library, prize to best script and then play staged

Social Welfare Entitlements

Promote your own group

Team up with your local Library/CIC to give broader information

Breast check/ cervical check – use free services – unislim/GP

Advertising using local media

Press release promoting information about a service

Cavan – 3 events (Launch of Book by adult learners)

Leftover food – cookery class

Showcase different services in the area e.g. Information stand

Demonstration classes i.e. Email, Cookery, Photography

Open Day – informal, day long event, short presentations: Start your own business (Greenworks)

Book Launch – Poems, stories collated into a book, get an author to visit the event

Open day/free tea/coffee/promotion on local media – use balloons to promote the centre

Coffee - information morning

Learning needs board

Bring a friend to the activity the learner is involved in

Learning Tree

Waste Management

Open information mornings

Make use of spaces in shopping mall to showcase work

Exhibition of art, crafts etc

Specialised information sessions i.e to parents of sick children in hospital

Voter's education

Information on your Rights

Creative writing - Learning Tree, bring a friend

Hold a lunch for participants – promoting work

'The Leftover Chef' - €5 a head (TARGET)

'Recycling food and other things. Food safety

BAP – Sean Gallagher (Dragons Den) to give a talk (March) – for 'Enterprise Day'

Taster workshop (morning)/Nina Byrne/ Operation Transformation

Healthy food made easy

Laughter Workshop

Ask high profile people to give something back

Library Bus – promote websites for distance learning

Hold taster classes

Book exchange – tie it in with the festival

Cycle to work' theme – photo shoot

LMA Information sessions



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The discussion space provided an opportunity for the participants to talk about possible synergies among their organizations/groups/centres. There was a strong awareness from groups of the need to work collaboratively with comments such as

- We should try to link in with other local groups to have a larger event
- We could tie in with Learning Communities Day and create partnerships to pull people together and meet different agencies

Participants agreed that there was a need for emphasizing the information that is already out there as accessing the appropriate information is often difficult for learners. The Festival is an opportunity to create awareness of the options that exists and the paths of progression that are available to adult learners. But as one participant stated 'education is not just for the workforce' and that the opportunity to showcase and host community based events and projects must not be overlooked.

Following a quick feedback session from each of the five discussion groups, Niamh Farren delivered a workshop on 'Promoting the Value of Adult Learning'. The aim of this workshop was to provide advice on using traditional and new media to promote Festival events and activities. The workshop provided tips on writing press releases, preparing for media interviews and tips on how to use social networking and the internet to promote your event and the work of your organisation. The workshop was interactive, allowing participants to draw on their existing experience of using the media and encouraging them to share their approaches as well as asking questions. Niamh gave a short PowerPoint presentation which explained AONTAS PR strategy for the Festival as well as useful pointers in new and traditional media. The workshop was complimented by the resources available in the Event in a Bag. See appendix 2 for the presentation.

The morning concluded with thanks and words of encouragement from AONTAS Director, Berni Brady.

4. Participant Feedback

Participants were asked to fill out an evaluation form to give AONTAS feedback for next year.

What could AONTAS do differently?

- Include the flyer for each day e.g. Green Learning Day etc, in the handout pack for each delegate, there were not enough copies on the tables and these were very useful to refer to during the session.



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- Hold it earlier – more time between the Information Day and the Festival. Give the dates of the 2012 Festival to those who attended the Information Day as soon as they become available, to allow plenty of time for planning ahead.

After today, what is one action or idea that you will put into practice during the Adult Learners' Festival 2011?

- Celebrate formal and informal learning within our hospital
- An information session on social media
- Discussed the festival with a Women's Group who use the community centre and they hope to have an event
- To run a series of Health info days. Possible for 2 hours on a Tuesday morning for 5 weeks
- Discussing idea with management

5. Participant List

| | NAME | ORGANISATION | EMAIL |
|----|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Ann NcGowan | Atlantic View CDP | atlanticview01@eircom.net |
| 2 | Evanna Keaveny | Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership | ekeaveny@ballymun.org |
| 3 | Liz Smyth | Belgard Training and Languages | info@ledepot.ie |
| 4 | Sandra Dunne | Blanchardstown Area Partnership | sdunne@bap.ie |
| 5 | Lorraine Cunningham | Blayney Blades | blayneyblades@eircom.net |
| 6 | Erin McGreehan | Cavan VEC | erinmcgreehan@cavanvec.ie |
| 7 | Grainne Dowdall | Childrens University Hospital Temple Street | Grainne.Dowdall@cuh.ie |
| 8 | Marie Grogan | Clondalkin Employment and Education Development Services | marie_mgrogan@yahoo.ie |
| 9 | Lorraine Walsh | Clondalkin Employment and Education Development Services | lorraine.w07@hotmail.com |
| 10 | Fiona O'Keefe | Co. Kildare V.E.C. | info@abce.ie |
| 11 | Mary Maher | DALC | marymaher@dalc.ie |
| 12 | Annemarie Scott | DCU | annemarie.scott@ryanacademy.dcu.ie |



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|-----------|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 13 | Pete McDonagh | Dublin Simon Community | |
| 14 | Eimear O'Neill | Dublin Simon Community | eimearoneill@dubsimon.ie |
| 15 | Yvonne O'Brien | Fingal Libraries | yvonneobrien@fingalcoco.ie |
| 16 | Siobhan Walshe | Fingal Libraries | siobhanwalshe@fingalcoco.ie |
| 17 | Deirdre Kelleher | FIT Ltd., | deirdrekelleher@fit.ie |
| 18 | Niamh Feeney | Focus Ireland Education Services | nfeeney@focusireland.ie |
| 19 | Elaine Fleming | Focus Ireland Education Services | efleming@focusireland.ie |
| 20 | Ian Byrne | Green Gables Training Centre | ian.byrne@sjog.ie |
| 21 | Sean Flynn | Green Gables Training Centre | |
| 22 | Alice Ryan | GreenWorks | alice@green-works.ie |
| 23 | Aine Mulligan | Harmony Community Development Project | harmonycdp@eircom.net |
| 24 | Caitriona Kelly | Hill St Family Resource Centre | ckellyhillstfrc@gmail.com |
| 25 | Cathy Moore | Hill St Family Resource Centre | |
| 26 | John O'Callaghan | ICA | John@ica.ie |
| 27 | Robert McCulloch | Meath Partnership | robert.mcculloch@meathpartnership.ie |
| 28 | Joe Murdoff | Men Alone In No-man's-land (MAIN) | joe@main.ie |
| 29 | Liz Hennessey | North Cork Adult Education | twodogsbarkingmad@gmail.com |
| 30 | Judy Halford | North Wall Women's Centre CDP | judyhalford@eircom.net |
| 31 | Wilfred Mitchell | Partanauk College - Dungannan | wilfred.mitchell@btopenworld.com |
| 32 | Bernie Black | Partas | bblack@partas.ie |
| 33 | Deirdre McCumin | Partas | ialdev@eircom.net |
| 34 | Mary Blake | Sicdda | jobclub@sicdda.ie |



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|-----------|--------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 35 | Geraldine Neill | St Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired | training@stjosephs.ie |
| 36 | Anne Webb | SunGard Global Services | anne.webb@sungard.com |
| 37 | Heidi Bedell | TARGET Adult Education Centre | heidi@targeteducation.net |
| 38 | NIALL CULLEN | Three Q Recruitment Ltd | sales@3qrecruitment.ie |
| 39 | Ann Luttrell | Triskel Arts Centre | annluttrell@triskelartscentre.ie |
| 40 | Ann Nugent | WCRC | annnugent@wrcr.ie |
| 41 | PJ Gallagher | Individual | gallagher.patrickjohn@gmail.com |
| 42 | Sinéad Ní Bheoláin | Individual | nibheolainsinead@gmail.com |



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Appendix 1: Information Day Agenda

Date: Wednesday, 19th January 2011

Time: 9:30 – 13.00

Venue: The Gresham hotel, O'Connell Street, Dublin 1

A light lunch of soup and sandwiches will be served at 13.00.

AGENDA

- 9:30 – 10:00** Registration with tea, coffee and biscuits
- 10:00 – 10:15** Welcome and overview of the Adult Learners' Festival 2011
Policy Aspects and Festival Messages
Berni Brady, Director, AONTAS
- 10:15 – 10:30** Festival Themes
Niamh Farren, Communications Officer, AONTAS
- *Celebrate Learning* : The STAR Awards Ceremony
 - *Green Learning Day*
 - *Learning Communities*
 - *Learning for Work*
 - *Lobby for Learning*
- AONTAS Support and Resources/ Event in a Bag
- 10:30 – 11:30** Organising an Event – Discussion groups
Experience of past event organisers, get ideas for your events and network
- 11:30 – 12:30** Workshop: *AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival 2011 – Promoting the Value of Adult Learning*
This workshop will offer practical advice on using traditional and new media to promote Festival events and activities.
Niamh Farren, Communications Officer, AONTAS
- 12:30 – 13:00** Workshop feedback and Q&A
Thanks & Close *Berni Brady, Director, AONTAS*
- 13:00** Lunch



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Appendix 2: Presentations

Presentation One: [AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival Promotional Strategy](#)

Presentation Two: [Promotion Workshop](#)

Appendix 3: Support and Resources

This year we've made it as easy as possible for you to participate. The [A- Z of activities](#) on our website will help you decide on something simple and easy that you can organise within your group or community. Once you have decided on an activity, you can [enter details about your event](#) directly on our website. AONTAS will send you one of our 'Event in a Bag' which contains promotional and display materials. Details of your event will be included on the website in the lead up to the Festival, along with your contact details. AONTAS can also help you promote your event in your local media, or put you in contact with organisations or people that are involved in your area.

Event in a Bag

If you are planning an event for the Adult Learners' Festival (21 -25 February 2011) we have everything you might need in an Event in a Bag. This complete kit of materials is designed to support you in holding local events and activities during the week of the festival.

An Event in a Bag contains:

- 12 [A3 Posters](#) (10 with a blank space to advertise your own event)
- 10 [A5 fliers](#)
- 3 [Banners](#)
- 6 Balloons
- 30 [Bookmarks](#)
- 30 Pens
- 30 Magnets
 - 1 FETAC poster and bookmark
 - 1 Qualifax poster, 5 framework flyers and 20 rulers
 - 1 Evaluation form
 - 1 Book of raffle tickets

A limited number of posters and fliers are available as Gaeilge:

[A3 Poster](#) (Irish Language)

[A5 Flier](#) (Irish Language)

Get your free Event in a Bag by registering your event on the Calendar of Events [by clicking here](#) or contact Eleonora Peruffo at eperuffo@aontas.com / 01 4068220.



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To assist us in compiling statistical information following the festival, we have included a book of raffle tickets, which you can use to count the number of people attending your event. We would encourage you to hand out a ticket to each participant and then send us back the raffle book whereby we will enter you into an amazing prize draw. If you exceed the 100 tickets please just keep a note of the extra numbers attending. There will be prizes* for the event organizer who:

1. organizes the most events during the festival week
2. organizes the most Green friendly event
3. organizes an event with the most participants
4. organizes the most collaborative event (one or more groups/organizations working together)
5. returns the completed evaluation form (raffle among those who return the evaluation form)

We have also included an evaluation form for you to complete. We would urge you to complete and return the evaluation form to be in with a chance to win an exciting prize. Do not forget to become part of the bigger promotional picture alongside your colleagues across the country and register your event online at www.adultlearnersfestival.com.

Festival Themed Days

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Monday, 21 February 2011: | Celebrate Learning |
| Tuesday, 22 February 2011: | Green Learning |
| Wednesday, 23 February 2011: | Learning Communities |
| Thursday, 24 February 2011: | Learning for Work |
| Friday, 25 February 2011: | Raise your voice for Adult Learning |