


Literacy for life

A new Whole-of-Government approach to supporting adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs

NALA Policy and Research

Literacy Now

The cost of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs in Ireland and why we need to act now




#LiteracyChangesLives

NALA
National Adult Literacy Agency
Aisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

NALA Policy and Research

Literacy for life

A whole-of-government approach for investing in adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills for an equal and resilient Ireland



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Literacy Impact

An outcomes framework for measuring the impact of improved literacy, numeracy and digital skills



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Learning and Work Institute
4 November 2020



Literacy, numeracy and digital skills in everyday life

Literacy includes more than the technical skills of communications: it also has personal, social, emotional and economic dimensions.



Literacy and inequality

Literacy is a barometer of equality.

Literacy is not neutral, it is bound up with power and powerlessness, with equality and inequality.

In Ireland there is a **widening gap** between the haves and the have nots. It has been shown that those who need the most assistance are the least likely to be assisted. This is the Matthew effect where “without intervention, those who have acquired more education get more, and those that have not get little or nothing.”

Some people have their **literacy needs met**; others do not.

This can be for **many reasons**.



The United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda aims to address this through their commitment to reaching the **furthest behind first** and calls for investment in adult literacy.



Irish General election: February 2020

Coalition government formed in June 2020 with three political parties: Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party.

Addressing adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills in the new Programme for Government

Two commitments

- Develop and implement a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills within the first year of the Government;
- and**
- Introduce a plain language requirement for all public service communication, so that people can understand information the first time they read or hear it.

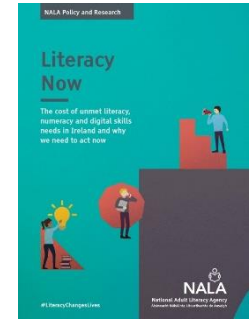


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NALA launches three new documents in July 2020

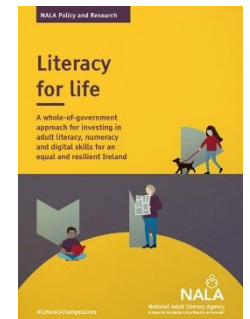
Literacy Now

- Report examining key policy and practices in adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy and providing evidence why we must invest now – read [here](#)



Literacy for Life

- Whole-of-Government approach for investing in adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy – read [here](#)



Literacy Impact

- Outcomes framework for measuring the impact of improved literacy, numeracy and digital literacy – read [here](#)



Map of nine Government Departments with policies involving literacy, numeracy or digital literacy

Education and Skills

- Action Plan for Education Framework 2016-19
- The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020 - 24
- National Skills Strategy
- Supporting Working Lives and Enterprise Growth in Ireland
- The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020

Health

- Sláintecare Action Plan 2019
- Healthy Ireland
- Health Literacy policy and implementation (Health and Wellbeing Directorate)

Communications, Climate Action and Environment

- Digital Skills for Citizens
- Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and the Media Literacy Network
- Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020 and the Voluntary National Review (VNR)

Children and Youth Affairs

- Family literacy in DEIS schools
- School completion programme
- First Five: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028.

Business, Enterprise and Innovation

- Action Plan for Jobs
- Workplace literacy in particular around sectors identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

Employment Affairs and Social Protection

- NESC jobless households report and low skills trap
- Pathways to work

Finance

- Competition and Consumer Protection Commission on Financial Literacy

Justice and Equality

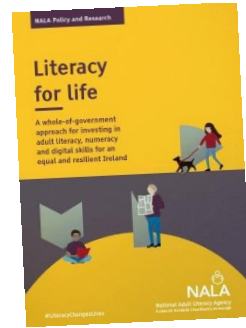
- Prison and probation literacy support

Rural and Community Development

- Right to Read programme which forms part of "Our Public Libraries 2022: Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities strategy"
- Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

Literacy for Life

The purpose of this report is to provide a **framework** to re-examine the policy approach to supporting adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.



Connecting adult literacy with the concept of “resilience”.

Adopt a much broader understanding of the **relationship between adult literacy and resilience** through an assessment of how literacy contributes to individual agency and the capacity to respond to external events and forms of change. This thinking fits with the “**capabilities approach**” from international development and social justice (Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum).



The proposed framework would include:

- a cross-departmental and holistic approach to literacy policy;
- a monitoring framework for literacy across policymaking bodies; and
- new outcomes and indicators for the impact of literacy learning.

Literacy for Life

This report suggests a Whole-of-Government framework that would go beyond focusing solely on literacy as a skill.

The framework would be based on a **capabilities approach** that improves adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to support individual capacity to:

- process information,
- make constructive decisions,
- self-advocate, and
- feel greater life satisfaction.



You can read **Literacy for Life** [here](#).

Literacy Impact

The purpose of this research report is to identify indicators to measure the outcomes of literacy strategies and initiatives in Ireland.



The report:

- presents an **Outcomes Framework** structured around eight domains;
- proposes **sample indicators**; and
- makes recommendations how the Framework could be featured in a new Government strategy.

Outcomes category	Domains
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and Personal Development
Life-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and Intergenerational • Community Life and Social Inclusion • Health and Wellbeing • Work • Financial Capability
Societal and Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society and Citizenship • Economy

Domains wheel



Current status

The Minister for Further and Higher Education has:

- Got cabinet approval to progress the development of the Strategy
- Tasked SOLAS (Further Education and Training Authority) to develop the strategy (due in April 2021) – consultation being launched
- Set up an Interdepartmental Stakeholder Group

NALA is continuing to **work with and support** Government Departments and state agencies to support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

Further information

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