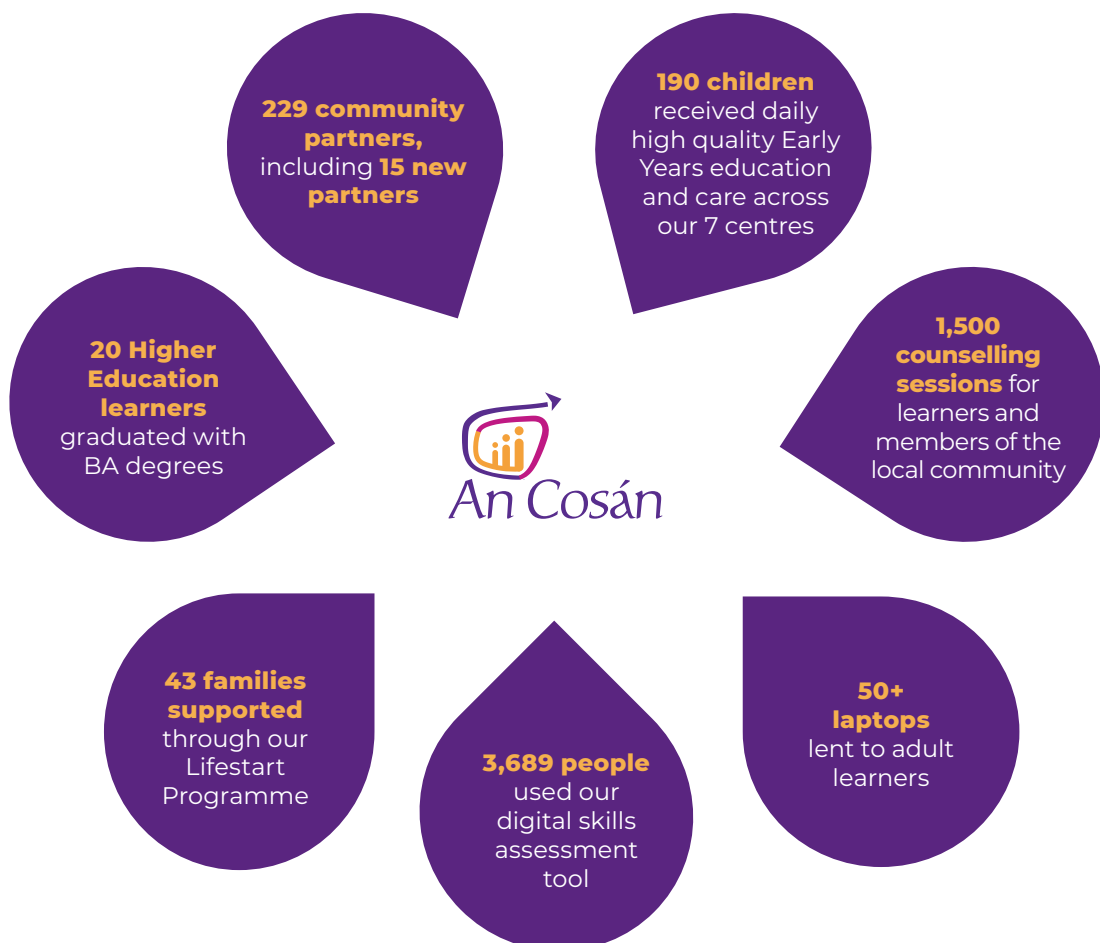
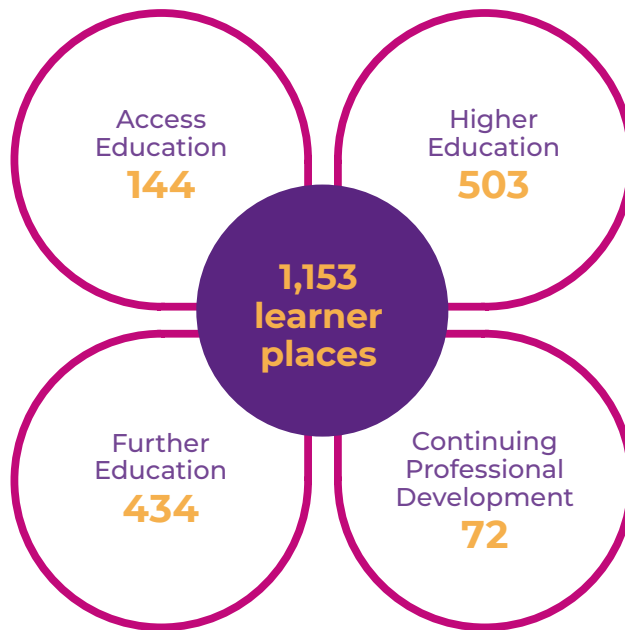


Annual Report 2021

TRANSFORMING LIVES





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Chairperson's report



Reflecting on 2021 brings memories of so many achievements, challenges, opportunities and landmark moments for An Cosán. We have now been in existence for 36 years. Each of those years has brought memorable moments but, as I look back at 2021, I am struck by the significance of this year in the arc of our history. In writing this reflection, I feel such pride in where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are going to next.

When Katharine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan created An Cosán all those years ago, they could not have anticipated what the year 2021 would look like. They couldn't have foreseen the pandemic, the digital divide, and all the other issues that we face in our society, locally and globally. But the organisation they created was based on values and a vision, responding to community needs and acting to empower through education, and that remains at the core of who we are and has allowed us to rise to unprecedented challenges.

In 2021, with a committed team and with the backing of our incredible supporters, we have continued and expanded our services to provide a pathway of lifelong learning in order to nurture our learners and their communities, while also acting at a systems level to advocate through national platforms for policy and practice to end the digital divide and bring about a more inclusive society.

We provide a pathway to learning, leadership and enterprise for those who are often left behind by our society, and we ensure that they have the right supports so that they can succeed. An Cosán believes in the incredible potential, skills and talents of our learners, but we know that they are too often blocked by barriers that prevent them from progressing in life. And so we work to break down those barriers through our programmes, enabling them to achieve while empowering them to change the destiny for themselves and their communities.

We act on every point of the lifelong learning journey of those we serve.

For the little ones in our Early Years education and care centres and their families, 2021 was hugely challenging due to the pandemic restrictions but, once we were able to welcome them back, our team ensured that they were met with the support they needed. And, by the end of the year, all these children were reaching their individual goals.

So too for our Adult Learners, who were supported to learn online. This was a year where they were challenged, but they rose to it, and continued to engage with their learning and progress through their programmes, whether Access, Further or Higher Education. We were able to provide tailored supports with a strong focus on Digital Inclusion so that they could continue to succeed. And, proudly this year, we were able to expand our provision for more classes and to reach more people.

As an organisation, we have bolstered our core funding to ensure our sustainability going forward, and I have to express my heartfelt gratitude to our funders and supporters for their unwavering commitment to the mission we share. And we have drawn on that network of supporters, as well as our learners, team and board, to progress the development of the organisation with our education review and the initiation of our strategy process, which was completed in 2022.

We live in an ever-changing world and, while we hope that we have seen off the worst of the challenging times, we know that future challenges may await, but so do opportunities for a brighter tomorrow. It is with the support of all those in our network and community that we are able to progress towards our goals of ending poverty and achieving a truly equal society.

Anna Durkan
Chair of the Board of Directors

CEO Overview of 2021



As I look back at 2021, it is hard to believe it was just one year. Twelve months. Three hundred and sixty-five days. So much happened in each of those moments for our country, for our people and for our organisation. It feels like it could have been a lifetime.

As 2021 dawned, it was with dark clouds. The Covid pandemic, which we had thought was fading away at the end of 2020, struck back with a vengeance, and we found ourselves in yet another lockdown - one which would last much longer than the others. I worried that we would be nearing the last reserves of hope and resilience that had kept our team, our learners and our community strong through

the previous dark days. But, once again, An Cosán reached deep into its essence and we found the strength once again to face the difficult months. And together we found our way through.

As we fought through those hard times, I believe we found new strengths, old strengths and undiscovered strengths that are taking us to a bold new frontier.

Covid and the deep divides it highlighted in our society allowed us to demonstrate our approach to community-empowered education as the key means to end poverty and inequality. As we continued to deliver our services, we took the opportunity to engage at a national level to show what needs to be done, speaking out on digital inclusion and women's education. We built on old relationships and formed new ones, so we would be heard by those who make the decisions. And we were listened to.

We seized the moment to focus on digital inclusion, focusing on the fact that in this new world it's not enough to simply close the digital divide: we must educate and empower those left behind in our society in such a way that they can thrive and access the digital spaces that are so necessary.

And we also returned to our roots - to our feminist principles and values - knowing and acknowledging that we hold women and children at our core. An Cosán was created for women and children. They are the ones on whom we focus our services. They are the ones for whom we must break down barriers. Women and children are not passive participants in our work: we enable and support them to be active citizens and agents of their own change.

The world has changed. As a woman of colour, I have long encountered barrier after barrier, sometimes clearly seen, sometimes hidden. I see a shift now towards an understanding of the systemic inequalities in our societies, and a desire to change them. An Cosán is equipped with, and equips others, with the tools needed to make that change a reality.

We achieved so much in 2021. Against adversity, we not just kept our adult community education, early years childhood and care, and vital wraparound supports going, but we improved and expanded them. We found the time to do an extensive education review that was fully inclusive and featured voices from around the globe, and most importantly from our communities. With this we were enabled to build a strategy that is based on listening and responding to need, raising the voices of those we work with, allowing them to tell their story and shape their future realities through the empowerment of education.

Heydi Foster
CEO of An Cosán

2021 Highlights

Championing those left furthest behind

One Generation Solution



We launched our new **One Generation Solution to poverty campaign** video during our online International Women's Day celebration on 5th March in the firm belief that the route to ending poverty is empowering women through education. Educate a woman and she will lift not only herself and her children out of poverty, but her children too.

The video features a number of adult learners across the organisation.



It was the first time in 24 years of celebrating **International Women's Day (IWD)**, the An Cosán celebration took place online, due to Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time. It took the form of an inspirational and uplifting online seminar, which was filmed in a studio at the Aviva stadium, with the kind support of Goodbody. In their contributions, our Chair Anna Durkan and CEO Heydi Foster reflected on An Cosán's continued resilience and leadership throughout the pandemic.

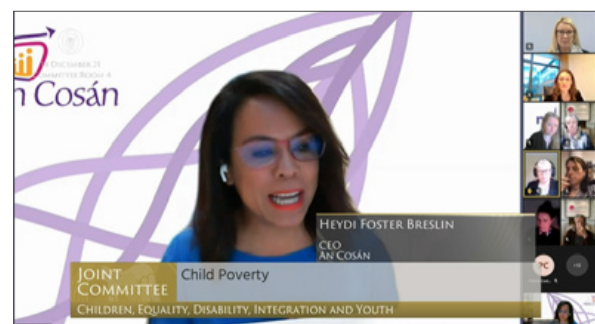
A big focus, as always, was on our inspirational female learners and their leadership qualities, tying in nicely with the United Nations theme for IWD 2021, which was *'Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a Covid-19 World'*. Everyone was blown away by our incredible learner Tanya Johnston whose story stole the show in demonstrating how lifelong learning with An Cosán can lead to a brighter future. You can watch the conversation between Miriam and Tanya on [YouTube](#).

We were thrilled too that our #OneGenerationSolution hashtag trended on Twitter that day!

We were hugely grateful to everyone who supported this event and especially to RTE's Miriam O'Callaghan who kindly gave of her time and expertise to MC for us once again.

Speaking up for children in poverty

An Cosán CEO Heydi Foster was invited to join the National Women's Council of Ireland on 14th December speaking on the issue of child poverty at the **Oireachtas Joint Committee on Child Poverty**. Most of the NWCI's address was based on a statement we had prepared showcasing how An Cosán's 35-year track record of tackling child poverty through our One Generation Solution was a proven model of community transformation.



During the question time that followed, Heydi took the opportunity to call a number of times for policy change and increased funding for the sector.

Digital Inclusion

Over the years digital inclusion has become central to our work supporting those left furthest behind. Given that one in two adults in Ireland currently lacks basic digital skills* and that nine out of 10 jobs will soon require digital skills, it is vital we achieve our vision of an Ireland where everyone can succeed in our increasingly digital world.

During 2021 we expanded our digital upskilling activities and capacity allowing us to create, test and develop exciting new initiatives to tackle Ireland's digital divide. Our Digital Inclusion Unit started work on the development of a suite of e-learning curricula comprising five modules with 21 micro e-learning lessons using DigComp**.

The **Digital Stepping Stones** (DSS) assessment tool we developed with Accenture, Ireland's first such tool, continued to prove a popular means for adult learners across the country to assess their digital competence. Over the course of the year 3,689 people used the tool. DSS has proved particularly popular with community educators in Further Education and Training Boards, Community Training Centres and YouthReach centres across Ireland.

Over the course of 2021 we continued to assert our status as a national player in helping Ireland work towards the European Union target of 80% of people with digital skills by 2030***. We advocated and campaigned at both national and European levels for policy and practice to end the digital divide and to bring about true digital inclusion.

Government's 10 Year Adult Literacy for Life Strategy

Our CEO Heydi Foster's membership of the **Government's Adult Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy Strategy, Technical Advisory Committee** provided an exciting opportunity for An Cosán to give a voice to our educators, our community partners and their communities and, most importantly of all, to adult learners most marginalised in our society. We collected insights and perspective from our learners and educators that were fed into the **Government's 'Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) 10 Year Strategy on Numeracy, Literacy and Digital Literacy'** in Ireland.



Heydi accepted an invitation to speak at the **launch of the ALL 10 Year Strategy** on 8th September 2021. She spoke about how the new strategy was essential in addressing digital exclusion and how, as the largest community education provider in Ireland, An Cosán was supporting people across the country in improving their literacy and acquiring the digital skills they needed to manage everyday digital tasks.

Our Digital Stepping Stones assessment tool was mentioned in the strategy.

National Economic and Social Council report

In July CEO Heydi Foster spoke at the launch of the **National Economic and Social Council report 'Digital Inclusion in Ireland: Connectivity, Devices and Skills'**, sharing the experience of communities impacted by digital exclusion, and how our Digital Stepping Stones (DSS) assessment tool had helped learners across Ireland identify their skill levels and signpost further learning.

DSS was referenced in this report also.



* The Irish Government's 'Adult Literacy for Life Strategy 2021'

** The European Digital Competence Framework

*** The European Commission's digital strategy 'Digital Compass 2030'



The Impact of Covid-19 on Women's Economic Mobility Mná na hÉireann report

In July An Cosán CEO Heydi Foster also spoke at the launch of the report **The Impact of Covid-19 on Women's Economic Mobility Mná na hÉireann Fund**, which draws on insights from Mná na hÉireann Women of Ireland Fund awardees, including An Cosán. Heydi spoke about the importance of ensuring that the future was one where everyone had the access to education they deserved, and that digital inclusion could lead the way to a brighter future.



Leaving No One Behind Webinar

A total of 115 people representing 70 organisations from across 19 counties registered for An Cosán's **Leaving No One Behind Digital Inclusion Webinar** in October.

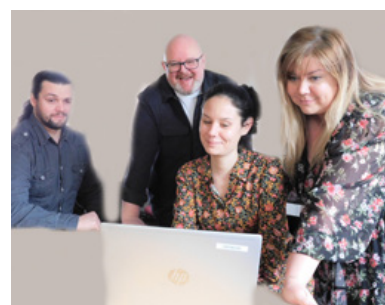
Our CEO Heydi Foster took the opportunity to call for a whole of society approach to a whole of society problem, saying, "I firmly believe collaboration between community, state and corporate sectors is urgently needed to ensure every adult has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital skills to fully engage in society."

Our Digital Inclusion Coordinator Mark Kelly shared the good news that work was underway developing a new suite of digital learning materials to complement the success of the Digital Stepping Stones assessment tool. He explained that these tools would increase adult learners' digital skills and confidence by filling in the gaps in their digital competency.

Playing a role on the European digital stage

Throughout 2021 we engaged at national and international level in Digital Inclusion and Digital Competence networks through participation in DigComp Community of Practice conference and webinars.

In November Mark Kelly spoke during a virtual study visit by an **Eastern Partnership of National Digital Skills Coalitions** (from Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine), which was facilitated by the Irish Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition. Under the title of 'Utilising DigComp 2.1 for Digital Inclusion in Communities', Mark spoke about the digital divide in Ireland, the development and roll out of Digital Stepping Stones and our new micro e-learning DigComp curriculum modules.



Increasing the role of Digital Inclusion in An Cosán

We added a Digital Skills Tutor to our team to manage and develop the digital skills of our learners, tutors and staff as well as a new Assistive Technology Trainer role to support the education team, tutors, moderators and learners to use technology to best effect for those requiring additional supports.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of SOLAS and Accenture in our Digital Inclusion work.



Excerpts from two of our CEO's Digital Inclusion Speeches during 2021

"An Cosán is active in addressing the full range of literacy and educational needs, but we are particularly pleased to see the attention given to digital literacy in the *Adult Literacy for Life 10 Year Strategy*.

"Without digital literacy, citizens cannot participate fully in society, or acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the 21st century.

"Nine out of 10 jobs in the near future will require digital skills. Our lives, our learning and our employment – our very participation in society – are now dependent on digital resources. Digital inclusion is about being able to participate in a fast-changing workplace and society.

"A key issue in tackling the digital divide is not to assume any particular level of digital literacy on the part of the learner. What is needed instead is to meet the individual digital literacy needs of adults based on where they are currently at.

"When an individual acquires essential basic digital literacy, it can open up a whole new world of opportunities and learning pathways. Ensuring the digitally excluded cross the digital divide will create a more inclusive, fair and equal society."

- An Cosán CEO Heydi Foster speaking at the launch of the Government's 'Adult Literacy for Life 10 Year Strategy on Numeracy, Literacy and Digital Literacy', 8th September 2021



'Ensuring the digitally excluded cross the digital divide will create a more inclusive, fair and equal society'



"We are all part of the 'connected system' that is needed if we are to succeed in really tackling adult literacy. This means all of us coming together, collaborating like this today, sharing insights and supporting each other and, most importantly, supporting current and potential learners.

"Without digital literacy, citizens cannot participate fully in society, or acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the 21st century. With our corporate partner, Accenture, we've been working to address this. Together, we developed tools and programmes to support learners.

"We undoubtedly live in a digital world. There are over 4.6 billion active internet users globally, but we know that doesn't mean everyone can avail of its benefits equally.

"We need a whole-of-society approach to a whole-of-society problem. A collaboration between community, state and corporate sectors is needed to ensure every adult has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital skills to fully engage in society.

"Let's commit to all work together to help those we support to realise their full potential."

- An Cosán CEO Heydi Foster speaking during An Cosán's 'Leaving No One Behind' digital inclusion webinar, 21st October 2021

Graduations

Graduations are a calendar highlight for any educational institution and An Cosán is no different! Even though our Level 5 graduates had to make do with an online graduation ceremony, it was a celebratory occasion nonetheless. Seventeen learners graduated from our QQI Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills and QQI Level 5 Community Development courses.

The graduates were thrilled to receive a video message of congratulations from Senator Lynn Ruane, who herself graduated from An Cosán before going on to Higher Education at Trinity College Dublin. You can hear her message of congratulations [here](#).



We were delighted to see 11 of our Higher Education learners graduate with a BA Degree in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development (NFQ Level 7) and nine learners graduate with a BA Degree in Leadership and Community Development (NFQ Level 7) at a South East Technological University (formerly Institute of Technology Carlow) Lifelong Learning Conferring Ceremony. These internationally recognised degrees will stand the test of time and will open new doors and opportunities for our graduates.

Learner Voice - Vickey Foran, BA graduate



“I enjoyed completing my degree, making new friends and learning from others. Being a single mother of four, and coming from a family of early school leavers, I was the first member of my family to commence college and complete a degree.

“Having this degree will allow me to further pursue my career in addiction services. On a personal level, having a degree in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development was, and is, a great support to me and my family. I found everyone at An Cosán to be very understanding and a great help to me.”

Learner Voice – Michelle Murphy, BA graduate



“As the youngest of six children from a working class family, college was not on my horizon. It was something others did, those that had the means and the privilege to do so. When I became part of the An Cosán family - because that’s what we are now, a family linked forever - my outlook changed. I was shown that there was no barrier that I could not overcome.

“Admittedly, I was terrified at first and doubted my abilities to even try and write something academically, but I had a team behind me that would pick me up when I fell. The supports from my classmates and those from An Cosán are the reason I graduated.

“Lifelong learning speaks for itself. There is no cap on education - take your first step and begin that journey.”



Learner Voice - Mark Kavanagh, BA graduate

“Even though we all came from different walks of life, it didn’t matter. We were all there for each other, especially in the group assignments.

“I think online schooling is the way forward, especially for professionals and mature students. It was my best experience of online education and enabled me to complete my journey to my degree.

“Many thanks to everyone at An Cosán.”

Adult Education Review

An Cosán continued to evolve in 2021 to meet the needs of our learners at all levels of education – Access, Further and Higher.

In order to remain innovative and to inform the direction of the organisation going forward, we commissioned a comprehensive review of our nationwide Adult Community Education (ACE) provision, engaging with a wide number of external and internal stakeholders to inform our Strategic Plan 2022-2026.

The ACE Review was completed with a view to ensuring that An Cosán’s education provision continues to meet the needs of our learners and is aligned to the SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024. The ACE Review highlighted the importance of our role in ensuring educational access for the most marginalised in our society, particularly in relation to the ever-changing external environment (including digitalisation, digital divide, economic inequality, poverty and unemployment, migration, female inequality, COVID19) and economic and social structural shifts post-COVID19.

Advocacy and Networking

Our network of public, community and corporate partners was as important as ever to us in 2021 and we were pleased to strengthen these relationships through a variety of formal and informal meetings and events during the year. It is only in working together that we can achieve a more equal and inclusive society where every woman, man and child can flourish and reach his/her full potential.

An Cosán is an active member of a number of national and international education, community and digital networks, including the Global Action on Digital Inclusion Network, the European Association for the Education of Adults, the European DigComp Community of Practice, the Irish Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition and the Coalition for Tech Apprenticeship and Inclusion as well as the Irish Development Education Association's Adult Community Education Working Group, AONTAS Community Education Network and Census Advisory Group, the National Women's Council of Ireland's Women's Community Sector Working Group, and the CORN network of community organisations in Dublin inner city.

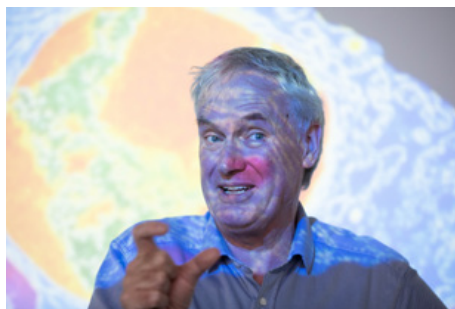
Development education and global citizenship

In April we launched our new **Irish Aid project**, working to increase the quality and effectiveness of development education integration in existing accessible Higher Education programmes in social enterprise, community development and leadership by creating opportunities to listen to learner and tutor experiences and by exploring models of accessibility and identifying specific development education and global citizenship themes.

National Forum on Teaching and Learning webinar with IT Carlow

In May we partnered with the Institute of Technology Carlow and the National Forum on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education to host a webinar titled '**Social Action models of Teaching and Learning for Social Enterprise development**'. The speakers, who included Sheila Cannon, Rosemary Kunene and Susie Cahn, explored the relationship between social enterprise and social change, identified and discussed the implications for teaching and learning in different contexts, and examined opportunities for social enterprise education.

Trinity College Dublin's Academic Primary Care Centre Tallaght



As part of the Bealtaine Festival in May, we held an online talk in collaboration with Trinity College Dublin's Academic Primary Care Centre. Prof Desmond O'Neill addressed the topic 'Ageing: Nurturing our Longevity Dividend'.

This led to further collaboration with Trinity College and the launch in September of an 'Innovating Community Health' series of blended talks, with some people attending in person and some online. There has been a great response to this series. The first talk was delivered by Prof Luke O'Neill who gave an informative and insightful talk about the latest Covid-19 updates.



We were delighted to welcome Prof O'Neill afterwards to An Cosán Jobstown where he met the after-school children in Early Years Jobstown. He was impressed by their excellent presentation on 'The Happy Chemicals In My Brain' and by their knowledge of Covid-19 and how to stay safe.

Learner Ambassadors

At the invitation of Trinity College's Access Team, one of our graduates, Rudo Chitseko, spoke during a **College Awareness Week** Webinar in November. Rudo shared how she greatly enjoyed her experience of learning with An Cosán and how she encourages others to explore opportunities with us.

Rudo is one of a number of An Cosán learners/graduates we have identified to become ambassadors for the organisation. Learners who are invited to become ambassadors receive training and support in preparation for speaking at events or in videos or media interviews. Hearing learners' and graduates' stories of transformation through education gives prospective learners great insight into the benefits of enrolling for adult and community education programmes.

Learner voice – Rudo Chitseko, BA graduate



“I am a different person, thanks to An Cosán. My perspective on social issues, like addiction and community development, are different now. I have more understanding of the issues involved.

“No matter what your situation is, you can have another second chance. Everything is possible. I am living testament to that. I never thought I would graduate with a degree, but here I am.”

“An Cosán is not only for people from Direct Provision, I met people from all backgrounds - some

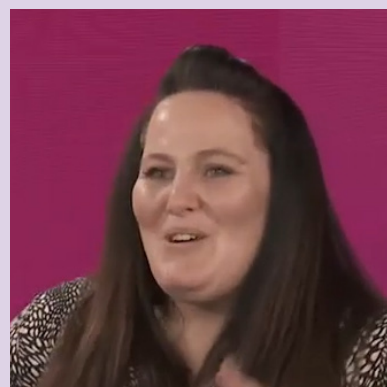
left school early, some with many challenges. I want to give back to the community now by applying the skills I have learned with An Cosán. We live in communities, so we have to make them good places to be.”

Learner Voice – Tanya Johnston, Level 6 graduate

“I had a totally different experience of education with An Cosán. It is such a welcoming and caring place. It gave me a space to be who I am; it gave me a voice and it empowered me.

“The support system was incredible – from the tutors to the learners to the cleaners. I felt I was an equal.

“Education empowers us to climb the ladder. There’s a long way to go for women, but belief and self-confidence will get us there.



Online presence

Our online presence continued to grow during 2021. **Twitter** and **LinkedIn** continued to be excellent platforms for engaging with our corporate, community and state partners while **Facebook** and **Instagram** were particularly beneficial for connecting with current learners and reaching prospective learners. **YouTube** continued to be an excellent way to share learner and graduate stories.



Heydi Foster-Breslin of @an_cosan notes that 90% of jobs in the future will require some level of digital skills ...while only half of Ireland's adult population have at least basic digital skills. #digital #inclusion



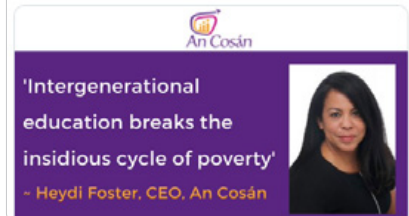
Less than an hour to go til we hear from these amazing women, sharing the journey of An Cosán, the transformative impact of education, and the powerful role of women in a better future!
#OneGenerationSolution #AnCosanIWD #InternationalWomensDay



Our CEO @HeydiFoster is pleased to be attending the Oireachtas Committee on #Children with @NWC where she will answer questions about @AnCosan's #OneGenerationSolution to #ChildPoverty.

You can watch online here >>
oireachtas.ie/en/oireachtas-...

#EmpowermentThroughEducation



Yesterday on #InternationalWomensDay we welcomed 24 wonderful new learners from all around Ireland to our Women's Education Programme, supporting them to realise their personal and professional potential! We look forward to learning together and bridging the #digitaldivide



Rethink Ireland and Bank of America



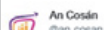
Really wonderful to have @an_cosan leading today's #AONTASmember webinar!

A huge thank you to @OneFineDay.ie & @DraganaSorol for an insightful presentation & for sharing ideas on tailoring online & remote supports for individual learners 🙌

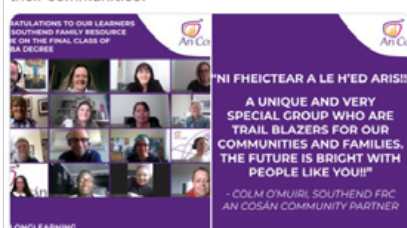
#CommunityEducation #AdultLearning



The digital stepping stones tool from @ancosan is a great way to understand & improve your digital skills #ThisisFET



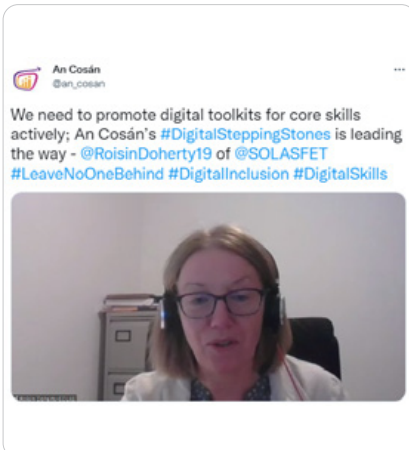
Congratulations to our wonderful group of learners from our partner Southend Family Resource Centre who completed the last class of their BA Degree last week after 5 years of learning! We can't wait to see what they do next as they continue to lead change in their communities!



Register today for our Skills to Succeed Academy s2sacademy.ie

An Cosán @an_cosan - May 19, 2021
Thinking critically involves stepping back and viewing all angles before making judgments or decisions. This @Accenture_Irl Skills to Succeed Academy course teaches how to validate sources of information and judge types of evidence. Contact m.kelly@ancosan.ie for Advisor training





Hitting the Headlines



A journey through community education

An Cosán focuses on the needs of learners through its online courses

© Tue, Oct 12, 2021, 01:00

Peter McGuire



Work With Us
We are currently recruiting for a number of exciting roles including Administrator, Executive Administrator, and Online Community Education.

An Cosán, a pioneer in community and adult education, was founded by former minister Dr Katherine Zappone and her late wife, Dr Ann Louise Gilligan, in 1986.

Now based in Jobstown, a suburb of Tallaght, the centre provides online learning nationwide, as well as locally based courses and seven early years centres.



Committee hears calls for national plan to tackle child poverty

Updated / Tuesday, 14 Dec 2021 19:59



Women's education bursary set up in memory of the late Marian Finucane

By Sarah Finnian
09th Sep 2021



Education bursary in memory of Marian Finucane announced

Updated / Tuesday, 7 Sep 2021 14:08



Progression rates from alternative education almost the same as mainstream schooling



A study that was carried out in Wexford revealed that success in alternative education is comparable to mainstream schooling.

WED, 10 NOV 2021 - 13:00

JESS CASEY EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

A new study has found that the majority of students in seven alternative education programmes for learners outside the mainstream system had significant success in progressing their education.



Educational fund for women established in memory of late RTÉ broadcaster Marian Finucane



Broadcaster and journalist Marian Finucane, who passed away last year, aged 69.



Scan your Clubcard for lower prices.



LECTURE SERIES: Prof Luke O'Neill speaking at the first Academic Primary Care Centre (APCC) Lecture Series 2021/22 at the Trinity Institute of Population Health. The lecture series, organised by Trinity College and An Cosán, will bring Trinity academics to the local community in Tallaght to deliver high-quality, accessible talks with a view to stimulating debate and community engagement on a variety of pertinent healthcare topics. Photograph: Paul Sharp/Shops

An Cosán wants to help tackle the digital skills gap with suite of new tools

by Blathnaid O'Dea 3 DAYS AGO 125 ARTICLES

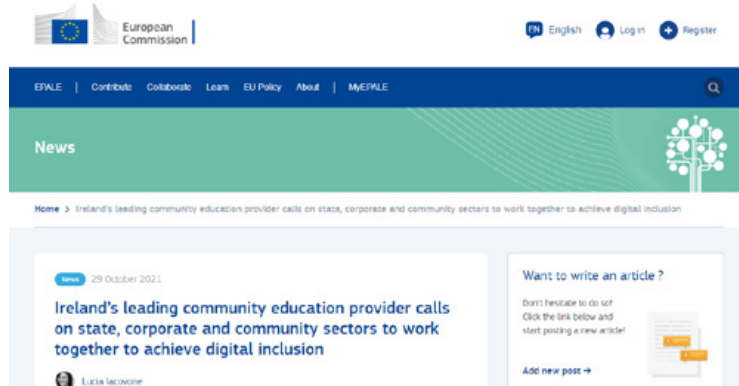
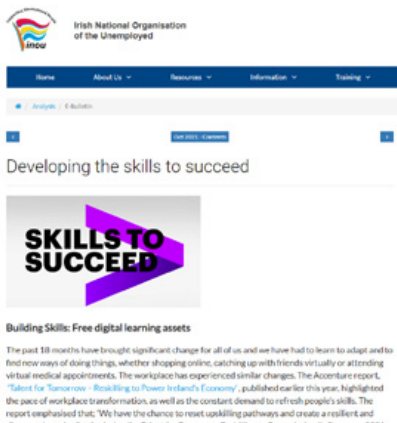
The CEO of the non-profit told attendees at a community webinar that almost one in two adults in Ireland has low digital literacy levels.

Dublin-based education non-profit An Cosán is introducing a new suite of digital tools in an effort to tackle Ireland's digital skills shortage.

Several An Cosán team members addressed the issue and the centre's plan to tackle it at a recent webinar on digital inclusion the organisation hosted for its community partners.

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TALK: Professor Luke O'Neill with An Cosán staff Avril Hannafin (ICT Support), Imelda Henratty (Outreach Coordinator), Lorraine Quinn (Manager) and Anne Genockey

IMMUNOLOGIST Professor Luke O'Neill raised the Academic Primary Care Centre (APCC) in Tallaght to give a talk about Covid-19 as part of the 'Innovating Community Health' series. An Cosán's Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Anne Genockey, said: "It was the first in-person talk in the series that the USA group in An Cosán were in attendance in the APCC, and then people could also join online through Zoom so there was over 150 people in total." Fiona Murdoch, An Cosán, explained.

Prof Luke also visited the after-school children at An Cosán's Rainbow House in Jobstown where they told him about their 'Happy Chemicals in My Brain' project then

Pamela takes on 'Stairway to Heaven' 16km walk for sensory equipment

By Aimee Walsh aimee@echo.ie

A TALKING POINT: Pamela, who has a sensory processing disorder, has taken on the 16km 'Stairway to Heaven' walk in Jobstown to raise funds for An Cosán's Rainbow House. Pamela, who has a sensory processing disorder, has taken on the 16km 'Stairway to Heaven' walk in Jobstown to raise funds for An Cosán's Rainbow House. Pamela, who has a sensory processing disorder, has taken on the 16km 'Stairway to Heaven' walk in Jobstown to raise funds for An Cosán's Rainbow House.



WALK: Pamela Gormley raised €1,200 to buy equipment for An Cosán's Rainbow House

Tallaght Notes Dr Luke O'Neill visits An Cosán Rainbow House



Professor Luke O'Neill, of Trinity College Dublin, paid a visit to Tallaght last week, writes Rachel Cunningham. O'Neill, who is a professor of biochemistry in the School of Biochemistry and Immunology, delivered a talk entitled COVID-19: Update on Vaccines and Therapeutics in the Academic Primary Care Centre (APCC), Tallaght. The talk was the first in an 'Innovating Community Health' series of

Professor delivers talk on How Confidence Works

Talk co-hosted by An Cosán was part of the 'Innovating Community Health' series

By Aimee Walsh aimee@echo.ie

A TALK was delivered by Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Trinity College Dublin and co-director of the Global Brain Health Institute, Prof Ian Robertson at An Cosán as part of the 'Innovating Community Health' series last week.

'How Confidence Works - what are its enemies, and why it is important to our health' was the title of the second talk in the series, which is being co-hosted by Trinity College Dublin, the Academic Primary Care Centre, Tallaght and An Cosán education centre in Jobstown.

The talk was delivered virtually by Prof Ian Robertson, who is also a member of the Academia Europaea and the Royal Irish Academy, a trained clinical psychologist and neuroscientist who is known internationally for his research on neuropsychology.

The talk was attended by over 100 people online, including members of An Cosán's



University of the Third Age (UTA) group, where Prof Robertson gave tips for boosting self-confidence and coping with stress.

In his talk, Prof Robertson spoke about how confidence was a self-fulfilling prophecy because of its effect on our brains. Having confidence leads us to expect success and we all have the power to boost our confidence with good habits, like simple breathing techniques.

"We all have the capacity to have more control over our emotions and to be happier," he said. "Check your words and monitor what you say to yourself."

"Confidence is critical because it empowers action - sometimes you have to fake it until you make it. Bring to mind who you are and your core values. By affirming these values, you will build confidence."

Tallaght students receive FitzGerald Family Scholarships

By Rachel Cunningham



TWO TALLAGHT students have been awarded educational scholarships through a community-based initiative which aims to create equal access opportunities to education for all. The two students, who successfully completed their Leaving Certificate exams this summer and are now in university, were presented with the FitzGerald Family Scholarship awards at a special ceremony held at An Cosán community education centre, Jobstown, on Wednesday, October 25. Wioletta, McPherson, who attended St Aidan's Community School, is now pursuing a BA Joint Honours degree course in English and Philosophy at University College Dublin, while Aislinn, daughter of Aileen FitzGerald, is studying Law at Maynooth University. An Cosán set up the

About An Cosán



The name of the company is The Shanty Educational Project Limited by guarantee trading as An Cosán. The company is established for charitable purposes only.

The main objects for which the company is established are:

- To provide for the relief of poverty, deprivations and disadvantage in disadvantaged areas through the provision of education, training, employment, enterprise and childcare.
 - To empower local people through education and enable them to fully participate with local authorities and state agencies in the delivery of Government.
- To promote sustainable local development by the development of the leadership, strategic and entrepreneurial capacities of local people.
 - To provide education, training, enterprise and childcare by establishing, building, maintaining and conducting a centre of centres or such facilities as may be thought desirable.

Building a Brighter Future Together



In these times leadership is more important than ever and An Cosán, together with its community and corporate partners, will continue to lead in the delivery of vital community education and early years' services.

In the knowledge that we were approaching the end of An Cosán's Strategic Plan 2018-2021, we undertook a process to review and reflect on what we had achieved, to identify where we could do better and to plot a pathway forward in the direction we should take over the next five years. In order to ensure the process was inclusive, participatory and comprehensive, a number of interactive and constructive strategy renewal sessions were held with staff as well as Board members under the guidance of Caplor Horizons.

The importance of aligning the Strategy with SOLAS's Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024 was fundamental, and the review and recommendations from the Adult Community Education Review fed into the development of the new Strategy.

'An Cosán's Strategy 2022 – 2026 is bold, ambitious and builds on the remarkable strengths of the team and expertise that An Cosán has developed. It recognises the need to constantly innovate and improve our services in Early Years Education and Care, Counselling and Family Support, and Adult Community Education. Since An Cosán began, we have supported over 20,000 people to access education and go on to live better lives. Now, we're working to grow that impact across the country.' - Anna Durkan, Chair of the Board of Directors



OUR VISION

A world where everyone can access education to achieve their full potential

OUR MISSION

To empower women and children left furthest behind through learning, leadership and enterprise

OUR VALUES

Connected:
Meeting the needs of our community in an inclusive way

Compassionate:
Being kind, supportive and loving

Courageous:
Being ambitious and resilient

OUR 10 YEAR GOAL

To become the education voice for those left furthest behind and a leader in enhancing the education system in Ireland

OUR CORE SERVICES

Early Years
Education & Care



Counselling &
Family Support



Adult
Community
Education

We provide a pathway to learning, leadership and enterprise for those who are most marginalised in our society. While we welcome all, our focus is primarily on women and children as we believe this is the most effective way to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.



We are a feminist organisation that holds empowerment and equality at our core. We strongly believe in inclusivity, diversity, and respect. The communities we work in are important to us and we are constantly striving to find new ways to break down barriers for people to access education in these communities to achieve their full potential.

OUR ENABLING GOALS TO BECOME A MORE SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION

- * Nurture our team and culture
- * Diversify and increase our funding
- * Strengthen our systems and processes
- * Improve our internal and external communications

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

1 STRENGTHEN OUR CORE SERVICES

To meet this goal, we will continue to provide our leading-edge services in:

- Early Years Education and Care
- Counselling and Family Support
- Adult Community Education

2 PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY

To meet this goal, we will:

- Exemplify how to work with marginalised communities inclusively
- Continue to be pioneers in the area of digital inclusion
- Create accessible community spaces

3 INFLUENCE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

To meet this goal, we will:

- Influence public policy
- Evidence our impact on people's lives
- Become an influential voice in the education sector

Resilience-building in our New Normal

Resilience is important because it gives us the strength needed to process and overcome challenges. Those lacking resilience become easily overwhelmed, and may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms. Resilient people, on the other hand, tap into their strengths and support systems to overcome challenges and work through difficulties. Being resilient means being able to adapt and bounce back when something difficult happens in our lives; it is the ability to once again pick ourselves up after trauma or painful experience.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a challenging time for everyone. For some more than others.

Building resilience and coping skills became an increasingly important part of our work with our counselling service, which serves the community of West Tallaght (and beyond, wherever possible), more in demand than ever before.

Ninety-three people availed of our **counselling service** over the course of 2021; 27 more than the previous year. Just over 75% of our clients were women.

More than 1,500 counselling sessions took place during 2021, similar to 2020.

Relationship difficulties, stress, anxiety and bereavement or loss were the most common issues with which people presented. Other issues included addiction and abuse, including domestic violence.

Our team of counsellors (made up of women and men) offer a caring, supportive and non-judgemental service. They listen when people need to talk something through and offer long-term support to those who need to unravel something from their past that is preventing them moving forward in their lives.

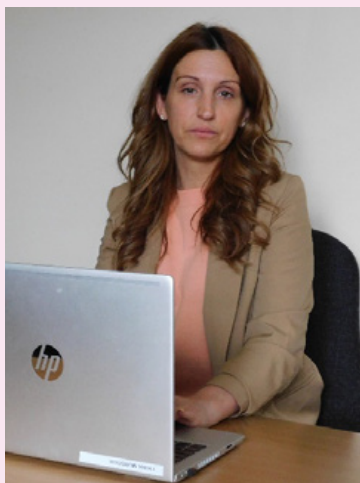
Delivering sessions online or by phone during lockdowns proved challenging. Counsellors and clients alike were relieved when face-to-face sessions were able to resume in September.

The team was pleased to receive funding for Continuing Professional Development to develop their child and adolescent therapy skills.

Learner Voice – Máire

I was amazed to discover how calm, homely and inviting the An Cosán centre was and how compassionate everyone was when I needed support'

Learner Voice – Samantha Dowdall, Level 6 graduate



“An Cosán is like a home from home. You walk in and you're offered tea and scones. It's so peaceful and nice and lovely. It's very uplifting. No-one looks down at you; everyone accepts you the way you are.

“The additional supports from An Cosán, like the laptop loan scheme and the one-to-one mentoring, are really amazing. I wouldn't be to do it without them. The tutors and all the staff have been fantastic. They have helped me dig deep and build my self-confidence. I was supported all the way through and I'm still getting tremendous support as I'm doing a BA now.

“All the doubts in my head have gone. I feel I have a goal to reach now and that I can go somewhere in life. Thanks to An Cosán, I have a future and a good career ahead of me.”

Transforming the Lives of Little Ones

We know the importance of giving our little ones the very best start in life. That's why across our seven Early Years Education and Care centres our Early Years professionals used the **HighScope Curriculum** throughout 2021 to create a fun and educational environment that enhanced the development of the children through a variety of experiences.

As well as providing daily day care and education for 190 children, our after-school programmes provided fun educational opportunities for children during the year as well as a summer programme for the month of July.

Family support was provided to parents/carers who faced particular challenges, such as developmental delays, child welfare issues and other family difficulties. Many of these children were referred from TUSLA – the Child and Family Agency.

Other supports offered included parenting courses, counselling for parents, baby massage classes and, when required, help with referral to other agencies.

Early Years' highlights in 2021 included:

- Welcoming the little ones on their return after the pandemic restrictions eased and seeing parents so happy to bring their children back to us
- Offering the support that children with additional needs needed during a difficult time for them and their families
- Although the usual pre-Covid events and celebrations couldn't take place, they were able to take place over Zoom, allowing the participation of parents
- The Early Years' staff successfully adapted to a new way of working and upskilled through a variety of trainings

The HighScope pre-school programme, which is used across our seven Early Years' centres, ignites children's interest in learning by creating an environment that encourages them to explore learning materials and interact with adults and peers. The focus is on supporting early learners as they make decisions, build academic skills, develop socially and emotionally, and become part of a classroom community.

By the end of 2021 all children in our services reached their own individual goals through the care and education provided to them by our wonderful, professional and committed team members.

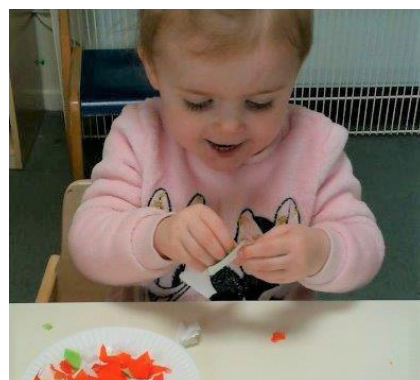


Parent Voice – Nicola, An Cosán Early Years Jobstown

“I know my daughter is in good hands while I am doing my courses with An Cosán. She learns a lot here and I can see such a difference in her.

“The staff are so nice to her; they are so caring. They are doing an amazing job and I completely trust them. They suggest activities I can do at home with her and our relationship is healthier now. This is a really safe space for both of us.”





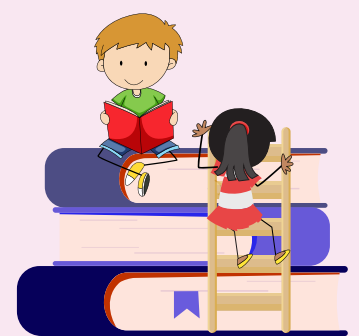
Parent Voice – An Cosán Early Years Cabra Youthreach

Quite soon after two siblings started in our Cabra Youthreach service, it became evident that both children would need to be referred for an assessment of need. The parents had noticed developmental issues, but had been unclear what steps to take next.

We held a series of meeting with them to discuss our concerns, provided them with information and supported them in completing the necessary forms to ensure they would receive additional support for the children. We also worked with them to develop and implement strategies to help the children.

The children have since received a diagnosis of autism and have received therapy. Their mother is hugely thankful to the team, saying, *“You were so important for us because you were the beginning of the autism journey, which was tough because we did not know anything. You guys understand what inclusion is and you offered this to my children. I will never forget your words, ‘We are together, don’t worry.’”*

“Thank you so much for accepting them how they were and giving them such an important opportunity. We were not lucky with early intervention, but with pre-school we were lucky.”



Transforming the Lives of Adult Learners

A leader in **Adult Community Education (ACE)**, An Cosán's model of transformative education seeks to ensure that all individuals who attend our programmes reach their full potential as individuals and grow their capacity to take responsibility for social change in their communities, thus contributing to the eradication of poverty and social injustice.

As part of our strategic planning process 2022 - 2026, an independent review of our ACE Programme was undertaken in 2021. The objectives of the review were to guide further development of the programme, ensure the continuation of prioritising and meeting of our learners' needs and, finally, to maintain consistency in the delivery of quality education programmes.



Characteristics of a transformative education learning environment:

- Encouraging students to reflect on and share their feelings and thoughts.
- Holistically-oriented, considering the whole student in the learning process.
- Cultivating awareness of alternate ways of learning.

Adelaide Nic Chárthaigh was appointed Adult Community Education Manager in July 2021 leading the ACE Team in the provision of Access, Further and Higher Education programmes and courses using a variety of face-to-face, blended and online delivery the ACE Team across all streams of adult community education in the delivery of Courses delivered in 2021 focused on the subjects/areas of early years' education and care, business administration with digital skills, wellness, personal and professional development, community development and leadership, and addiction studies. Learners were provided with opportunities to progress on a learning 'pathway' from non-accredited courses to QQI levels 5, 6 or 7.

Having pivoted all courses to online delivery in 2020, when Covid restrictions eased in September 2021 we were pleased to resume face-to-face classes in our Jobstown centre for learners in our Access and some of our Further Education programmes, albeit catering for smaller numbers of learners.

Our BA degree programmes, which are accredited by the South East Technological University (formerly the Institute of Technology Carlow) continued online.



Adult Community Education is guided by a strong feminist, values-based approach in identifying and prioritising the most marginalised and vulnerable women in society. An Cosán's provision of a transformative education learning environment is made possible with our wraparound services and holistic support for learners, including financial supports, IT and digital skills supports, laptop loans, Early Years' provision, peer support, and one-to-one tutoring, mentoring and counselling.

Access Education

An Cosán's Access programmes provide a fun and collaborative learning environment in which learners are supported to participate actively in their own development. Courses range from literacy and numeracy to basic computers, mindfulness, art, Gaeilge and the University of the Third Age (U3A). Many of our Access learners progress on to Further Education and then on to Higher Education in a way that suits their individual needs.

Our Access courses are delivered face-to-face and broadly fall into three categories:

- Literacy and Numeracy
- Digital Competencies
- Health and Wellbeing

Funded annually by the Dublin Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board, many Access courses were significantly affected by Covid restrictions. Some courses continued online but not all learners were able to continue in this way as many struggled with technology issues. It was also difficult to replicate online the supportive atmosphere of face-to-face classes that is so important for our Access learners, but the Access team persisted in providing invaluable support by phone and via Zoom to learners polarised by Covid.

Access Education Highlights 2021:

- A pilot Return To Learning six-week course proved hugely beneficial for the 12 learners who took part. The dual objectives were to build both the confidence and digital skills of the learners with the ultimate aim of preparing them to undertake a Level 5 course. This unaccredited gateway course led the way for the delivery of the programme on a rolling basis in 2022.
- A six-week Wellness and Resilience programme funded by Healthy Ireland proved beneficial for another 12 learners. This course saw participants exploring different methods and techniques to develop greater resilience. Participants were encouraged to journal and reflect on their experience throughout the programme.
- Our Access Lead facilitated three digital awareness and inclusion sessions during a Step Up Programme delivered by local services and co-ordinated by Tallaght Rehabilitation Project (TRP). This helped solidify a relationship with an important local service and resulted in four TRP clients commencing as learners in An Cosán on a range of programmes, including Basic Computers, Community Development, Community Care and Return To Learning. One learner's story was highlighted in *The Echo* newspaper.
- The return to in-person classes in Jobstown in September was a real morale boost for learners and staff alike.
- The ACE Review provided an excellent opportunity to review and reflect on our practice and identified opportunities for Access Education to remain responsive and relevant to the needs of the community
- We advocated on behalf of learners for access to supports and services by lobbying the Departments of Justice and Social Protection. We also interacted with the Meitheal Meeting to support vulnerable participants.
- Group and individual learning supports provided learners with access to supports to Further Education and Higher Education participants.

138 learners
availed of Access
Education over the
course of 2021

565
lessons were
delivered in 2021
(15 more than 2020)

11 tutors ran
19 courses (seven
more than the
previous year)

Further Education

An Cosán's Further Education courses are geared towards enabling learners to gain fruitful employment in a variety of areas and/or to progress to Higher Education. In 2021 we offered eight accredited Further Education programmes ranging from QQI Levels 5-6. These all ran on a part-time basis (two mornings a week).

Courses delivered included modules from Level 5 Major Awards in Community Development and Community Care, Business Administration with Digital Skills, and Early Childhood Care and Education. Modules from Level 6 Early Childhood Care and Education were also offered.

Further Education Highlights 2021:

Our **Young Women's Education Programme (YWEP)** continued to be a success in 2021 with 15 learners from two cohorts – Tallaght and north inner city Dublin – successfully completing our Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills course.

Both cohorts, which were funded by JP Morgan, participated in a seven-week Bank of America work experience programme. This took place online because of Covid restrictions in place at the time. Under the Covid 19 Contingency Plan, the participants were able to use this experience in place of on-the-job training in order to achieve their Level 5 Major Award.

A second cohort of our Business Administration with Digital Skills learners, funded by Rethink Ireland's Mná na hÉireann Fund, started the course in April 2021. The programme ran fully online with 24 participants from all over Ireland zooming in for sessions.

Funding was secured through the Mná na hÉireann Fund to provide employability skills training to participants following completion of their Award with a view to enhancing learners' employability opportunities following the course.

We welcomed a new YWEP Coordinator, Debra Crawley, to the Further Education team in October 2021. Debra ensures that learners are supported and motivated to successfully complete the programme.

An Cosán's Young Women's Education Programme is designed to provide learners with the knowledge, skills and competence in administration and digital skills to seek employment in a range of organisations. It also serves as an effective stepping-stone to Higher Education.

Graduation - Our Tallaght YWEP and Community Development Level 5 groups graduated from their two-year programmes at an online ceremony on 17th December. Seventeen learners graduated in total. It was a moving and celebratory occasion for staff and learners alike.

The Further Education team ensured that all participants had the **technology and support** to enable them to continue their studies for the first half of the year when classes could not take place in-person. The acquisition of laptops from the Tech2Students initiative and our laptop loan scheme ensured all learners had access to technology to continue their studies.

143 learners availed of Further Education over the course of 2021

7 tutors ran 7 Level 5 programmes and one tutor ran a Level 6 programme

A total of **390** awards were made in 2021 (297 more than the previous year), including 373 QQI Component Certificates (Minor Awards) and 17 QQI Major Awards

Most Further Education learners were **female** and came from a variety of backgrounds and, thanks to online learning, came from a variety of locations around Ireland

Learner Voice – Esther Chahira, Level 5 graduate

“For me, the course in An Cosán and the welcoming environment has given me the chance to learn so much. It has given me great pride and now I have the motivation I need to carry on in education, and I know that I am gaining the skills I need to get a good job.”



Learner Voice – Paula Ryan, Level 5 graduate



“An Cosán has made a huge difference in every aspect of my life. It has empowered me and inspired me. When I was under pressure, I availed of the counselling. Sometimes you’d have a hard day or a hard week and it was fantastic to go in, leave your children in Early Years and go to the counsellor. You unravel the pressures for an hour and then you are better able to focus on your education.

“An Cosán has taught me how to be a better person. It’s made our home a happier home. I’m a happier person and I have more patience and empathy. I’m a better Mum, a better wife, and a better friend. I’m more involved volunteering in the local community too.”

Learner Voice - Carmel Ward, Level 5 graduate

“I decided it was time for me to return to the workforce but, in order to do that, I needed to go back to education. Initially, I was only dipping my toe in the water, but I found that going back to education gave me a bug for learning.

“I was petrified, but the amount of encouragement from An Cosán and the staff was just amazing. They gave me the confidence to do it. The support was phenomenal and there was great student support too, even during Covid when we couldn’t have in-person classes.

“Going back to education is daunting, it is scary. But everybody encouraged and supported one another. The sense of achievement you get, it’s all worth it. It is achievable”.





Learner Voice – Korina Koler, Level 5 graduate

“All the staff at An Cosán are amazing – they are very warm and very supportive, they accept everybody and cherish everyone’s different backgrounds That’s the beauty of An Cosán.

“An Cosán provides so much support. It is very unique in the way they offer childcare, IT support, mental health support.

“I feel now there are no limits. Everything I want to do, I can do.”

Learner Voice – Fiona (not her real name), Level 6 graduate

“I skipped in most days with the thought of some time for myself, a beautiful opening circle and the promise of a freshly baked scone. The lighting of a candle at the start of class with a check in allowed a moment to gather yourself and leave as much as possible outside so that you were relaxed and ready to learn. Yes, it was hard work juggling assignments and family commitments, but it was so satisfying to gain knowledge and skills that can help children and young people.

“In addition to the skills and knowledge I gained through my studies I have taken away so much more. I have a belief in myself now that I never had. I feel more like my authentic self and have found my tribe in the incredible supportive women and men I have met through An Cosán. I feel empowered on my learning journey and know that nothing is out of reach now.”



Learner Voice – Tanya Shields, Level 6 graduate

“I was extremely nervous when I started with An Cosán but I was supported and guided the moment I walked through the doors. My tutor and peers made me feel at ease. Because the classes were small, it quickly became a safe space where I could be myself.

“It became more than just an educational journey; it soon became a journey of finding who I was again. I was connecting with like-minded people who shared common interests. Without

hesitation, I was always met with empathy, compassion and a listening ear. Without that support, I’d have given up for sure.

“The ‘old me’ didn’t believe in herself; I thought I’d never amount to anything. The ‘new me’ sees she can do anything she puts her mind to and she sees her worth. It astonishes me to see how far I’ve come. An Cosán has sparked a love for learning in me and I hope to continue on to become a social care worker.”

Higher Education

An Cosán's Higher Education (HE) programmes have been developed in the context of adult community education and lifelong learning. They are designed for mature students and are usually delivered through a blended model involving both online and face-to-face classroom learning. However, due to Covid restrictions, all our Higher Education provision throughout 2021 took place online.

Our third-level courses include part-time Degree, Higher Certificate, Certificate and modular programmes validated by the South East Technological University, formerly the Institute of Technology Carlow under delegated authority from Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

Higher Education Highlights 2021:

Our high quality of HE provision, including excellent teaching and learning practice, assessment and student feedback, was evidenced in successive Joint Quality Visits carried out by IT Carlow in 2021 as well as in successive external examiner reports.

New Memorandum of Agreement with IT Carlow. We were pleased to sign a new Memorandum of Agreement with IT Carlow in March 2021. The new memorandum outlines the obligations of An Cosán and IT Carlow regarding our Linked Higher Education programmes. It is based on shared values of inclusive education and on mutual respect for the academic traditions of both parties.

An Cosán's collaboration with IT Carlow dates back to 2008. The initial purpose of this joint initiative was to facilitate an accredited progression pathway for learners in Tallaght but, recognising the potential of online learning in 2016, a technology-enhanced blended model of adult and community education has since evolved and developed.

In 2021 the HE Team completed a **Programmatic Review** in fulfilment of requirements as a Linked Provider of IT Carlow. The team updated our suite of Higher Education modules, including curriculum, learning outcomes, and supplementary resources for all accredited modules.

The external validation panel, which reviewed the HE Team's report and documentation and held discussions with relevant stakeholders, concluded: "An Cosán are an example of an inclusive, caring, outreaching entity providing high level relevant qualifications. An Cosán has internal processes that are very rigorous and robust; it has a high level of organisation, and an exemplary level of care for students and their learning, with up-to-date expertise. An Cosán is a lead player on a global stage."

The HE Team also joined Senior Management to complete a **Linked Review** in September 2021 - a five-yearly assessment in fulfilment of requirements as a Linked Provider of IT Carlow. The external panel, which consisted of academic and industry representatives, reviewed An Cosán's self-evaluation report and discussed the whole of the Linked Provision with staff and learners.

An Extract from the Panel Commendations for Linked Provision between An Cosán and IT Carlow

- The Panel commend the partnership between IT Carlow and An Cosán for the strategic and incremental pathway that has been taken by both parties since 2008. The Panel particularly commend the flexible approach to provision of programmes, facilitating pathways from special purpose awards to major degree programmes.
- The approach to positioning the learner at the core of the shared mission and vision is very much to the credit of all involved.
- The holistic and wraparound nature of supports provided to learners was endorsed through the student reps.

- The Panel commend the partnership and the effective blending of practitioner and academic approaches to teaching. The commitment and passion of the teaching team was evident in the review meeting and this enthusiasm translates itself into an innovative and experiential approach to delivery on the ground.
- The Panel commend the partnership on ensuring all aspects of QA procedures with regard to delivery and feedback are adhered to as per the Institute of Technology Carlow QA regulations. In particular, students noted and appreciated the efficient response of teaching staff to their queries.

External evidence of the benefits of **Linked Provision** was outlined in an '**Enabling an Inclusive Equitable Quality of Education For All**' report by Rethink Ireland and the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre NUI Galway in November 2021 with researchers identifying An Cosán learners' enhanced hard and soft skills, including (i) enhanced sense of belonging; (ii) cultural awareness; (iii) positive outlook; (iv) self-confidence; and (v) overcoming social isolation.

Learner feedback remained consistently positive throughout 2021 with one student telling us that *'An Cosán makes us feel valued'*.

Graduation. We were thrilled to see 11 of our Higher Education learners graduate with a BA Degree in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development (NFQ Level 7) while nine learners graduated with a BA Degree in Leadership and Community Development (NFQ Level 7). These internationally recognised degrees will stand the test of time and open new doors and opportunities for our graduates.

Higher Education 2021 in Numbers:

11 learners graduated with a BA Degree in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development (NFQ L7)

9 learners graduated with a BA Degree in Leadership and Community Development (NFQ Level 7)

26 learners achieved a Special Purpose Award in Technology Enhanced Learning (NFQ L7)

21 learners achieved a Special Purpose Award in Transformative Community Education (NFQ L7)

We ran **31** modules at Higher Level with 110 undergraduate learners

Our 9 Higher Education tutors delivered **686** teaching hours

Approximately **two-thirds** of our Higher Education learners in 2021 were **female** and, given that learning was entirely online in 2021, they came from across the country

Learner Voice – Ciara Doyle, BA graduate

“Going back to college as a mature student, and also being a single mum, I was nervous. But doing the course with An Cosán was a dream. The whole team - from tutors to tech support to learning support - made me feel extremely at ease with assignments and with everything college entails. I have benefited greatly by going back to education and I’m looking forward to what my future holds. Learning with An Cosán is a very enjoyable and supportive way of learning.”



Learner Voice – Njabuliso Moyo, BA graduate



“I enjoyed studying with An Cosán and meeting new people. I hope to inspire anyone who feels that he/she might have missed out on an opportunity to attain a third level education that, it’s not too late, to go out there and set the world on fire. We can do anything through hard work.”

Learner Voice – Catherine Sheehan, BA graduate

“I enjoyed new learning, finishing each assignment and progressing onto the next module. As I did painting previously in college, academic learning was a new challenge for me. I found the tutors supportive and understanding. I hope doing the degree will open up more career opportunities for me.”



Learner Voice – Maria Harris, BA graduate



“An Cosán allows you to learn in an environment that is tailored to your needs. I was looking for a course that complemented both my experience in community development and in addiction, and this was it. Once the pandemic hit, all classes went online and, because I had already met the tutors and my fellow learners in person, it was easier to engage online. Now that I have my degree in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development, I hope to continue working in that sector.”

Transforming the Lives of Families

Lifestart

Family support visits continued during 2021 with a total of 43 families in the wider Tallaght area receiving daily and/or weekly support from our Lifestart Team.

We equipped parents with the skills to enhance bonding, coping skills for mental health, and skills for social, emotional, intellectual and physical development, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth.

The kinds of issues families were dealing with ranged from mental health issues, social isolation and addiction to domestic violence, coercive control and homelessness. A number of mothers had little support from their families or the fathers of their children.

We were delighted that additional funding meant we could take on a new part-time Home Visitor. Sophie O'Callaghan has developed a good relationship with 19 families since joining us.

Having an extra team member meant that, when referrals increased when public health nurses resumed home visits of young mothers following the pandemic, the Lifestart Team was able to cope with the influx of new cases.

Both our Lifestart Team members are on the Tallaght Infant Mental Health Network Group.



What is Lifestart?

Lifestart is a programme for parents of children aged from birth to five years of age that offers families a monthly child and parent development programme, which is delivered to parents in their own homes by Family Visitors.

The ethos of the programme is to support and guide parents in their homes with the focus on all areas of a child's development.

On each visit, the Family Visitor brings to the home age-appropriate information about the development of the child, including checklists that allow parents to see how their child is developing compared to the average or typical child. The Family Visitor explains to the parents all the things they can do to encourage their child's development and suggests activities which will help the child to develop her/his potential fully.

The Family Visitor brings books, art materials, music, nursery rhymes and educational toys from Lifestart's library and shows parents how to make best use of them with their child. The Family Visitor will answer parents' questions about their child's development.

Parents who avail of Lifestart report feeling valued, encouraged and supported by the programme.

Lifestart in Numbers 2021:

43 families availed of our
Lifestart Programme in 2021

The **average age** of children availing of the
Lifestart Programme was **17 months**. The youngest was
2 months old, the oldest 2 years, 9 months

11 families were headed by single/lone parents

7 children were referred to our Jobstown Early Years Centre

6 parents were referred to our counselling service

Ivanna (not her real name) joined the Lifestart Programme during 2021. A lone parent living in homeless accommodation and feeling socially isolated, she has a hostile relationship with her family who live in Eastern Europe where she is originally from.

Ivanna is recovering from alcohol addiction and substance mis-use due to childhood trauma and depression. She has no social network in this country and the bi-weekly visits from our Lifestart Team have proved a lifeline for her and her child.

The building up of a trusting relationship has meant Ivanna can now express herself freely to the Lifestart Home Visitors as she grapples with the guilt she feels due to her use of illegal substances at the start of her pregnancy. Fearing her past drug use may cause harm to her child, she always appears on edge and frequently presents at A&E with minor issues.

Because she had been moving from one homeless hub to another, Ivanna had not had the opportunity to build up a relationship with a public health nurse. Hence, her frequent visits to A&E when she felt overwhelmed and required medical advice. Our Lifestart Team linked Ivanna with her local medical centre where she now has a good relationship with the public health nurse.

Ivanna is now also engaged with several An Cosán education programmes, which she greatly enjoys while her baby is cared for by Early Years Jobstown. Both Ivanna and baby also attend our Parent and Toddler Group.



Transforming the Lives of Communities

Community Partners

Our network of community partners continued to be key to us rolling out our education programmes across Ireland in 2021. We expanded the reach and delivery of our adult community education programmes for marginalised communities further with 15 new partnerships developed during the year, bringing the total to 229 organisations across 26 counties.

Our network comprises community education organisations around Ireland with whom we provide access to online programmes at affordable rates. They range from local community development groups to regional Community Training Centres and national government bodies, such as the Education and Training Boards.

These centres provide a place where students can access the technology they need to pursue education and create peer learning communities.

Together with our community partners, we work to empower learners, their families, and communities.

A number of new collaborative adult education programmes got underway in 2021, including a Certificate in Leadership and Community Development with Waterford Area Partnership and a Transformative Community Education NFQ Level 7 Special Purpose Award with Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board.



New funding from various sources meant work could get underway on some important new projects in 2021. This included a Technology Enhanced Learning programme for community educators, thanks to funding from the RTÉ Comic Relief Fund, and a Global Citizenship Education initiative for community partners with funding from Irish Aid.

We continuously engage with our community network through various events, talks, projects and courses, thus ensuring we stay in touch with key players in the industry. Our Community Partner Lead, Maria Flanagan, spoke at a number of partner events during the year, including an International Women's Day event organised by Women of Wicklow Social Inclusion Network and a Smart D8 launch event in March, and at an information session for awardees of Rethink Ireland's Mná na hÉireann Fund in June.

An Cosán played an active role in the Erasmus+ Fatherhood Project throughout 2021, including two transnational partner meetings to develop training programmes to empower young fathers aged 18-30 to actively engage in the parenting role.

Our e-learning platforms Digital Stepping Stones, Skills to Succeed Academy and Scope were taken up by a growing number of partners.

One of our partners, the Irish Refugee Council, awarded four of our learners a scholarship of €500 each towards their progression in Higher Education.

Around 270 people attended 49 An Cosán open days / information sessions (mostly online). Online sessions, which are held every Friday at 11am, give prospective learners an opportunity to meet a member of our team, learn about An Cosán, our learner-centered ethos, our holistic approach and wraparound supports, and provide an opportunity for people to explore their options and ask any questions they may have in a welcoming and supportive space.



Learner Voice – Pamela Doran, a learner with the Matt Talbot Community Centre (one of An Cosán's community partners) who is doing our Business Administration with Digital Skills programme.

“I’d never heard of Zoom until Covid happened and everything was done through Zoom. It was a lifesaver because I was able to connect with my family and to switch to online learning. It’s second nature to me now. It was a great way for women across Ireland to come together and learn online.

“I found the course so interesting. It’s helped me a lot – you learn a skill and you have to practice - and I feel confident I can do all the basics on the computer now.”



Learner Voice – Rudo Chitseko, BA graduate

“I have been using the skills I learned with An Cosán through my volunteering in the community.

“I want to give back to the community and change lives somehow. I want to make a difference. When I came into direct provision, I got a lot of help and support from people, and now it is my turn to support others.

“The reality is we live in communities, so we have to make them good places to be.”

Learner Voice – Amanda Sinnott, BA graduate



“For three years I studied under the amazing tutors of An Cosán and I enjoyed every minute of it. Learning as an adult and enhancing my personal development was the most enjoyable experience for me. It turns out I have a lot to offer! An Cosán has given me the confidence to pursue my learning further, so not only is that good for me but also for the work in my community.”

Pathways to Employment and Social Enterprise

Twenty-four people benefitted from our **Community Employment (CE)** scheme in 2021, using the opportunity to develop their skills and learning via on-the-job training, accredited internal and external courses, external work placements etc.

Given that the ethos of CE is to engage with people at their level and with their goals, an Individual Learning Plan was developed with each CE trainee to ensure they met their personal goals and met the criteria for the Department of Social Protection.

All CE trainees engaged in in-house work experience and training and earned workplace certificates. In-house work experience included IT moderation, programme development and facilitation, childcare, hospitality and reception, administration, finance support, and building maintenance. Trainings included office skills, word-processing, accountancy technician, life/career coaching, basic sign language, project management, child development, social, legal and health studies.

Several trainees secured part-time paid employment with An Cosán in IT moderation while on the scheme, thus demonstrating the valuable and important work the CE team members do within An Cosán.

Several trainees engaged in external work placements with two going on to secure employment as a direct result.

A third of our CE trainees progressed by the end of 2021. Half of those who progressed went on to full-time education, including three to Trinity College Dublin, and half went on to part- or full-time employment.

An Cosán’s Community Employment (CE) programme assists long-term unemployed people back to work by providing work opportunities in a number of areas. It gives individuals an opportunity to try something new and work within their community. In addition to the CE placement, participants can avail of working part-time in other services, if they wish, thus giving participants the opportunity to use their new skills elsewhere.

Our CE programme has proven very successful since we set it up three years ago with previous participants going on to secure employment or going on to further study, including several who enrolled on Trinity College Dublin courses.



Catherine Cross, Paula Rynne, Sinead Grogan

Catherine Cross

"Participating in the CE scheme has provided many benefits. Personally, I have grown in confidence, gained new skills and formed a clearer understanding of my own abilities."

"I am always eager to learn. I have taken part in digital skills training, which has helped me gain confidence in using One Drive, Teams, and Microsoft office as well as Excel and PowerPoint. I have also completed a Level 5 module in Word-processing and a Level 6 Certificate in Personal and Professional Development."

"As a CE worker, I have also been actively involved in providing student support. I trained as a moderator for online classes during the pandemic and successfully combined the role with facilitation. I am now confident of my digital abilities and have gained a good understanding of the challenges involved in community education for both provider and student."

Paula Rynne

"Ever since I joined the CE Scheme in September 2020, I have been actively encouraged and supported to undertake various training programmes. Accredited trainings I have completed to date include Train the Trainer and Teaching English as a Foreign Language."

"I am fortunate to be situated in An Cosán as the quality of the courses given is of a very high standard. I have had the opportunity to receive ongoing teacher practice/training and I have had many opportunities to brush up on my skills and regain confidence in my abilities."

"I have had opportunities to support participants in the various courses. I have also had the opportunity to carry out a variety of research projects, including contributing in a small way to the European-wide Fatherhood Project funded by Erasmus. It is a significant move in including young fathers in contributing in a positive way to the life of their children."

Sinead Grogan

"I am in my third and final year on the CE scheme at An Cosán. I have gained a lot of experience while working here. I started off in hospitality and then I progressed to doing six months' work experience on reception, which I loved. It helped me gain a lot more confidence in myself."

"I am currently doing research in the CE office on Early Years and, through the CE scheme, I have also started a course in Computerised and Manual Accounts in the Tallaght Training Centre."

Social Inclusion

Members of our University of the Third Age (U3A) group and some of our Early Years centres took part in South Dublin County Council's **Social Inclusion Week**. An African drumming and story-telling session was a real hit with the little ones.



FitzGerald Family Scholarships

We were delighted to welcome Réachbha FitzGerald to An Cosán in October to present FitzGerald Family Scholarships to two deserving recipients. Alan Smith and Hollie McDonnell, who are both from Tallaght, were presented with the awards by Réachbha, grand-daughter of the late Garret FitzGerald (former Taoiseach) and his wife, Joan.

Both students were settling into third-level education, having completed their Leaving Certificate exams in June 2021. Alan is studying Law at NUI Maynooth while Hollie is studying English and Philosophy at UCD.

Learner Voice – Alan Smith (pictured right with his proud Mam)

“My first year of college has been completely life-changing. I have learnt a lot about myself and the skills I have learned on my course have already come in to use. I've managed to get myself a job for the summer and I've made friends for life.

“To sum up my first year of college in one word I would say ‘proud’. I had an overwhelming sense of achievement one of the days, as my bus pulled onto campus, and it has really stuck with me.”



Learner Voice – Hollie McDonnell

“I am really enjoying my first year of college, especially my English modules as they are a great way to express myself through creative writing. I look forward to seeing how the next two years go and to seeing what the rest of my degree holds!

I couldn't have done any of this without the financial help An Cosán kindly gave me and I will be forever grateful.”

Finance and Governance

Fundraising Highlights 2021

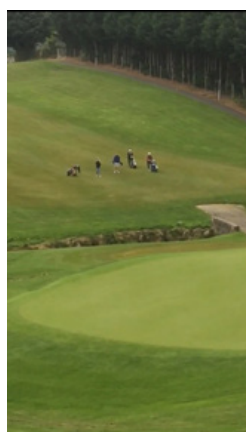
International Women's Day

We were delighted that our first ever online International Women's Day celebration raised over €8,000. We thank the generous individuals and companies who supported this event, including Goodbody and Titan Experience.



Around the World

Families and staff members joined the little ones from our Early Years centres taking part in the Around the World challenge in June. Together they ran, walked and cycled to raise valuable sponsorship for much needed resources and equipment for our Early Years centres.



Golf Classic

We were thrilled that the easing of Covid restrictions by the end of the summer meant that we could proceed with our annual Golf Classic at Powerscourt Golf Club. An enjoyable day was had by our wider An Cosán family with a surplus of €17,000 raised.

VHI Women's Mini Marathon

An enthusiastic group of staff and supporters took part in the virtual VHI Women's Mini Marathon in September. It

was an enjoyable team-building event, which saw participants walking from our headquarters in Jobstown to our Early Years' service in Fettercairn ... and back again!

Education bursary in memory of Marian Finucane announced

Updated / Tuesday, 7 Sep 2021 14:05



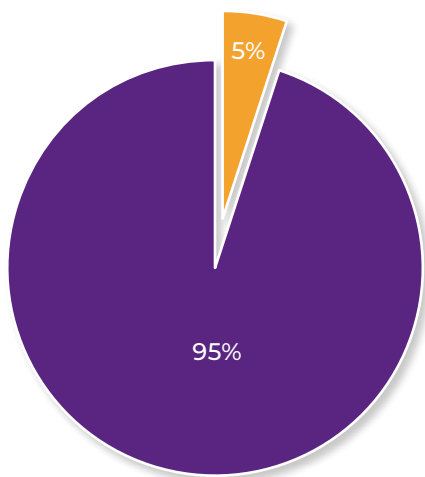
Marian Finucane Bursary Fund

In memory of Marian Finucane and all that she achieved for women's empowerment, her husband John Clarke, together with the Community Foundation for Ireland (CFI), generously donated and made an appeal on RTÉ radio and in other media for our newly-established Marian Finucane Bursary Fund. We received a hugely positive response to enable women learners who require financial support to pursue their educational journey.

John donated €20,000 through CFI and, in response to the media appeal, Coca Cola HBC also donated €20,000. Members of the public who heard the appeal also made donations, which amounted to €12,500.

Stairway to Heaven

One of the mothers from our Kiltipper Early Years' service, Pamela Conway, did a fundraising walk with her family and friends in October. They walked the 16-kilometre Stairway to Heaven route in Cavan/Fermanagh and, in doing so, raised over €2,000 for sensory equipment for Kiltipper Early Years.



Unrestricted: €232,356 (5%)

Restricted: €4,166,252 (95%)

Total Income 2021

Donations

We are hugely grateful to all our donors, especially to those supporters who make regular donations.

Regular donations allow An Cosán to continue to plan in line with our vision and strategic goals.



'I wouldn't have been able to study without the financial supports. They really took the pressure off.'
– an An Cosán graduate

Legacies – laying down solid stepping-stones to the future

It is now a generation since our work began empowering women and children through education.

We believe in the One Generation Solution to tackling disadvantage. Mothers are the key to handing down a love of learning to their children.

We encourage our supporters to consider leaving a legacy to benefit the next generation of learners in marginalised communities across Ireland.

Leaving a legacy to An Cosán is the ideal way to ensure a brighter future for the next generation.



OUR VISION

A world where everyone can access education to achieve their full potential

OUR MISSION

To empower women and children left furthest behind through learning, leadership and enterprise

*Do An Cosán's vision and mission align with your own?
If so, would you consider pledging a legacy to An Cosán in your will?*

Thank you to our Funders and Supporters!



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Ulster Bank



J.P.Morgan



Support In Kind

As a result of receiving a donation of over 200 books from Children's Books Ireland, every child attending our seven early year services received a present of a book from Santa Claus to encourage a lifelong love of reading. Some of the children made lovely 'thank you' cards to acknowledge the gifts.



In sponsoring the production costs of our online International Women's Day event, An Cosán was enabled to share our #OneGenerationSolution and give a platform to learners to share their experiences of empowerment through education, demonstrating the positive impact of An Cosán's education programmes and wraparound services on women, families and communities.

Expertise was shared in respect of our CRM tender process to assist us further develop more robust internal systems.

A&L Goodbody provided legal services in respect of our [Digital Stepping Stones website](#) – an important tool in our Digital Inclusion work with adult learners.

Replenishing our store of laptops for our Laptop Loan Scheme ensured that barriers to learning were mitigated as much as possible and that Digital Inclusion was accessible for all our learners.

The impact of providing hands on work experience for the young women on our Business Administration and Digital Skills programme was invaluable because it allowed the learners to make practical use of their new skills, which took their learning from theory to practice.



BANK OF AMERICA



Governance

Governance Code

The Board was delighted to approve that An Cosán is fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code (as submitted in Annual Report to the Charities Regulator in October 2021). Adherence to each of the core principles takes tremendous effort, determination and high standards across the entire An Cosán family: Board, Management and the An Cosán team.



Best Practice: Audit Tender

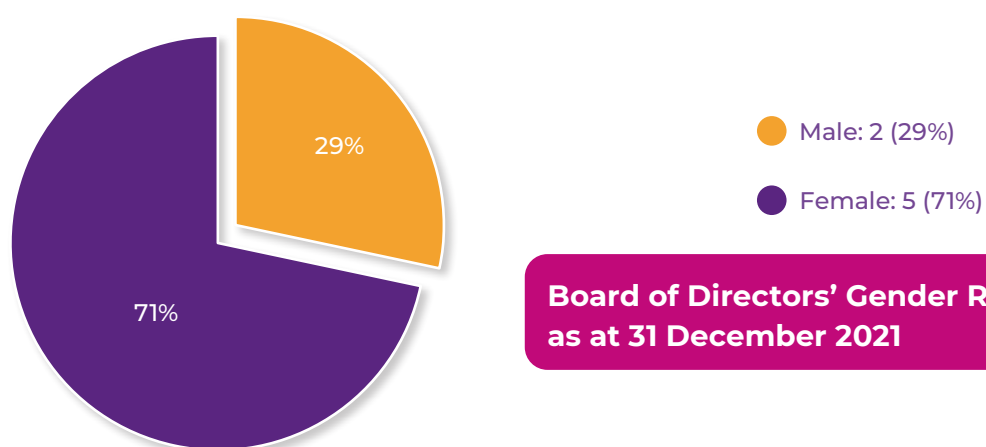
mazars

As a charity, we strive for best practice in everything we do, and so in 2021 we ran an Audit Tender Process to bring a fresh Governance perspective and set of insights to An Cosán. After an extremely robust process, our Board was delighted to appoint Mazars to provide external audit services to An Cosán.



Board of Directors

Board Member	Role	Appointed / Resigned
Anna Durkan	Chair	Re-Appointed
Conal Henry	Vice Chair	Continuing
Mairead Butler	Company Secretary	Re-Appointed
Ger French	Director	Continuing
Bill Roche	Director	Re-Appointed
Dee Kehoe	Director	Continuing
Siobhán Wall	Director	Continuing
Martina Genockey	Director	Re-Appointed Resigned 19 th Oct 2021



**Board of Directors' Gender Representation
as at 31 December 2021**

Finance & Risk Committee

Board Member	Role	Appointed / Resigned
Mairead Butler	Chair of FRC	Continuing
Bill Roche	Director	Continuing
Siobhán Wall	Director	Appointed to FRC 16 th Sept 2021

Early Years Working Group

Board Member	Role	Appointed / Resigned
Ger French	Chair of EYWG	Continuing

Company Secretary: Mairead Butler

CEO: Heydi Foster

Company Registration Number: 131383

Charity (CHY) Number: 8659

Charity Regulator Number: 20021528

Registered Office

The Shanty Educational Project CLG
An Cosán
Kiltalown Village Centre
Jobstown
Tallaght
Dublin 24

Auditors

Mazars
Audit & Assurance
Block 3 Harcourt Centre
Harcourt Road
Dublin 2

Solicitors

A&L Goodbody
North Wall Quay
Dublin 1

Principal Bank

Allied Irish Bank
Village Green
Tallaght
Dublin 24

Other Bank

Bank of Ireland
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4

The Members

Eileen Durkan

Dara Hogan

Brenda O'Malley Farrell

**Attendance at Board meetings in 2021**

Number of Directors	% Attendance at Board Meetings 2021
3	100%
1	80%
1	75%
3	63%
8	



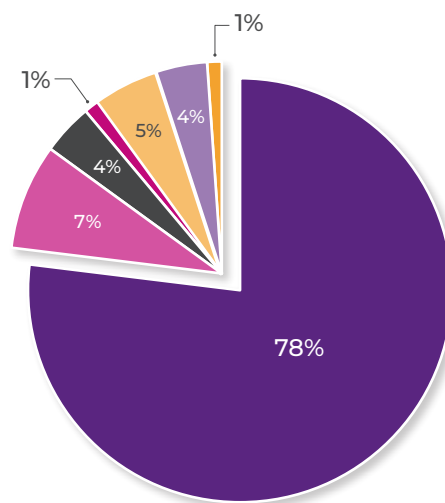
Finances

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2021

	Unrestricted Funds 2021 €	Restricted Funds 202 €	Total 2021 €	Total 2020 €
Total Income	232,356	4,166,252	4,398,608	3,734,967
Total Expenditure	54,551	3,580,751	3,635,302	3,489,715
Net Income	177,805	585,501	763,306	245,252
Reserves	194,708	1,328,429	1,523,137	759,831

Total Income 2021: €4,398,608

- State: €3,409,745
- Private & Corporate: €316,923
- Fundraising Activities: €187,002
- Donated Services "Support in Kind": €45,354
- Learner Fees: €220,749
- Early Years Education & Care Fees: €163,078
- Other: €55,808



Financial Review and Reserves

An Cosán had an exceptional year financially. This follows a number of years where the organisation had no reserves and growing deficits, leaving us vulnerable. In order to stabilise An Cosán's financial sustainability, we engaged with Tusla and Solas. The result of their combined effort was that we received an increase in core funding from both Tusla and Solas. The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic introduced a huge level of additional uncertainty as well as service disruption. An Cosán focused on cost containment to mitigate this uncertainty.

We were also fortunate to avail of comprehensive government funding in 2021 relating to Covid-19 pandemic supports. These exceptional supports from the State amounted to 14% of total income. €629,000 of exceptional income was received from the following State funding streams: Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme, related PRSI Credits, Covid-19 Stability Scheme, Covid Operational Support Payment and a once-off increase in Tusla funding.

Another exceptional factor in An Cosán achieving a surplus of €763,306 in 2021 was due to the donations received from our charity partner, Goodbody. This relationship has grown over the last three years and proved invaluable throughout 2021. They provided An Cosán with both unrestricted financial donations and also pro bono support, covering the production costs of running our online International Women's Day event in March. They also brought support and expertise to members of our team working alongside them on various projects.

Because our usual flagship fundraisers – our annual International Women's Day lunch celebration and Winter Ball - could not take place face-to-face due to the pandemic, we were deeply appreciative of the unrestricted support of €139,000 our charity partner, Goodbody, gave us in 2021.

This meant that An Cosán could continue to provide essential services to our learners, our families, our little ones, and those furthest behind during a challenging year.

It was fantastic to see a 26% increase in our traded income in 2021 (namely, learner and parent fees and counselling contributions) as it was an indication that more and more face-to-face classes, educational programmes and counselling sessions could take place, which is the heart of all we do at An Cosán.

The exceptional funding received in 2021 (noted above) has enabled An Cosán to stabilise our financial position and has built confidence in our ongoing ability to provide essential services to those furthest behind for the foreseeable future.

Please note that the comparative amounts in the statement of financial activities and balance sheet reflect a prior year adjustment in respect of the recognition of capital grants. In prior years capital grants were treated as deferred income and amortised over the useful life of the related assets. In preparing the 2021 financial statements a prior period adjustment was made to recognise the capital grant as income at the time it was received in order to meet the SORP requirements for income recognition.

Total reserves at the end of the financial year are €1,523,137 (2020: €759,831), of which €1,328,429 (2020: €742,928) is restricted and €194,708 is unrestricted (2020: €16,903).

Our reserves policy aims to achieve and maintain a level of reserves equivalent to three months' worth of operational expenditure for the organisation. As An Cosán is a not-for-profit charitable organisation, the approach to achieving this target is to be gradual and sustainable, while ensuring the delivery of our quality core services of Early Years Education & Care, Adult Community Education and Counselling & Family Support.

For 2022, the value of three months reserves equates to €940,000. This figure includes three months' worth of payroll and revenue expenditure and three months' worth of day to day, non-exceptional, operational expenditure for the entire organisation. As our unrestricted reserves position is at €194,708 at year ended 31 December 2021, we have a future target of €745,292 to attain.

In order to achieve this target, we intend to further diversify our income across corporate, philanthropic and fundraised sources. This is one of the enabling goals in our Strategic Plan 2022-2026. We hope to grow monthly donor support and to promote legacy giving to build our unrestricted reserves in a sustainable way. The intention of the Board of Directors is to build our reserves through gradual sustainable annual surplus in the approximate amounts of €10k - €20k per annum.

As part of our recent organisational re-design, two new roles (Communications and Information Officer and Grants and Development Officer) were introduced to enable this area to thrive. Through improved communications and connectivity with our network, unified branding of An Cosán's work and regular well organised fundraising events and promotions, corporate and philanthropic donations and unrestricted fundraised income are poised to grow.

The current modest unrestricted reserves position gives the Board and management reasonable comfort and ability to plan longer term. It affords the organisation the capacity to withstand the risks associated with potential future income shocks and growing cost base, and to provide essential services while seeking additional funding that may be needed to address any potential future deficit.

Over the last couple of years, actions have been taken by senior management to attain core state funding across a range of government departments. This diversification has helped to mitigate our funding risk and develop more sustainable income streams to underpin our essential service delivery into the future.

Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2021

	Total €	Restated 2020 €
Fixed Assets	919,531	954,215
Current Assets	1,376,084	913,742
Creditors	(719,552)	(1,047,557)
Net Current Assets / (Liabilities)	656,533	(133,815)
Creditors: Amounts falling due after one year	(52,926)	(60,569)
Unamortised Capital Grants	0	0
Total Net Assets	1,523,137	759,831
Income Funds		
Restricted Funds	1,328,429	742,928
Unrestricted Funds	194,708	16,903
Total Funds	1,523,137	759,831

And the last word goes to three of our graduates ...



Senator Lynn Ruane

“Re-entering education with An Cosán did not give me a skill for the market; it gave me a skill for life, a skill for survival and growth. It taught me how to resource myself in a positive way, using skills to cope that weren’t harmful.

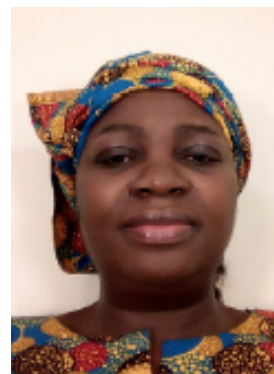
“An Cosán taught me how to be a little more centred, to acknowledge the big gaping hole at the centre of my being, and to give me a foundation that I could build on, so that I could fill that hole with a sense of purpose and confidence.”

Foluke Oladosu

“Further Education and Training (FET) has completely changed my life. I was amazed to see how much my confidence grew. I felt a sense of belonging and I was unstoppable because I was soaking up all this knowledge.”

“FET helps people reach their full potential. I am so grateful for the people that provided me with support and for everyone that believed in me. FET is for everyone, especially those that fell off the mainstream education system. All you have to do is believe in yourself and participate.

“It boosted my confidence and I am now working with An Cosán. I want to help and give back to learners and the community that once helped me.”



Emily Keltly

“Thanks to An Cosán and all the supports they provided, my life’s journey took a turn for the better. Now I’m going up and up and I love giving back to people and to my community. Taking part in the drama classes helped build my confidence and I am still besties with my ‘drama family’!

“An Cosán helped me achieve a BA Degree in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development in 2013 and I’ve been fully employed ever since.”



Kiltalown Village Centre,
Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24, D24 R3PN
01 462 8488 | info@ancosan.ie
www.ancosan.ie



"The ability to read, write and analyse,
The confidence to stand up and demand justice and equality,
The qualifications and connections to get your foot in that door
And take your seat at that table –
All of that starts with education"

Michelle Obama

