

# CREATING BRIGHTER FUTURES in communities across Ireland



an Cosán

# Annual Report 2022

# Creating brighter futures for adults, families and communities

## 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

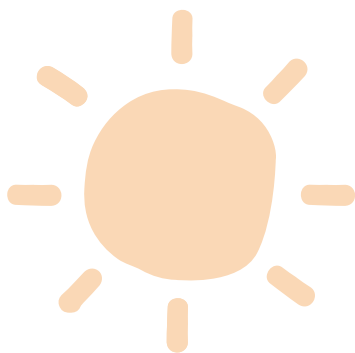
## OUR 10 YEAR GOAL

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



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# Chairperson's Report



The year past brings so many thoughts of proud moments, of facing challenge, of building and strengthening, and importantly of celebrating the work that has been achieved. I know you will share my feeling of pride in the learners who have shaped a better future

for themselves with the support of our wonderful team. It is with those learners and staff, and with our community and wider stakeholders, that we came together to plan and reflect, and in 2022 launch our new strategy, that guides us on the path forward.

We have such a big vision, a vision of an Ireland and a world where people can access education that allows them to achieve their full potential, and how we achieve that is through empowering women and children left furthest behind through learning, leadership and enterprise.

We deliver on this mission through our values. Those of connection, ensuring that we meet the needs of our community in an inclusive way. Being driven by our community, always listening, and acting on what we hear. Always asking and reaching out to know what needs must be addressed, and evolving to meet the challenges. We are compassionate; at our heart and core we do our work in a way that is kind, supportive and loving.

An Cosán is famous for ensuring that learners and little ones aren't just provided with the best education, but also that they feel that sense of belonging. We are courageous – as a value, this echoes across the organisation and out into the wider world. You will hear the stories of our learners who best capture the ambition and resilience that is central to the journey they are on, and inspire our courage to affect the system for the better.

Our values are met by goals of equal measure, whether to strengthen our vital services so that they are leading the way in early years, in counselling and family support, and in adult community education. Or in promoting inclusivity through our leadership in working with marginalised communities, creating accessible spaces and ensuring true digital inclusion is possible for all. And lastly, we act to achieve systems change. Taking our learning and our evidence and sharing this with government to help drive policy choices that really make a difference to people's lives across the country. And, in doing so, being a leading voice to influence the shape of education in Ireland.

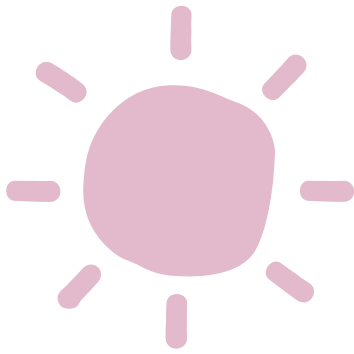
In just the first year of this strategy, we have expanded our services and further supported our learners in their progression, we have bolstered our sustainability by ensuring our financial future through developing funding partnerships, and we have reached out further than we have before through new campaigns and deepened relationships on a national level.

I believe, even with some of the dark days we have seen, that our future is bright and getting brighter, because we will be led to that future by our learners and our community.

I wish to congratulate the CEO, Deputy CEO and the Senior Management Team, along with all of the dedicated and hard-working staff, for their continued success and for their commitment to the wonderful organisation that is An Cosán. To the members of the board past and present and newly appointed, whose generosity of time, energy and expertise ensures the continued success and sustainability of An Cosán. To our funders and supporters, it is our pleasure and privilege to have you on this journey with us and we thank you for your contribution.

**- Anna Durkan, Chair of the Board of Directors**





# Message from our CEO



As I take a moment to look back on another year for An Cosán, I yet again ask myself "How has it been just one year?". This thought reflects how much has happened in the world. In a year where we had hoped to settle into a 'new normal' following the pandemic, we were faced

with brand new challenges in the shape of the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis that followed it. We live in an uncertain world now, never knowing what crisis will strike next.

But, in that reflection of the year past, is also the thought that I am once again stunned, yet proud, at how An Cosán has risen to the challenges and tackled each of these with the passion and determination that we have carried with us and built on over our 37 years.

I believe that our response to the years of the pandemic has honed us, sharpened our focus, and proven to our team and community that, no matter the issue, we can face it as long as we do so together.

The cost-of-living crisis has struck deeply within the community we serve. In our work, every day we see food poverty, clothes poverty, period poverty, poverty after poverty that affects our learners, our little ones, and hits at our community in so many different ways. The supports that are available are also hard to reach for so many, especially those lacking digital skills to find the services that are increasingly online. And so we can continue to lead on closing the digital divide so that everyone has equal access.

We have expanded our wraparound supports this year, ensuring we meet the needs of our community. As just one example, in the past year our counselling provision increased significantly to meet the demand - the pressure on people's

mental health, and increases in suicidal ideation, particularly among younger women. This reality of the work we are doing and the vital necessity of the supports we are providing is that we are able to support our learners through their darkest times.

We have also proudly supported refugees from the war in Ukraine who are now part of our community. Assisting them to access services, supporting them with language and learning, dealing with trauma and grief, and integrating into our society, their new home. Yet as we work on ensuring people are welcomed, I know the hostility that is out there toward refugees and migrants. As a woman of colour, I have seen the looks, I have heard the threatening talk. This trend needs to be reversed, so all can be welcome in our society.

And we have not just responded to crisis. We have continued to thrive and to build. We launched our new strategy, secured new core funding to ensure our sustainability, and our work has been recognised as we were proud to be shortlisted for the AONTAS Awards, the Charities Institute's Charity Excellence Awards, the Diversity in Tech Awards and Tallaght Person of the Year Award.

Through initiatives like our Get Yourself Online campaign, we have continued to spread our work across the country, training 40+ Digital Champions who work with us to promote digital inclusion and ensure a more equitable and brighter future.

We continue to listen, to learn, to engage with our community, to respond to the needs that we see and to strengthening our learners so they can lead the way. I know that whatever challenges the years to come may bring, the promise, potential and determination of our people means that not only will we face challenge, we shall shape a beautiful inclusive future through the empowerment of education.

**- Heydi Foster, CEO of An Cosán**

# 2022 Overview - a Year of Flourishing



20,000 learners empowered since 1986

460 Higher Education places

350 Further Education places

1,216 Adult Education Places

31 Ukrainian learners

38 direct provision learners

71 Continuing Professional Development places

335 Access Education places

326 Qualifications

20 BA Level 7 Degrees

20 NQF Minor Awards

10 NFQ Level 6 Certificates

33 QQI Major Awards

243 QQI Minor Awards

40 Digital Champions signed up

1,497 used our Digital Stepping Stones online checker

Digital Inclusion

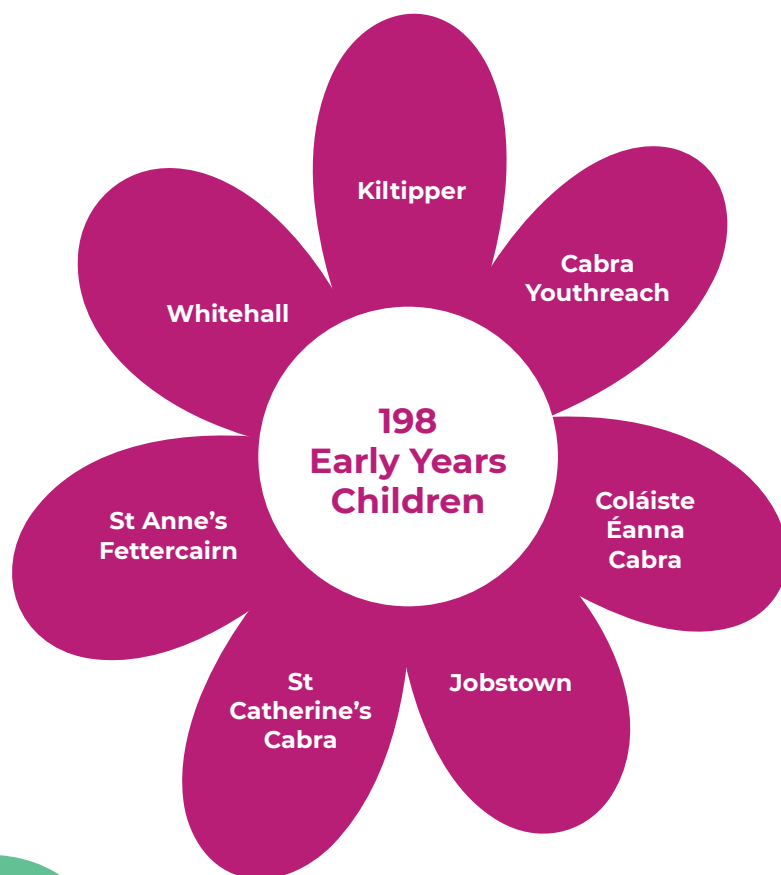
Over 100 joined our Get Yourself Online campaign launch

Minister Simon Harris launched our national Get Yourself Online campaign

96 laptops loaned to adult learners



An Cosán shortlisted for 4 awards!



**A further  
20,000 learners  
will be empowered  
by 2030**

# About An Cosán (‘the path’)

Education  
with a heart

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 objectives of An Cosán are:

- To provide for the relief of poverty, deprivations and disadvantage in marginalised areas across Ireland through the provision of education, training, employment, enterprise and early years' education and care
- To empower people through education and enable them to fully participate with local authorities and state agencies in the delivery of Government
- To promote sustainable development by the development of people's leadership, strategic and entrepreneurial capacities
- To provide education, training, enterprise and early years' education and care by establishing, building, maintaining and conducting appropriate centres and facilities.

## Providing learning, leadership and enterprise since 1986

An Cosán began in 1986 in The Shanty, the home of Ann Louise Gilligan and Katherine Zappone in the Dublin mountains. Working with a small group of women, living inside and outside of Tallaght, they had a vision that education was the key towards transformation and the eradication of poverty. Initial efforts exceeded expectations with courses growing in popularity.

In 1999 An Cosán – a centre for learning, leadership, and enterprise in Jobstown – opened its doors to adult learners and children in order to enable, equip and empower them to reach their full potential. Of equal significance to the dream was that the inequalities of achievement outcomes between social groups and geographic regions would be reduced. This is still the dream of our feminist organisation that holds equality and empowerment at our core.







# Vision 2026:

## Transforming Lives Together

### An Cosán's Strategy 2022-2026



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#### OUR 10 YEAR GOAL

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### 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

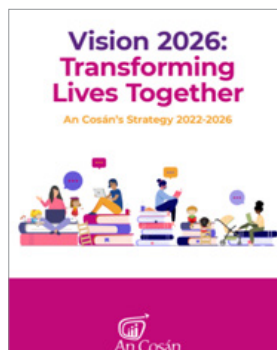
# Vision 2026: Creating Brighter Futures Through Our New Strategy

A key highlight of 2022 was the launch of our new strategy, **Vision 2026: Transforming Lives Together**, which sees us pledging to empower a further 20,000 people to transform their lives by 2030.

Over 20,000 lives have already been transformed through our unique model of education provision and, with the launch of our strategy for 2022–2026, we aim to reach a further 20,000 people by 2030. This figure includes not only adult learners, but children, parents and families too.

It is an ambitious strategy that builds on the strengths of An Cosán and the expertise that the organisation has developed. Recognising the need to constantly innovate and improve our services in early years' education and care, counselling and family support, and adult community education, the Strategy sets out the aims and benefits to learners of our unique educational model complete with wraparound supports.

Its underlying aims are that we must continue to prioritise the most disadvantaged by reaching out to 'the furthest behind first' and that the voices of



learners as ambassadors must be at the fore as they can express their personal experience and the An Cosán vision.

The future direction will continue to provide a pathway to learning, leadership and enterprise for those who are

most marginalised in our society. And, while we welcome all, An Cosán is a feminist organisation with our focus primarily on women and children as we believe this is the most effective way to end intergenerational poverty.

Our strategy positions us to promote inclusivity by working with the most marginalised. It empowers us to influence systemic change, whether that is directly through influencing government policy, or through encouraging our learners towards active citizenship and enabling them to influence factors that affect their lives."





# Strategy Launch





# Creating Brighter Futures Through our Strategic Goals



## Strengthening Our Core Services

### Early Years Education and Care

Our Early Years' teams in our seven centres across west and north Dublin were delighted to welcome back full numbers of children to our services in 2022.

A total of 172 children between the age of three months and five years benefited from our curriculum and high-quality caring environment with a further 26 children aged up to 12 engaging in a variety of after-school activities.

High quality early years' education and care is essential for children to achieve their full potential in life and, using the HighScope Preschool Curriculum, Aistear The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and Síolta the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, we supported children to develop the confidence and independence they needed to take the next step in their educational journey.

Community-based services, such as An Cosán, are best placed to help families and children who need additional supports. Our teams assessed all areas of families' needs and provided holistic wraparound services supporting them to become more confident and engaged in making positive lifestyle choices for themselves and their children.

Our Early Years' staff also worked with a number of children with additional needs. They purchased

We supported 198 children in our 7 centres



additional sensory equipment and attended training events to upskill to meet the needs of these children. The early intervention strategies used by An Cosán for children with social or emotional difficulties and their families can prevent the need for remedial intervention later in their lives.

### Our focus on development and learning

The HighScope Preschool Curriculum, which is used across our seven Early Years' centres, is based on a 'Plan, Do, Review' model that enhances the development of children through a variety of



experiences. It aims to ignite children's interest in learning by creating a fun and educational environment that encourages them to explore learning materials and interact with adults and peers.

Children moving on to primary school took part in play-based transition activities in June to help them prepare for this next step, bringing with them their learning journals, which told the story of their interests, strengths, and challenges.

Children were given the opportunity and supported to develop confidence, resilience, and independence, make decisions, build academic skills, develop socially and emotionally, and become part of a classroom community.

Children in several of our centres were thrilled to discover new outdoor equipment on their return from the summer break. This proved valuable in helping them develop their co-ordination and gross motor skills, and provided hours of fun too, of course!

We were delighted that all children in our services reached their own individual goals through the care and education provided to them by our professional and dedicated Early Years' staff.

### Supporting Active Participation

Our Early Years' centres participated in a number of national events during the year, including National Storytelling Week. There was great excitement for children, parents and staff that visits and outings could resume; these had been suspended during the pandemic. Trips to libraries and farms, as well as educational tours and literacy events, took place across the centres during the year. Visits from community gardaí proved particularly popular, especially when the little ones were allowed to operate flashing blue lights on top of the garda cars!

Staff and children across our seven centres also had great fun taking part in different fundraisers. The little ones in Coláiste Éanna all brought in their favourite stuffed animal / soft toy to join in the fun! The €2,000 raised was donated to UNICEF Ireland to buy healthcare supplies for Ukrainian families, including family first aid kits and birthing kits as well as sanitised drinking water and thermal blankets.

Parents were delighted to be able to come into the centres again for in-person events, like family mornings and graduations, which had to take place online during the pandemic.

### Continuous Staff Development

To continue to support our Early Years' teams to provide the best possible experience and programmes for children and families, we supported six team members from across the services to pursue a BA Degree programme in Early Childhood Education and Care with South East Technological University, along with a number of other continuing professional development opportunities.





# Early Years' Education and Care









# Early Years Parents' Feedback

## 'A home from home'

'I love bringing my kids to Early Years Coláiste Éanna. It's a home from home. The children love coming here too.'

'They love showing me what they have done, and bringing their work home and putting it on the fridge. Their confidence has definitely grown because they're with children their own age; they need that interaction with other kids and it gets them ready for the school environment.'

'The staff are so nice and welcoming. My daughter came here before starting primary school and it made a huge difference as she got to mingle with children her own age and it got her used to a classroom environment. It meant starting 'big' school wasn't as frightening an experience for her.'

'The staff were excellent at being aware of her allergies and keeping her safe while also keeping her involved in everything and keeping other kids aware. She loves seeing the staff again any time she comes with me to pick up her brother!'

- Gillian



## 'A lot more confident'

Since coming to An Cosán Early Years Jobstown, my twin girls have become much more outgoing and confident. They don't stick together any more; they go and do their own thing.

'They enjoy learning songs and all the different activities. They know their colours and numbers and they have learned things I didn't even know they could know at this age.'

'An Cosán is a brilliant place for all of us. I started through the Lifestart programme. The parenting course gave me a leg up and I feel I can handle situations a lot easier now. With the personal development courses, I'm a much more positive person now than I was.'

- Jody



## 'A very positive experience'

As parents of a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder just months before he started at Early Years St Catherine's, we were very anxious and worried about how our son would adapt to life in a pre-school environment. Mariana, the manager, reassured us that Danny would be fine and provided us with information, support and positive feedback each week.

'The staff have provided our son with much needed support, patience and understanding on a daily basis and, as a result of their hard work, our son has progressed on so many levels. Danny has become more tolerant of voice, he interacts much better with his peers and has developed many new skills as a result of his time in pre-school.'

'Thank you for making our son's first year in pre-school a very positive experience!'

- Thelma and Liam





## 'You couldn't get anything better'

'Both my children have loved coming to An Cosán Early Years Fettercairn. It has given them the opportunity to become interested in so many things. They like playdough, water trays, painting ... literally everything! And they love spending time with their friends!

'They learn by playing. I love that type of education because it's not being forced. Coming here is preparing them for school.

'I love the staff and the kids love the staff. I also enjoy the coffee mornings and talks organised by the parent-carer facilitator. They're a great way to get know people in the area.

I recommend An Cosán to everyone. You couldn't get anything better!

- **Monika**

## 'Impressive level of care'

'My daughter has come on in leaps and bounds, thanks to the effort put in by the staff at An Cosán Early Years St Catherine's to help her to socialise, learn and enjoy her surroundings. We are delighted to see her going in and mixing and playing with her classmates, coming home and sharing stories, pictures and songs with her siblings and have the ability to express herself so well.

'She enjoys the experience of pre-school, thanks to the support and variety of approaches used to engage her interests and help her to progress. There has been a great effort made to organise events like Christmas parties, Easter treats and summer get-togethers and to include family in the experience of playschool, which boosts the children's confidence and pride. We're very grateful that she has had such a positive learning experience and are very impressed at the level of care given to each child.'

- **Emma**



## 'A hidden gem ... I know my kids are in good hands'

'My experience with Early Years Cabra Youthreach has been extremely positive. I was finding it hard to find a place near me to help with my twins. An Cosán was recommended to me and I have to say it is a hidden gem. The staff are absolutely fantastic; they're professional and very friendly.

'My kids love to go every day; they really enjoy their time there. They learn a lot and I see a big difference in them, especially with my boy. He was very dependent on his sister but, with care and guidance

from the staff, he got more independent and blossomed. We were worrying a bit about his speech but, with advice and help from the staff, we were able to work on it.

'The twins have developed a very close bond with the staff. When we collect them, they are usually in the playground playing very happily and in no rush to go home. The teachers usually have some funny or charming anecdotes about something the twins said or did. Everybody who works there goes above and beyond. I know my kids are in good hands.'

- **Liba**

## After-school programme

The 26 children who attended the after-school programme in our Jobstown centre participated in a variety of educational activities, including Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), art, drama, games, and outdoor play. They learned essential life-skills too, including how to perform CPR. As well as attending our centre throughout the school year, they participated in a summer programme throughout July.

This group of children also participated in our Wellbeing Through the Arts programme funded by a community grant from the Adelaide Health Foundation. The aim of the project was to enhance children's wellbeing through emotional education, art, movement, and drama.

An Cosán implemented this programme to provide a designated space for wellbeing and, in doing so, facilitated opportunities for emotional expression and regulation, and to enhance and encourage positive mental health and confidence in a safe and supportive space.

## Supporting the parents of our little ones

Supporting the parents of our little ones is a critical aspect of the service we provide. Throughout 2022 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.

We were delighted to start a Mother and Baby Group, thanks to funding from the Community Foundation for Ireland. The main objective of this new initiative is to develop and deliver a mother and baby health and development programme for mothers and their babies under 12 months. Guest speakers delivered a range of talks to the group on topics identified by the mothers and facilitators, including breast-feeding, baby brain development, infant mental health, general health, and vaccinations.



The somatic movement therapist and facilitator who worked with the group, together with our Early Years' staff, reported an improvement in the children's wellbeing through a gradual growing in confidence to try new things, a new sense of openness and connection to each other and their environment. Also, a clear development in their emotional vocabulary and willingness to express this.



'I was feeling very isolated at home with my fourth child when someone told me An Cosán was setting up a Mother and Baby Group. I'd never been to An Cosán and I'd never been to a baby group with my first three, but I thought I would give the group a try. Everyone was so kind and welcoming, and you can say anything in the group. Everyone is going through the same things with their babies, so we are able to reassure each other. I see a big difference as a result of my child coming to the group. It has been lovely to see all the children coming out of their shells.'

**- Nikita, Mother and Baby Group participant**



## Counselling and Family Support

### Counselling

Our caring counsellors provide support and a listening ear to people when they need to talk something through. Sometimes all a person may need is to talk about a problem. Other times, more may be needed.

We all face hurdles in our lives and sometimes we need some support to get over a hurdle and move forward. The service is open to anyone living in the Tallaght community, and is strictly confidential. It is a safe place where people can talk over whatever may be holding them back.

Throughout 2022 our counselling service continued to see a high demand in response to extensive needs such as unemployment, isolation, poverty, grief, addiction, anxiety and depression.

A total of 69 people availed of our counselling service over the course of the year with 88% of clients being women.

Many of those attending the service reported that they were victims of crime, abuse, or coercive control and in the autumn, as a result of funding from the Department of Justice's Victims of Crimes Office, we set up a weekly peer support group for victims of domestic violence and coercive control.

Our counsellors supported **69 learners** and members of the local community



A grant was secured to support the professional development of counsellors and our team of nine counsellors, made up of women and men, took part in a training on working with children and adolescents.

Our counsellors also took part in a session with Sarah Jane Hennelly, CEO of the Association for Agency-based Counselling & Psychotherapy in Ireland (AACPI), who trained them in the use of the AACPI database.



# Client Voice – Maria\*

I called An Cosán in September 2020 after spending months trying to find a counsellor who could help me. I was at my last resort and feeling at what I thought was my lowest point. I spoke to Bernie on the phone initially and I have been attending weekly sessions with her ever since.

From the outset, I felt I had finally found someone who could understand what I was experiencing and had the wherewithal to help me work through it.

When I first came to An Cosán, I could not eat and had lost a huge amount of weight. I couldn't sleep and I was crippled with debilitating anxiety. I spent most days and nights crying and felt I had no control over my life. I had difficulty performing the most mundane daily tasks and I even found it difficult interacting with my children. I was then, and still am, going through a very toxic break-up with my ex-husband.



He was controlling, intimidating and manipulative both emotionally and mentally and, on one occasion, he was physically abusive. However, it was only after spending many months with Bernie that I was able to see his behaviour for what it was. Even after going to court and obtaining a safety order against him, I still was unable to accept the term 'abuse'.

Bernie has helped me work through all my emotions and anxiety and accept things for how they are, and she has helped me find the strength to overcome them. I was at a very low and weak point in my life and I was far from the strong independent woman I used to be. I think I was



a shadow of my former self. Actually, I know I was. I even looked frail and had constant pains in my stomach and I just wanted it all to stop. I felt nobody would believe me or understand what I was going through. Just to have someone listen and acknowledge what I was going through gave me the hope and strength to carry on.

It hasn't been an easy journey, but now I feel I am stronger than ever before. I have the clarity of mind to see things in life for how they really are, something which I absolutely did not have before starting counselling. Bernie has helped me acknowledge and validate my feelings and has helped me know my own mind and have confidence in the decisions I make in life.

I am so grateful for An Cosán's counselling service. Sometimes I wonder where I would be without it. Bernie has rebuilt me, little by little, often with some setbacks, into a better woman than I was before meeting her. I have learned to be happy and content in myself, all of which I owe to Bernie. Life is not perfect and often not easy, but accepting it for what it is and being grateful for what I have, has all come from my time spent with Bernie. Without her, I would certainly not be the woman I am today.

*\*Maria is a pseudonym*



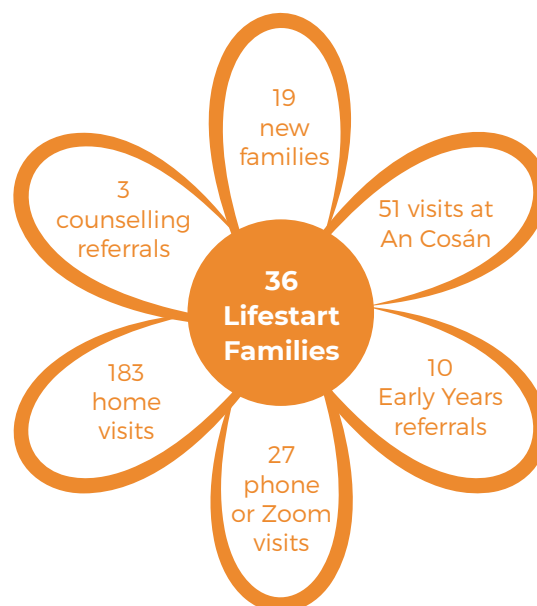
## Family Support – Lifestart

Family support visits continued during 2022 with a total of 36 families in the wider Tallaght area receiving daily and/or weekly support from our Lifestart Team. The average age of the children involved in the programme was 16 months.

The aim of Lifestart is to support and guide parents in their homes with the focus on all areas of a child's development. Our Lifestart staff equip 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 in 2022 ranged from chronic health conditions, disabilities, mental health issues, addiction and poverty to domestic violence, coercive control, overcrowded housing and homelessness. A number of mothers had little support from their families or the fathers of their children.

Our home visitors completed training in baby massage, which meant they could begin offering free infant massage classes to parents. These have proven particularly beneficial for parents struggling with bonding and attachment.



## Highlights of the year

The Lifestart Team offered a range of supports to families, including additional visits and extra supports when required, referrals to our Early Years, Counselling and Adult Community Education teams and links with external supports.

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



# Lifestart

## Feedback from parents

### Tom and Anne\*

Tom and Anne\*, who are both first-time parents, greatly appreciate the support of the Lifestart Team, especially as they have little support from their family. When they were registering for the Lifestart programme, they were anxious about whether they were doing enough for their child's development. They felt they were 'winging it' and, in particular, were seeking support around their child's development and play.

Within six months, their Lifestart Home Visitor saw massive changes in the mother's confidence. Mam really looked forward to the

visits and, even when she returned to full-time work, she made sure to continue to schedule monthly Lifestart visits on her days off. She appreciated the information she received and always looked forward to trying out new things that she learned with her child. She felt reassured when she realised all the things she was already doing to support the development of her child.

*\*Tom and Anne are pseudonyms*

### Jessica\*

I've been with Lifestart for quite a long time now and I absolutely love it! I've grown so much confidence since starting. Sophie has been brilliant at giving me tips and tricks for any challenges I faced along the journey of motherhood so far, and I'm so grateful. The girls have really grown and have become really fond of Sophie too. I'd recommend this programme to every parent, regardless of your situation. It's so nice to have somebody you can trust and talk to that can really guide you through it all.



### Sineád\*

'Our experience with the Lifestart programme has been amazing for myself and my daughter. Sophie has helped both of us in so many ways. We look forward to our monthly chats and development / social checks. Sophie is such an amazing part of the team and is always there to help - only ever a text a way.'

'As my child was born in March 2020 and we missed out on so much interaction, she was very nervous and shy, and me being a first time single mam, I was struggling too. Our health nurse put us in touch with An Cosán and, ever since the first visit, it has been so helpful and informative.'

'Every visit includes different topics - from play to development to toilet training and general information about children's development.'



*\*Pseudonyms have been used*



## Adult Community Education

An Cosán's community-based approach to adult education aims to respond to the needs of all within the community offering pathways for personal and professional development. With focused support and provision to address the needs of the most marginalised within the community, our part-time and blended learning options allow for the flexibility required to meet the needs of learners with additional commitments and limited resources.

A 2021 review of An Cosán's ACE programme reaffirmed its unique selling points as being:

- A primary focus on the 'furthest behind' women in Irish society
- The wraparound holistic model available in-house, and
- The personalised individual support, guidance and hospitality that An Cosán provides.



Our unique ACE model places the learner in the centre and provides wraparound supports to help adult learners achieve their full potential. These learning support services include one-to-one mentoring and coaching, individual and assistive tutoring, and employment outreach for our adult learners seeking employment. IT moderation during online classes is an essential service for our learners to support them in managing their online learning.

In 2022 we continued to develop our services by

- developing our model of transformative education to ensure that learners reach their full potential as individuals and grow their capacity to take responsibility for social change in their communities

1,216  
learner places  
in 2022



- Enabling learners to access and engage in learning by removing barriers to learning using Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and Universal Design Learning (UDL) and in the provision of crucial wraparound services
- Continuing our work tackling Ireland's digital divide and championing digital inclusion
- Advocating nationally to ensure the voice of disadvantaged learners and community educators is heard.

### Developing our services in 2022

#### Additional wraparound supports added in 2022

to improve the learning experience included new learner support services with academic skills and digital skills workshops and the introduction of induction and orientation days in September for all incoming learners.

#### Improvements to the admissions process and laptop loan scheme were also implemented in 2022.

For our Higher Education learners, early learner access to disability services and to targeted workshops on library services as well as career development were implemented in collaboration with South East Technological University (SETU) Carlow.

Applying a person-centred approach that values everyone and fosters inter-cultural understanding, **our targeted learners in 2022 included increasing numbers of refugees living in emergency accommodation and asylum seekers based in direct provision.**

Constantly innovating and remaining flexible, An Cosán's ACE provision has continued to create value by ensuring that our adult education programme from NFQ levels 1-7 is:

- **Relevant** – designed and delivered to meet the needs of our core learners and all are underpinned by Universal Design for Learning.

- **Holistic** – Literacy/numeracy and digital literacy competencies are developed in combination with other key transversal competencies, including competencies to support employability and learning progress.
- **Transforming** – our ACE model is constantly evolving to meet the needs of our core learners, maintaining a focus on building capacity and capability in individuals and communities to contribute to economic and social progress in a knowledge-led 21st century.
- **Lifelong** – All our courses, including digital literacy and our recently piloted Return To Learning gateway courses, are recognised as part of our lifelong learning pathways across formal, non-formal and informal learning settings.



## Learner Voice - Sarah Jane Deegan



**Sarah Jane Deegan, Return To Learning graduate & current QQI Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills learner.**

'I had been out of education for over three years and I wanted to better my life for myself and my children. The first step was to sign up to An Cosán's six-week Return To Learning course and that gave me the confidence to enrol on the Business Administration with Digital Skills programme in September.

I love going into class in the mornings and my kids love going into Early Years, which is a fully funded support service run on-site, so I can just focus on the course work. The whole experience is really increasing my confidence and, with the skills I'm learning, I know I'm going to be able to get a good job to support myself and my children.

I would advise anyone thinking of starting a course to get up and get out there, start your early mornings and routine, and empower yourself.'



## Access Education

With the continued support of Dublin Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) and an easing of Covid-19 restrictions, we resumed delivery of 11 Access (Foundation) courses in our Jobstown centre. Learners engaged in building their skills in a range of subjects, including literacy, Irish, art, mindfulness, computer skills and women's health.

**335 Access Education learner places**



## Return to Learning

Based on the recommendation of our 2021 Adult Education Review to establish gateway programmes to facilitate access to learning, we delivered two six-week Return To Learning courses in the summer of 2022. Supported by Coca-Cola HBC under their #YouthEmpowered programme, the objective was to support learners in acquiring the digital and personal skills needed to continue in education or to gain employment.

Minister of Justice, Social Protection, Community and Rural Development, Heather Humphreys TD officially launched the #YouthEmpowered programme in An Cosán on 7th July and one of the learners, Sarah Jane Deegan, was interviewed by Ryan Tubridy on his RTE Radio 1 show shortly afterwards. If you're reading this Annual Report online, you can listen back to the interview [here](#).

This Return To Learning programme has since been developed into a standalone 12-week course at Access level and a pre-QQI Level 5 module at Further Education level.

## Responding to Need - English classes for Ukrainian refugees

In early summer we held an open day for Ukrainian refugees staying in emergency accommodation in the Tallaght area. Those attending expressed an interest in learning English, learning about Ireland, and attending health and well-being classes.

A programme was developed that combined both English for Speakers of Other Languages classes and mindful movement. Those attending were also able to avail of our wraparound support services, including Early Years' provision and hospitality.

### Feedback from Return To Learning participants:

'The course was absolutely fantastic. I liked everything about it. The tutors were so well picked; they were respectful, they weren't judgemental. There was a great vibe - everyone made us feel very comfortable.'

'Everyone was made welcome: the opening circle made us feel welcome and secure in ourselves. We learned the basics of Word, Excel and PowerPoint, and we learned about personal development. I think it was a great starter course. I would love to learn more about computers and go on to develop more digital skills.'

## Supporting the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy

Autumn 2022 saw the roll out of new courses to support the Government's Adult Literacy for Life Strategy. These included:

**Computers for the Terrified!** - aimed at complete beginners, this course provides a fun and relaxed introduction to **Digital Stepping Stones** (the digital checker we developed in partnership with Accenture), the internet, email and more. Learners are also introduced to assistive technologies i.e. products, equipment and systems that enhance learning, working and daily living, especially for those with unrecognised or undiagnosed learning difficulties.

**The D8 Surfers Club** - this off-site programme based in The Digital Hub is aimed at over 60s who wish to increase their digital literacy. It covers practical digital skills, such as form-filling, online banking, shopping etc.

**Key Skills – Literacy & Numeracy** - using NALA's online learning platforms, this course develops adult key skills at NQF Levels 1, 2 and 3. Learners are also encouraged to progress into additional back to education programmes or wellbeing courses in An Cosán.

**Cúpla Focal** - offers parents, whose children attend local Irish schools, the opportunity to brush up on basic Irish skills. Learners explore the Irish language and culture through song, poems music and dance.



## Learner Voice - Nicola Quinn



**Nicola Quinn, QQI Level 5 Community Development graduate.**

'I was afraid of my life going back into education. I was never academic in school.

However, there's loads of support from the teachers in An Cosán and I was able to do it when I got there. Initially, I didn't know if I could do it, but I just kept getting myself into that seat, kept getting myself there.

I had no belief in myself but, when I got a distinction in my first module, that kept me going and helped me to see that I was better than I thought I was. Doing something I never

did before built my self-esteem; I realised I was more than drugs.

Not in a million years did I think I would be where I am today - I've completed a college course, I became a youth worker and now I'm a Project Worker with Community Addiction Response Programme in Killinarden. I really enjoy working with my community and working with people. I want to stay working in the community and help build people up, help them build their confidence, help them to see that there is a better way of living than drugs

An Cosán is like a family – all the extra supports and workshops to help you achieve your goals. I'm excited now to see what else the future holds.



**University of the Third Age (U3A)** - encourages people aged 55+ to engage in Lifelong Learning with the approach of 'you are never too old to learn'. The learning takes place in a fun and social setting while embracing positive ageing. Topics covered include physical activity, relaxation, computers and confidence-building, and encourages active citizenship.

**Word on Wednesday** is a drop-in service hosted by our Digital Inclusion Team that supports digital literacy for those who want to learn how to use Microsoft Word and other software in an informal learning environment.

**Discover Your Path** uses a Futures Literacy approach to allow learners imagine a desirable future, identify the skills and strengths required, and develop a plan on how to reach future goals.

## Further Education

A total of 23 Further Education modules were delivered in 2022 in the areas of Early Childhood Care and Education, Community Development, Community Care, and Business Administration with Digital Skills.

**350 Further Education learner places**

**Mná na hÉireann - Women of Ireland programme 2022** saw the completion of the Mná na hÉireann programme funded by Rethink Ireland. Initiated in 2019 and using a blended learning approach, 32 learners on our Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills programme achieved accredited training. Nineteen earned Major Awards, 23 secured employment and eight progressed to Further or Higher Education.

As part of the course, learners also attended a series of employability workshops and one-to-one career coaching sessions to support them in gaining employment.

Creating employment opportunities for learners was also enhanced by the establishment of an employment outreach programme and the appointment of an Employment Outreach Officer to build relationships with potential employers.

## Early Learning and Care

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) confirmed that the major Early Childhood Care and Education at NFQ levels 5 and 6 would be de-activated in December 2023 to be replaced with a new Early Learning and Care (ELC).

With continuous high demand from learners to gain qualifications in early years' care and education, An Cosán successfully applied to DDLETB for access to



the new ELC programme and, in collaboration with Longford Women's Link and Killucan Services, is now in the process of applying to QQI for validation of the programme. The first intake of learners onto the new ELC programme is expected in September 2023.

### QQI Engagement

Engagement with QQI to evaluate and seek approval of An Cosán's quality assurance procedure in offering FET validated programmes was successfully completed in 2022 with the result that QQI's Programme and Awards Executive Committee on 9th February 2023 accepted the recommendation of the expert panel to approve An Cosán's Quality Assurance procedures.



### Learner Voice - Dolores O'Sullivan



**Dolores O'Sullivan, QQI Level 6 Early Childhood Care and Education graduate.**

'An Cosán has had an enormous impact on my life. It offered me

a pathway back to education in a safe and welcoming environment. It is a special place with very special people who are making a significant impact on people's lives in the most positive and nurturing way.

The two years I spent at An Cosán have been more beneficial, rewarding and enjoyable for me than the 14 years I spent in mainstream education. An Cosán has given me belief in myself that I could go back to study and get a qualification.

I was incredibly fortunate to have an amazing lecturer and mentor in Christina. She went above and beyond for each of her students, always guiding us on our educational journey. Christina is without doubt the reason I'm now pursuing my Degree programme.

Any time I rang the office of An Cosán, I was greeted by a friendly voice – always helpful, always caring. Kindness, caring, and great warmth are how I would describe An Cosán and all the staff.

An Cosán is a special place with very special people who are making a significant impact on peoples' lives in the most positive and nurturing way. I will always be deeply grateful to you all.'



# Graduations and Awards









## Higher Education

The transformative learning on the BA Degree and Certificate programmes delivered by An Cosán as a Linked Provider of the South East Technological University (SETU) continued with delivery to standard of all scheduled 25 modules in 2022.

The high level of demand for An Cosán's community-based Higher Education programmes continued with 75 applications for our two degree programmes accredited by SETU – our BA in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development and our BA in Leadership and Community Development. 24 learners were offered a place on their chosen programme for September 2022.

### Awards

Twenty of our Higher Education learners graduated with BA degrees at SETU's Lifelong Learning ceremony on 8th January 2022. Nine graduated with a BA in Leadership and Community Development and 11 with a BA in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development. These internationally recognised degrees will stand the test of time and open new doors and opportunities for our learners.

**460 Higher Education learner places**

### Quality of Higher Education Provision

Excellent teaching and learning practice, drawing on disciplinary expertise as well as Adult and Community Education, were highlighted by our external examiner, Dr Bríd Connolly of Maynooth University, in her 2022 report:

*"Tutors were helpful and constructive in their feedback, yet again. Their feedback was thorough, constructive, supportive, and mindful, throughout. In short, I consider that this cohort of students have had an invaluable learning experience. They have been treated with fairness, kindness, and honesty. And finally, An Cosán continues with exemplary work in the arena of community education."*

### Higher Education Pathways for Non-Traditional Learners Project

Participatory action research into An Cosán's community-based Higher Education programme was undertaken as part of the Higher Education Authority-funded 'Higher Education Pathways for Non-Traditional Learners' project. This research showed the positive impact of An Cosán's model of flexible third-level provision, wraparound support, and transformative educational practice. In addition to facilitating organisational learning for enhanced delivery, the sharing of the report has enhanced An Cosán's standing among relevant stakeholders in adult community education and in access to Higher Education.



The project also saw An Cosán host an international seminar and workshops on 'Rethinking Higher Education Pathways' and 'Re-imagining Community-Based Higher Education' in November 2022. The two-day event attracted over 100 participants with extremely positive feedback from everyone who attended.

In addition, our Higher Education Lead, Thomas Murray, wrote an article on 'Community Education for Human Rights and Social Inclusion' that was included in AONTAS's **Adult Learner Journal 2022**.



## Learner Voice - Nicole Gabbett



**Nicole Gabbett, QQI Level 6 Train the Trainer and QQI Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills graduate.**

'During the pandemic, our class hit the screens and we instantly became a team. For 18 months An Cosán delivered fantastic content in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere. The tutors were passionate and truly unique. Each learner had their own style of learning and, even online, it was nurtured.

None of this was possible without the direction of An Cosán and my local resource centre,

Southend Resource Centre in Wexford. An Cosán sparks a healthy mindset and truly is the pathway for success.

I'm currently training in an office environment within the Wexford Trade Union Centre. This Community Employment scheme provides a relaxed environment where I can put all the theory I've learned into practice.

I understand the importance of continued learning and joined An Cosán once again and completed Women in Leadership.

I will always encourage people to join the An Cosán family and become the best version of themselves!





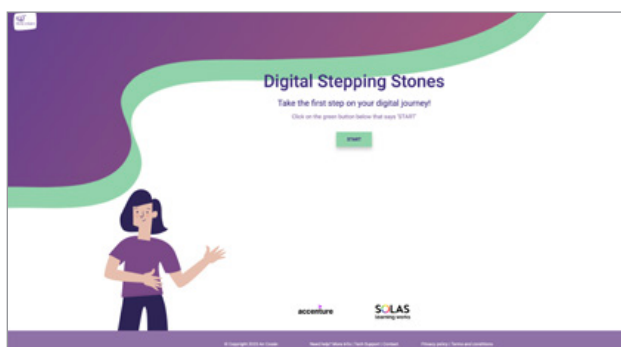
## Digital Inclusion

The Government's **Adult Literacy for Life 10-Year Strategy** (ALL Strategy), which An Cosán CEO Heydi Foster helped launch in September 2021, revealed that one in two adults struggle with digital literacy. Whether it is access to technology or to the skills needed to navigate the digital world, An Cosán has long been a pioneer in advocating that digital inclusion is essential for everyone to fully participate in life, work, and learning.

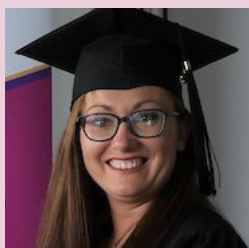


In 2022 An Cosán made considerable progress in the digital transformation of our national ACE provision as well as in our efforts to support the ALL Strategy by setting up Ireland's first Digital Inclusion Team. The team works on promoting the benefits of digital inclusion and breaking down barriers to help marginalised and disadvantaged learners to access and succeed in adult learning in today's digitised society.

The team is actively supporting all our learners, tutors, colleagues and community partners. This has been supported by the development of digital skills' training workshops and using our bespoke resources, such as our **Digital Stepping Stones** assessment tool and creation of a new digital skills curriculum to help build people's ability to digitally engage in learning for work and for everyday life.



## Learner Voice – Selina McClean



**Selina McClean, QQI Level 6 Early Childhood Care and Education graduate**

'I looked forward every week to our classes. I was able to sit at my

kitchen table and have a cup of tea and chat to my friends in the class. I had been apprehensive going online at first to do the course; I didn't think I would be able to do it. But, being online, the experience was amazing.

'The tutors made it easy to learn and showed us all the apps to help us. We learned to use

PowerPoint, we learned to use Word. I learned how to use Dictate until I learned how to type more quickly.

'Learning with An Cosán has completely changed everything for my family. Being able to help my children with their schoolwork has helped them immensely. I have been able to teach my son to type and to help him with his school projects. I used Google and apps to help my daughter with her reading and sounds. It's amazing that I have been able to teach them the skills that I myself learned through An Cosán.'

## Community Partnerships

An early adopter of online community education, An Cosán's ACE Programme fosters and develops relationships and collaborations through our national community organisation network to promote and ensure our courses remain affordable and accessible and are designed to meet the needs of the under-served communities we serve. The network also allows us to build capacity in the community sector through delivery of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to educators and practitioners alike.

229  
community  
partners

## Projects

An Cosán continues to support FET and the community education sector through capacity-building activities in our education centre in Jobstown and through our 220+ community partners nationwide.

## Development Education

With the aim of integrating Global Citizenship into our ACE Programme, we delivered a four-week online Introduction to Global Citizenship course to 25 learners. We also delivered two webinars on Integrating Global Citizenship Education into Adult Education to 58 community educators and practitioners. You can view recordings of these two sessions on the [An Cosán YouTube channel](#).

In addition, we developed two resources for tutors on the Sustainable Development Goals and Social Exclusion and the Digital Divide. In April we submitted a final report about these initiatives to Irish Aid, which funded these initiatives.



## Learner Voice - Joyce Akama



**Joyce Akama, QQI Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills graduate.**

'An Cosán has changed my life. It has given me hope to believe in

myself. Their incredible and loving staff and tutors are there any time you need a shoulder to lean on.

My time with An Cosán as a student was enjoyable. I had so many opportunities to speak and interact, which has built my confidence, like having talks as a student with Minister

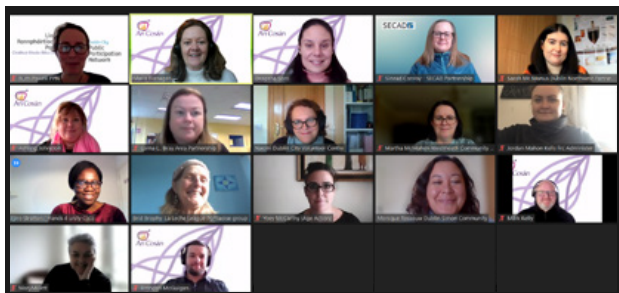
Simon Harris about Further and Higher Education and the digital divide.

Through An Cosán, I also gained valuable work experience with Goodbody's and I had the opportunity to do the Ernst & Young Refugee Access Programme, which led to me doing an internship with them.

What really stood out for me was how, when I said I could not do something because of my kids, I was always told to bring them with me. It really showed me how they wanted me to succeed.

Thank you An Cosán. I will forever be grateful for what you have caused me to achieve.'





## Technology Enhanced Learning

Funded under RTÉ Does Comic Relief, we designed and delivered two six-week online courses in Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) to 50 community educators and practitioners between March and June 2022. Participants from a diverse range of community organisations around Ireland took part to develop their digital, technology and educational technology knowledge, skills and attitudes. Content included digital literacy, digital inclusion, and training on tools for both assistive technology and TEL.

Community educators, tutors, and community development workers who took part have gone on to promote and develop inclusive educational technology practices in their organisations across the FET sector. A number also signed up as Digital Champions to assist us in rolling out our Get Yourself Online initiative across the country, thereby **creating Ireland's first Digital Inclusion Community of Practice**.

This is just one of the many ways An Cosán supported the Government's **Adult Literacy for Life 10-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy** in 2022.

## Fatherhood Project

An Cosán continued to play an active role in the **Fatherhood Project**, developing tools, resources and networking opportunities to equip young fathers (18-30 years old) to actively engage in their parenting role. A collaborative Pan-European initiative funded under Erasmus+, the training programme has been designed to be inclusive, free, open source and accessible in four languages: English, Spanish, Greek and Icelandic.



## Open Days

Over 200 enquirers attended an Open Day held in early September to register learners for our Further Education and Access Education autumn programme.

We also continued to hold regular online information sessions throughout the year, which attracted a total of 226 potential learners.

## Joint Awards Ceremony

Thirty learners were joined by family, friends and members of the An Cosán team for an award ceremony held in the Russell Centre in Tallaght on Saturday 24th September 2022. Ten learners received a Level 6 Certificate in Personal and Professional Development accredited by South East Technological University and 20 received either a QQI Level 5 or 6 Early Childhood Care and Education award, or a QQI Level 5 award in Business Administration with Digital Skills. It was a wonderful positive day and received great coverage in local media.

## Bursaries

Recognising that the pursuit of education can be prohibitively expensive for some, we operate a small bursary fund for eligible learners. In 2022 33 out of 36 applications for financial support were successful, amounting to the awarding of €26,300 in total. In our commitment to making education accessible to all, we also offer phased payment options for learners who are self-funding their courses.

## Team Developments

To drive digital transformation across An Cosán and highlight the importance of digital inclusion, the Digital Inclusion Team was established. The team aims to improve the ability to access and use the ICTs required to learn, work and participate fully in society.

The Digital Inclusion Team also supports our Community Partners in developing the ICT skills of their employees and their learners. The team is co-led by Mark Kelly, Digital Inclusion Coordinator, and Dragana Soro, Educational Technologist.

After 22 years working with An Cosán as a tutor, Deidre Bannon retired. As an educator, Deirdre was peerless and could connect with learners in ways that very few can.



## Learner Voice - Michelle Murphy



**Michelle Murphy**  
**NFQ Level 7 BA**  
**in Leadership**  
**and Community**  
**Development.**

'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. 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. The supports from my classmates and those from An Cosán are the reason I graduated.

For anyone that has even the slightest itch to go back into education, I would say do it! Regardless of circumstances there is always a way.

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



# Team Building











## Promoting Inclusivity

### Working with Marginalised Communities Inclusively

All An Cosán's educational programmes are aimed at reaching those furthest behind in our communities in order to enable, equip and empower them to achieve a better future for themselves and their families. They provide pathways for learners out of educational disadvantage and towards skills and qualifications needed by employers.

Our Business Administration with Digital Skills programme, for example, not only includes equipping learners with essential skills for the modern workplace, but also includes career coaching and employer outreach as well as an opportunity to gain valuable work experience. The Bank of America ran a weekly work experience session for seven weeks in 2022 giving learners a valuable insight into the world of work and helping them in their preparation to secure sustainable employment. Participants also engaged in work experience in a variety of different settings.

We are hugely grateful to Rethink Ireland, Bank of America and the Department of Rural and Community Development for supporting this programme through the Mná na hÉireann Fund and we were chuffed when our Jobstown centre was chosen for the launch of an additional €400,000 for the fund, which supports a number of organisations empowering women.

#### Supporting Ukrainian refugees

In 2022 we continued to prioritise reaching those left furthest behind in the communities where we serve, identifying the needs of women and children, in particular, and enabling them to access our services. We supported women from a range of



backgrounds, including some of the many Ukrainian women who arrived in Tallaght after fleeing war in their country.

The team at An Cosán reached out to Crosscare and other refugee support teams in the area to offer free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes alongside wellness classes to those located in nearby hotels and accommodation centres. Those who attended our classes came from all walks of life - from college students to accountants - and wanted nothing more than to use the skills and talents they brought with them to Ireland by working and participating in the community. Improving their English was an important first step towards achieving this goal.

We were delighted that our initiative proved successful not only in helping refugees develop their knowledge of English, but also in terms of providing a stepping stone for their integration process. All in a welcoming, sharing and safe space. For many of the participants, the English classes were the only spaces where they could learn, socialise and move towards integrating into Irish society.

While the adults attended sessions, their children made the most of their time with our Early Years' educators who introduced them to the toys, books and other educational materials in our Early Years

Jobstown Centre. The children were also supervised as they made the most of the garden and playground facilities.

*'Thank you so much for inviting me. The classes were amazing - I really enjoyed them - and my daughters really liked being in An Cosán too.'* - **Ivanna**

*'I am from Kyiv and I had to come to Ireland. I really like everything here – amazing, smiling people who always help you. Thank you for your hospitality, for participating in our lives, in our affairs, in our destiny. We are very grateful to you. Thank you.'* - **Anastasia**



## Jane Ronan



**Jane Ronan, QQI Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills graduate.**

'Before I started at An Cosán, I'd stayed home to rear my three children. I went to my local job centre to look for courses to get me back into a learning environment and there I was told about An Cosán. The women I met on the course weren't just classmates. We uplifted each other: the confidence they gave me, the drive they gave me. We were all there for the same purpose – to learn and to get back into the workforce. The drive of An Cosán behind us all just pushed us.'

The information on the Business Administration with Digital Skills course wasn't intense but the information that was in it really set me up for the job I'm in today. I am working now for the National Learning Network and I am where I want to be. I applied for this job as part of the communications module while I was doing the course.

Further down the line, I want to go into a tutor role. I realised, while doing the course with An Cosán and listening to the tutors helping me, that I wanted to do the same thing as the tutors. I wanted to help others. For me personally, it's been amazing.

Without the drive and focus of An Cosán, I wouldn't be where I am today.'



## Promoting community health in partnership with Trinity College Dublin

A series of public health talks we co-hosted with Trinity College Dublin's Academic Primary Care Centre Tallaght under the umbrella title 'Innovating Community Health' were well attended both online and in person.

Topics covered included:

- 'The Science of Happiness' – Prof Brendan Kelly
- 'Cancer Diagnosis: Then and Now' – Prof Maeve Lowry
- 'Addressing Inequity in Healthcare for People with Intellectual Disabilities: Improving the Patient Journey' – Prof Mary McCarron



## FitzGerald Family Scholarships

We were delighted to welcome Ciara FitzGerald to An Cosán in October to present FitzGerald Family Scholarships to three deserving recipients. Festos Okoh, Chloe Geoghegan and Matthew Hanley were presented with the awards by Ciara, who is granddaughter of the late Garret (former Taoiseach) and his wife Joan FitzGerald.

The students, who were at that time settling into their first year of third level education, were joined at the celebration by proud family members and representatives of the students' former schools as well as Will Moore, Regional Director, and Dealbha Prendergast, HR Director of Sherry FitzGerald.

An Cosán set up the scholarship in 2004 in memory of Joan FitzGerald, a great supporter of An Cosán, with the aim of breaking down barriers and creating equal access opportunities to

## Festos



Joining us to receive his FitzGerald Family Scholarship wasn't Festos's first time at An Cosán. He attended our Early Years Jobstown service as a child while his mother engaged in a number of An Cosán programmes.

Festos, who attended Killinarden Community School and is now pursuing a Level 8 Degree in Mechanical Engineering at Technological University Dublin Tallaght, was nominated for the award by his former school in acknowledgement of how "hard-working and committed to his studies" he was during his second-level career, and how he went out of his way to support his fellow students, including organising after-school study sessions for them.



third-level education. The three students were nominated for the award by their schools in recognition of their hard work and commitment and for their support of other pupils.

## Continuing to be pioneers in the area of digital inclusion

### Get Yourself Online

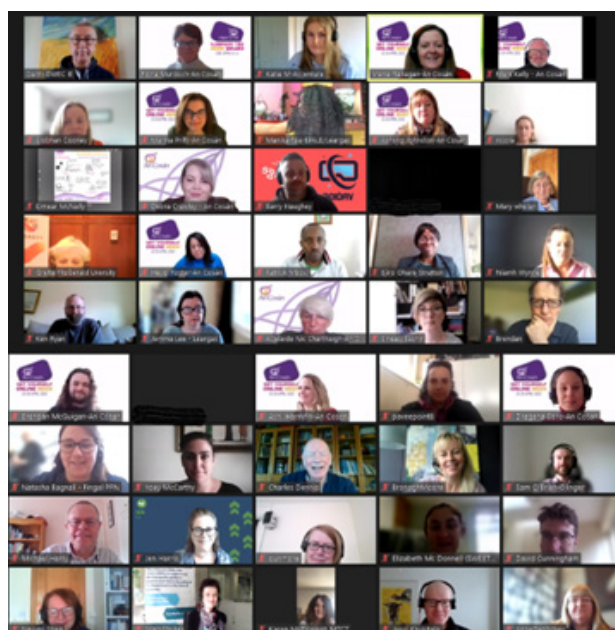
In 2022 An Cosán developed Ireland's first digital inclusion campaign - **Get Yourself Online** - to support the Government's Adult Literacy for Life 10-Year Strategy digital literacy agenda by equipping adult learners with the digital skills and confidence to get online confidently and safely and thereby help Ireland reach the national and European Union target of 80% of adults with digital skills by 2030.\*

The campaign was launched by Minister for Further, Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, at a community partner webinar we hosted in April, which was attended by over 100 community education representatives. The webinar, which was titled *Digital Equity Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow*, featured presentations from Accenture (on their research *Towards a Digital Society*) and Paul Finnis, CEO of the UK's Digital Poverty Alliance as well as EPALE.

An Cosán also undertook a comprehensive PR and media relations campaign to support the Get Yourself Online campaign launch. The subsequent coverage in national and local media as well as online raised awareness of Ireland's digital literacy challenges and the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy's 2030 target. It also provided a call to action for people to reflect on their own digital literacy needs.

As part of *Get Yourself Online*, we created a 'Digital Inclusion - Community of Practice' through the recruitment of a network of Digital Champions. By the end of the year, 40 community educators and community developers had signed up to be Digital Champions to support us rolling out Get Yourself Online across the country. Weekly drop-in learning and support sessions for Digital Champions ran in-person and online in An Cosán Jobstown from April to August.

A wide and diverse array of community organisations joined us as Digital Champions.



"Over the past two years we have seen our lives disrupted, and somewhat forever changed, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the acceleration of digital change. One of the biggest changes in our daily lives has definitely been the frequency with which we now use digital technologies in every aspect of our lives and we now have opportunities to learn, to connect and to work like never before .... I know events like this webinar and weeks like this Digital Inclusion Week are key to sparking conversations, building connections and taking next steps." - **Minister Simon Harris TD launching Get Yourself Online**

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



## Get Yourself Online – Micro e-learning Curriculum

In 2022 An Cosán's Digital Inclusion Team also developed a unique new offering to be launched in 2023 – a *Get Yourself Online* digital competence curriculum based on DigComp, the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens. This curriculum, the first of its kind in Ireland, consists of a suite of micro online learning modules - one for each of the 21 digital competences of DigComp.

This digital learning resource will complement and enhance the use of our Digital Stepping Stones assessment tool and provide a seamless next step in a learner's digital development. It will also provide community educators and tutors across Ireland with a 'one stop shop' to address digital skills gaps in adult learners.

## Networking across Ireland and internationally

An Cosán became a founding member of Digital Ireland Network, a national network to mobilise localities across Ireland around digital growth. As part of *Digital First Day* on 16th November, we delivered an online seminar to community partners on digital inclusion.

We also continued to build and participate in international networks of like-minded communities of practice, such as the *Digital Poverty Alliance* in the UK and the pan-European *DigComp CoP* and *DigiCo*.



## Creating Accessible Community Spaces

Throughout 2022 we continued to create accessible and inclusive educational community spaces by including the voices of learners in our communications, including press releases, social media, newsletters and fundraising events. Also, through our community partner network, by continuing to offer online and blended learning opportunities, and through our Community Employment scheme.

We were glad to be able to attend in-person events again to meet members of the public and spread the word about our courses and our unique approach. We attended events at the Technology University Dublin, Dublin City Learning Festival, South Dublin County Council Public Participation Network get-togethers and we also set up information stands in the Community Hub in The Square shopping centre.

## Community Partners

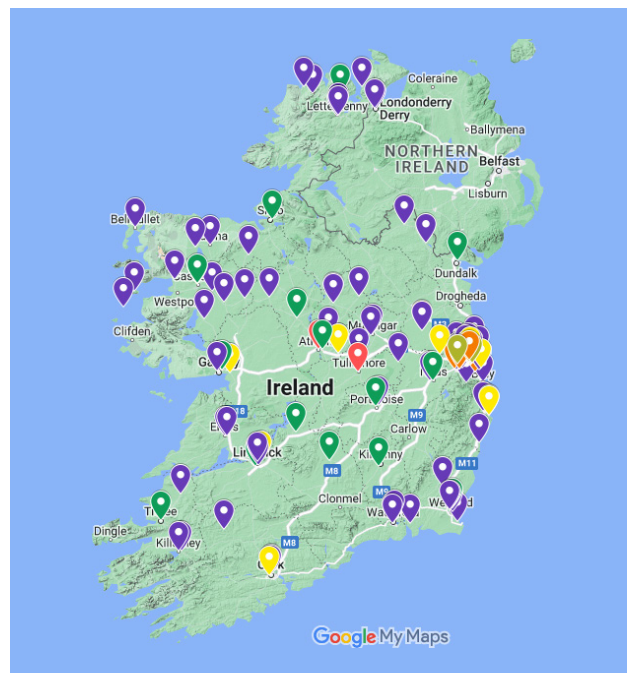
Through our network of 229 community partners, we continued to reach marginalised communities across the country with our various programmes and digital learning tools and resources.

Our community partners range from local community development groups to regional community training centres and national government bodies, such as the Education and Training Boards.

Our network of national and community partners helps ensure programmes are affordable and accessible to those furthest behind in remote, rural and under-served communities.

We provided integrated, community-based responses, which saw us continuing to fill regional gaps in FET provision by ensuring the accessibility of courses in remote, rural and underserved locations. We did this by offering the following services to our community partners: leadership, training, educational insights, community newsletters, seminars, and digital upskilling.

In turn, the community-based organisations provided a place where learners accessed the courses and modules they needed.



We gave access and training to community-based organisations, staff and learners through our **Digital Stepping Stones** assessment tool, **Skills to Succeed Academy** (digital skills for employment and the economy) and **Get Yourself Online** initiative (DigComp-based curricula) for FET/community education providers. We also supported our



community partners with our Technology Enhanced Learning programme, which upskills community educators on technological tools for learning, assistive technology and utilising Universal Design in Learning (UDL), so they can put them into practice to reduce barriers and improve inclusion.

An Cosán also became a founding member of a new Digital Network Ireland collective and delivered an online seminar for community partners as part of the inaugural Digital First Day on 17th November, which focused on rural connectivity.

## Community Employment

Thirty people benefitted from An Cosán's Community Employment (CE) Scheme in 2022, with each trainee using the opportunity to develop their skills and learning via on-the-job training, accredited internal and external courses, and external work placements.

30  
Community  
Employment  
participants

Five CE trainees started working towards QQI Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills, two QQI Level 5 Childcare, one QQI Level 6 Train the Trainer and one Literacy Skills. Some took part in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Scrum Master Training, or Personal Coaching.

Seven CE participants had progressed to either employment or further education by the end of the year.

The CE group is quite diverse and embraces different personalities and backgrounds, which has added to the team becoming stronger and each member freely communicating with each other for support and advice. This has improved teamwork and personal development skills among the team with each member showing more confidence by the day.



## Community Employment Voices

### Sineád Grogan

When I started on the An Cosán CE Scheme I was very nervous. I started as part of the hospitality team and, since then, my confidence has grown a lot and I have made new friends. I have also gained a lot of experience and training. I am now getting a lot of training in the finance department with the finance team. My supervisor is the most firm but fair boss. She looks out for her team, which is what, in my opinion, makes the CE team a great team to work with.

I am going to miss An Cosán dearly when my time is up on the scheme in 2023. I would highly recommend anyone to be a part of such a wonderful CE team at An Cosán.



## A Pathway to Employment

### Laura O' Brien

I was a CE Scheme employee in An Cosán for a year - from August 2021 to August 2022. I was studying Community Development online and I wanted to get experience in a community education setting. The CE Scheme provided an ideal situation for me to transition from one career path to another, to re-evaluate my skills and gain valuable experience.

The CE Scheme placed me in an environment where I was able to develop my confidence and it offered me a diverse range of duties and much needed training. I felt supported by my supervisor and was offered guidance and encouragement when needed. I also felt the benefit of being part of a wonderful team of people - both my CE team colleagues and the wider An Cosán employee community.

I have been very lucky: my perseverance and commitment paid off and I gained employment in the Adult Community Education department of An Cosán in 2022. I don't think I could have made this transition without participating in the CE Scheme. It gave me the time and space to reflect, gain experience and re-direct my career for the better.







# Influencing Systemic Change

## Influencing Public Policy

As Ireland's largest community education organisation, An Cosán continued to find ways to influence systemic change in 2022 with our CEO Heydi Foster continuing to drive our community education and digital inclusion advocacy, ensuring the voices of disadvantaged learners and our community partners were heard on the national stage.



Heydi's speaking engagements included taking part in an Economic and Social Research Institute / Microsoft roundtable discussion on the theme of technology and education. She used the opportunity to share

how An Cosán was making great strides towards bridging the digital divide, especially in the most marginalised communities around Ireland.

Heydi also welcomed the opportunity to share the effectiveness of our One Generation Solution at an end-of-year celebration Rethink Ireland organised for its awardees. Heydi spoke at our international 'Re-igniting Community-Based Higher Education' seminar in November.



We were pleased to welcome Minister for Social Protection and Community and Rural Development, Heather Humphreys TD, to our Jobstown centre in July. She heard first-hand from some of our learners, most of whom went on to enrol in Level 5 courses in the autumn, how the course had boosted their skills and confidence.

In September An Cosán wrote a letter to Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, in advance of the Budget to advocate and impress upon him the importance of resourcing the adult community education sector to support the delivery of the Government's Adult Literacy for Life 10-Year Strategy.



"We will continue to be a model for how to work in an inclusive way with marginalised communities across Ireland. We will work with and help shape the policy of our Government and our public representatives, so they understand the impact that this way of working has on people's lives and hear the voices of those it empowers."

**- An Cosán CEO Heydi Foster speaking at our 2022 International Women's Day Celebration**



## Active Citizenship

All of An Cosán's education provision – from Early Years through to Adult Community Education and University of the Third Age – enables and encourages women and children towards more active citizenship.

In 2022 we set up an Alumni Network to provide peer support for community leaders as well as refresher workshops to motivate network members to pursue active citizenship opportunities.

Creating the new roles of Employer Outreach Officer and Learning Support Officers and running Global Citizenship courses as well as Business Administration with Digital Skills employability workshops, work experience and internships, we also promoted active citizenship.

We also collaborated with Work Equal on an employability programme and we collaborated with Community Foundation Ireland and Beacheaire to research what works best for lone parents.

It is always encouraging to see our learners and graduates coming up with their own ideas and making a positive impact. Some of the learners on our Community Development course organised the planting of a Tree of Hope outside our Jobstown centre to tie in with National Suicide Awareness Month. The tree was unveiled by South Dublin

County Council Mayor, Emma Murphy, after a number of weeks of preparation by Manuella Killen and her classmates.

We were thrilled to hear that one of our graduates, Thembinkosi Malisa, had been nominated for two EY International Women's Day Awards. Thembinkosi, who has been working with EY in Galway since graduating from our Level 5 Business Administration With Digital Skills programme and who has since completed our Level 6 Personal and Professional Development Certificate as well, was nominated in the Person with Purpose category and shortlisted in the Rising Star category.

It is fantastic to see our learners and graduates go on to have influence and success in ways like this!

## Evidencing our Impact on People's Lives

We continued to build our national reach and strengthen connections in 2022, including with our 229 community partners, leading to greater awareness of An Cosán's unique, holistic model of education and our One Generation Solution approach.

Our Higher Education Authority research enhanced the standing and visibility of our community-based Adult, Further and Higher Education programmes and of our wraparound service provision among relevant stakeholders in the community education sector. The research report will be published in autumn 2023.

Some of our Level 6 Personal and Professional Development learners participated in an innovative Photovoice project in which they took photographs that showed the impact of adult community education on their lives. The Photovoice exhibition will be launched in the summer of 2023.

We also showcased the impact of our work by including learner and parent voices across our communications. During the year 18 learners and staff members undertook media training, 14 of whom had an opportunity to use their new skills and confidence to speak at an event, on video or on radio. Some also undertook interviews with newspaper journalists.

By sharing their personal stories, learners effectively demonstrated the very real impact An Cosán had had on their lives and amplified our key



'Thank you so much An Cosán for empowering me through learning and development and for creating an inclusive environment in which I was able to nurture and grow my skills'

- **Thembinkosi Malisa**



messaging. As well as having articles and interviews in national and local newspapers and magazines and interviews on national and local radio, we also featured on a number of other websites, including **SOLAS**, **AONTAS** and **Irish Tech News**.

Several of our learner ambassadors were given the opportunity to speak at our fundraisers. These events are a valuable means of raising the profile of An Cosán and of celebrating the achievements of our learners and graduates. At each event our Chair, Anna Durkan, and CEO, Heydi Foster, speak about our work transforming lives of women, families and communities. One or more of our ambassadors is



also invited to share their story of empowerment through education and how their experience with An Cosán has opened up new opportunities for them.

Paula Ryan from Tallaght and Rudo Chitseko, who is originally from Zimbabwe but has been living in Kerry since 2015, shared with the 320 guests at our **International Women's Day Lunch in The Shelbourne** how grateful they were that their experience of adult education with An Cosán had given them a more sustainable future.

**Samantha Dowdall** shared with the 100 golfers who took part in our **Golf Classic** at Powerscourt Golf Club how she greatly appreciated the welcoming and holistic nature of An Cosán's approach and how it had changed the trajectory of not only her life, but of her young daughter's too. Similarly, Korina Koler told the 300 guests at our **Winter Ball** that she felt "only the sky's the limit now". Her experience with An Cosán had enabled her and her three children to go from a life of hunger and near homelessness to one where she was enjoying a prestigious job as PA to the CEO of Rethink Ireland. QQI Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills programme, Korina was delighted to who secured the role of PA to the CEO of Rethink Ireland.

It was admirable to hear all four of our Learner Ambassadors share how the skills and confidence they gained with An Cosán not only opened up new and exciting opportunities for them, but also how it had enabled and encouraged them to volunteer and take on leadership roles in their local communities, thereby demonstrating our One Generation Solution in action.

## Awards

We were grateful that our innovative approach to community education and our pioneering digital inclusion work was recognised by our being selected as finalists in four awards in 2022. We were shortlisted in the following:

- Charities Institute Ireland's 'Charity Excellence Awards' – Best Corporate Charity Partnership (for our ongoing partnership with Accenture)
- Diversity in Tech Awards - Social Impact
- AONTAS STAR Awards - Third Level Access and Engagement
- Tallaght Person of the Year Award – Learning and Innovation

We were  
shortlisted for  
4 awards



"I got amazing support from An Cosán. There were times it was hard, so it was good to get support when I needed it – technical support and help with assignments. Because of

the supports, I never gave up. There was always someone to encourage me. And I greatly appreciated the financial supports. I wouldn't have been able to study without them.

An Cosán has been life-changing for me. I am a different person altogether now. My perspective on social issues is different; I give everyone a chance now. I listen to people's stories as they are.

We need to listen and understand instead of judging people. It's not the drugs, it's what happened to people before they started taking drugs. You have to be kind to everyone. That's the different me now.

"I want to give back to the community. I don't want to be just living; I want to make a difference. The reality is we live in communities, so we have to make them good places to be."

**- Rudo Chitseko, An Cosán BA graduate**



"An Cosán is like a home from home. It's very uplifting. No-one looks down at you; everyone accepts you the way you are. The additional supports, like the laptop loan scheme and the one-to-one mentoring,

have been really amazing. I wouldn't be able to do it without them."

"Thanks to An Cosán, I have a future. I have a good career ahead of me and my daughter has a good future ahead of her too. I include her when I am doing college work on the computer; that is empowering for her and encourages her too."

**- Samantha Dowdall, NFQ Level 5 Personal and Professional Development graduate currently enrolled on our BA in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development programme**

"An Cosán has impacted every aspect of my life in a positive way. It has empowered me and inspired me. It has taught me how to be a better person. I have more patience and empathy now. It's made our home a happier home and I am more involved in the community now.



"I availed of everything An Cosán offered me. The financial supports, the free Early Years' education and care for children, the one-to-one tutoring and mentoring, the laptop loan scheme, the support with digital skills, and the counselling. I couldn't believe everything I was offered."

**- Paula Ryan, who has completed six courses with An Cosán**



"I was a scared and hidden adult on the brink of homelessness before I enrolled with An Cosán.

The tutors were amazing. They cherished everyone's different backgrounds and treated everyone the same. They understood my skills and flaws, and they supported me through every stage of my transition to a new approach to life. I had never experienced such support from an educational institution.

My dreams have come true, thanks to An Cosán. I have since been hired by an amazing organisation, I am happy and content and I am a role model for my children."

**- Korina Koler, QQI Level 5 Business Administration with Digital Skills graduate**



# Making an Impact Through Storytelling





# An Cosán learners rewarded for commitment and dedication



**DEDICATION:** An Cosán graduates show off their certificates

TWENTY learners from An Cosán community education centre in Jobstown graduated with BA degrees at the Institute of Technology, Carlow's recent Learning Conference. The graduates were joined by their families and friends to celebrate their achievement. An Cosán is a community education provider, in partnership with the South East Technological University (SETU). The NQF Level 6 Certificate in Personal and Professional Development was created in response to a call from the Higher Education Authority in 2013 for

A BA in Applied Adult Education and Community Development, spoke about his journey to this point. "An Cosán continues to provide many people with the opportunity to find their own voice and into the world."

Irish in communities who might not otherwise have access to it at all with our own vision."

news@echo.ie 25th

# Innovating Community Health



**SUCCESS:** At the final talk in the Innovating Community Health series of Tallaght Centre (APCC) Tallaght are (from left): Aine Lynch, Director of Nursing, Tallaght University Hospital; Suzanne Kennedy, Intellectual Disability Liaison, Tallaght University Hospital; Prof Mary McCarron, Professor of Ageing & Intellectual

Disability. The series aims to promote the community health sector and its role in the future of health care.

# Seminar emphasises the key role of adult education

More than 100 learners, educators and practitioners attended



**TRANSFORMATIVE:** Delegates at An Cosán's Igniting Community-Based Higher Education Seminar

The seminar, which took place in the Russell Centre, Tallaght, saw the celebration of 50 adult learners who have engaged in a new flexible and digitally inclusive Higher Education programme developed by An Cosán and SETU. The NQF Level 6 Certificate in Personal and Professional Development was created in response to a call from the Higher Education Authority in 2013 for

consequences play out in terms of disadvantage, and a growing threat to

# Sensory equipment will benefit An Cosán's early years service

Three services are "absolutely delighted" to be awarded €6,000 through the Tallaght F



for the children with a goal of well-being for all.

18 news@echo.ie

# WINNERS ALL THE WAY!



Over 30 adult learners from An Cosán were recipients of awards



Irish's largest provider of community education is pledging to empower a further 20,000 people to transform their lives by 2030.

This will not only benefit adult learners, children and their families, but also their communities. An Cosán, which was founded 36 years ago to break the cycle of poverty for families living in west Tallaght, has already transformed the lives of over 20,000 people throughout the country through its unique model of education provision. This encompasses adult community education, online courses, early years' education and care, and a range of holistic support services. These include

news@echo.ie

# AN COSÁN COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROVIDER PLEDGES TO TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF A FURTHER 20,000 PEOPLE BY 2030

took place during the organisation's AGM at the Tallaght Centre, Tallaght. Chair of the Board of Directors, Anna Durkan, said, "We are delighted to share our new strategy. It 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."

world where everyone can access education to achieve their full potential."

"Our strategy positions us to promote inclusion by working with the most marginalised," she continued. "It empowers us to influence systemic change, whether that is directly through influencing government policy, or through encouraging our learners towards active citizenship and enabling them to influence factors that affect their lives."

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."

An Cosán offers a wide range of courses, including Access and Higher Education classes in Tallaght and online. Find more at [www.ancozan.ie](http://www.ancozan.ie) or email [courses@ancozan.ie](mailto:courses@ancozan.ie) or tel: 01 462 8488.

passive participants in our work, they are supported to be active citizens and agents of their own change.

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**Those glittering prizes**

individuals families

**#LifelongLearning**



## Becoming an Influential Voice in the Education Sector

As well as the events and speaking engagements already mentioned in this report, we hosted an international seminar and workshops in partnership with the South East Technological University (SETU) in November. More than 100 adult learners, educators and practitioners came together for our two-day 'Re-igniting Community-Based Higher Education' event.

The event, which took place in the Russell Centre, Tallaght, saw the celebration of the achievements of 50 adult learners who have engaged in a new flexible and digitally inclusive Higher Education programme developed by An Cosán in partnership with SETU.

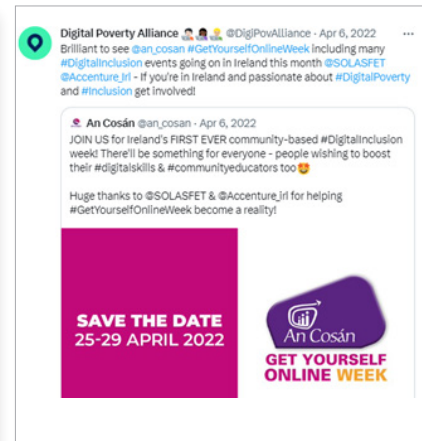
Our CEO Heydi Foster said the seminar was an "important milestone" in the organisation's linked partnership with SETU and a welcome opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the first awardees of the new Higher Education course, many of whom came from socio-economic groups under-represented in university settings, including lone parents and asylum seekers. "These are internationally recognised awards that will open doorways for learners and stand the test of time," she said.

Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson, Co-Executive Director of the Highlander Research and Education Center, USA said it was "an incredible honour and privilege" to learn with the lifelong learners of An Cosán, which she described as "a space that encourages people from every walk of life, from all over Ireland and all over the world, gather together for the sake of their personal and professional development."

"The work of adult education is life-changing and life-saving, powerful and to be valued and invested in, transforming lives and supporting democracy and the social good," she said. "In these challenging times, I want to emphasise the power and value of adult education, its capacity to transform lives and to support democracy and the social good."



# Online networking and advocacy






# Online networking and advocacy

**An Cosán** @an.cosan - Apr 26, 2022

'If your children see you learning, they will be happy to learn too,' our ambassador Selina McClean shares with @nearfm listeners how learning with @an.cosan has benefited not only herself, but her children too.

#GetYourselfOnline #DigitalInclusion #LifelongLearning




**An Cosán** @an.cosan - Apr 27, 2022

Just some of the smiles in our #Tallaght #community centre today from those who successfully completed the #DigitalSteppingStones checker we developed with @AccentureJr.

If you'd like to check your #digitalskills in 15 mins, head to [dgtalsteppingstones.ie](#)


#GetYourselfOnline



**An Cosán** @an.cosan - Apr 28, 2022

We were delighted to showcase today the #DigitalSkills checker [dgtalsteppingstones.ie](#) we developed with @AccentureJr to representatives from #AdultEducation and #CommunityEducation organisations


#GetYourselfOnline #DigitalInclusion



**An Cosán** @an.cosan - Apr 28, 2022

#DigitalSkills & resources are necessary for civic & cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning & access to essential services. They're critical to ensure that no one, & no community, is left behind' - @an.cosan CEO @HeydiFoster

#GetYourselfOnline #LeaveNoOneBehind




**Adult Learning IE** @EPALIE\_IE

We've partnered with @an.cosan for the #GetYourselfOnline campaign!

If you've missed it, we've got you covered 📖! Happy reading 📖 📖! 📖!

@Leargas @Jemma\_Leargas

[bit.ly/3PxrjX](#)




[epale.ec.europa.eu](#)  
Get Yourself Online, the Importance of Digital Equity - Part 1  
Get Yourself Online, the Importance of Digital Equity - Part 1

**An Cosán** @an.cosan

We were delighted to welcome visitors from 3 Finnish study centres - @SVNTYT, @MaastrichtU & @KokkolaU - on their recent visit to Dublin under #Erasmus+.


We look forward to further sharing about #LifelongLearning and #EmpowermentThroughEducation



**An Cosán** @an.cosan

Super place in the @IrishTimes with our CEO @HeydiFoster explaining how our @tomasolr learning courses funded by @LocalCo HSE are giving #AdultLearners the skills to return to #Education & the workforce >> [bit.ly/3Z8m5nK](#)

#LifelongLearning #DiscoverDevelopSucceed




[IrishTimes.com](#)  
Coca-Cola programme aims to support 2,000 young people in path to employ... YouthEmpowerment programme is aimed at women and at-risk youths

**An Cosán** @an.cosan

Are you tuned in? @DeoCrawley, @Proactiveness & @SonsDoherty on @nearfm talking about how An Cosán is equipping adults of all ages with the #digitalskills to fully participate in society

Listen online >> [nearfm.ie/livestream/](#)


#LifelongLearning #DigitalInclusion



**Heydi Foster** @HeydiFoster - Jul 25, 2022

Great excitement today as @an.cosan's expanding #DigitalInclusion Team meets in person for the first time! They are passionate about ensuring all adults have the #digitalskills necessary to participate fully in society.

#GetYourselfOnline #LeaveNoOneBehind #OneGenerationSolution




**Digital Inclusion**

Helping Ireland reach the EU target of at least 80% of adults with basic digital skills by 2030

**Heydi Foster** @HeydiFoster - Sep 15, 2022

Thrilled to be at @CITweets #CEA2022 with our partner @AccentureJr & members of @an.cosan Board & #DigitalInclusion Team!


Great to be celebrating our digital successes supported by @SOLASFET & the many achievements of #charities across Ireland 🇮🇪



**Diversity in Tech Awards** @DiversityTechAwards

Our finalists for the Social Impact Award are here! 🏆 It will celebrate a winner driving significant, positive change. Kindly sponsored by EPAM Systems we wish all the contestants the best of luck! #DITA22


@Access\_Earth, @an.cosan, @codeinstitute, Hatch, The Big Idea



**An Cosán** @an.cosan - Nov 21, 2022

"Holistic, transformative education is vital for realising #humanrights, An Cosán's recent collaboration with International Protection Applicants shows us this."


~ our #HigherEducation Lead @tomasolr speaking at the launch of @aontas's #WALL launch



**An Cosán** @an.cosan - Dec 20, 2022

A brilliant @SOLASFET report celebrating the transformative power of #CommunityEducation across Ireland, including our #DigitalInclusion work with @AccentureJr >> [bit.ly/3V8ACRL](#)

#GetYourselfOnline #LifelongLearning #ThisIsFET #LeaveNoOneBehind #OneGenerationSolution




Presented at the Charities Excellence Awards in the Capital Hotel Burlington, Belfast on 20th September 2022. An Cosán: Heydi Foster, Board of Directors

**An Cosán** @an.cosan

"Educate a woman and you educate the whole community"

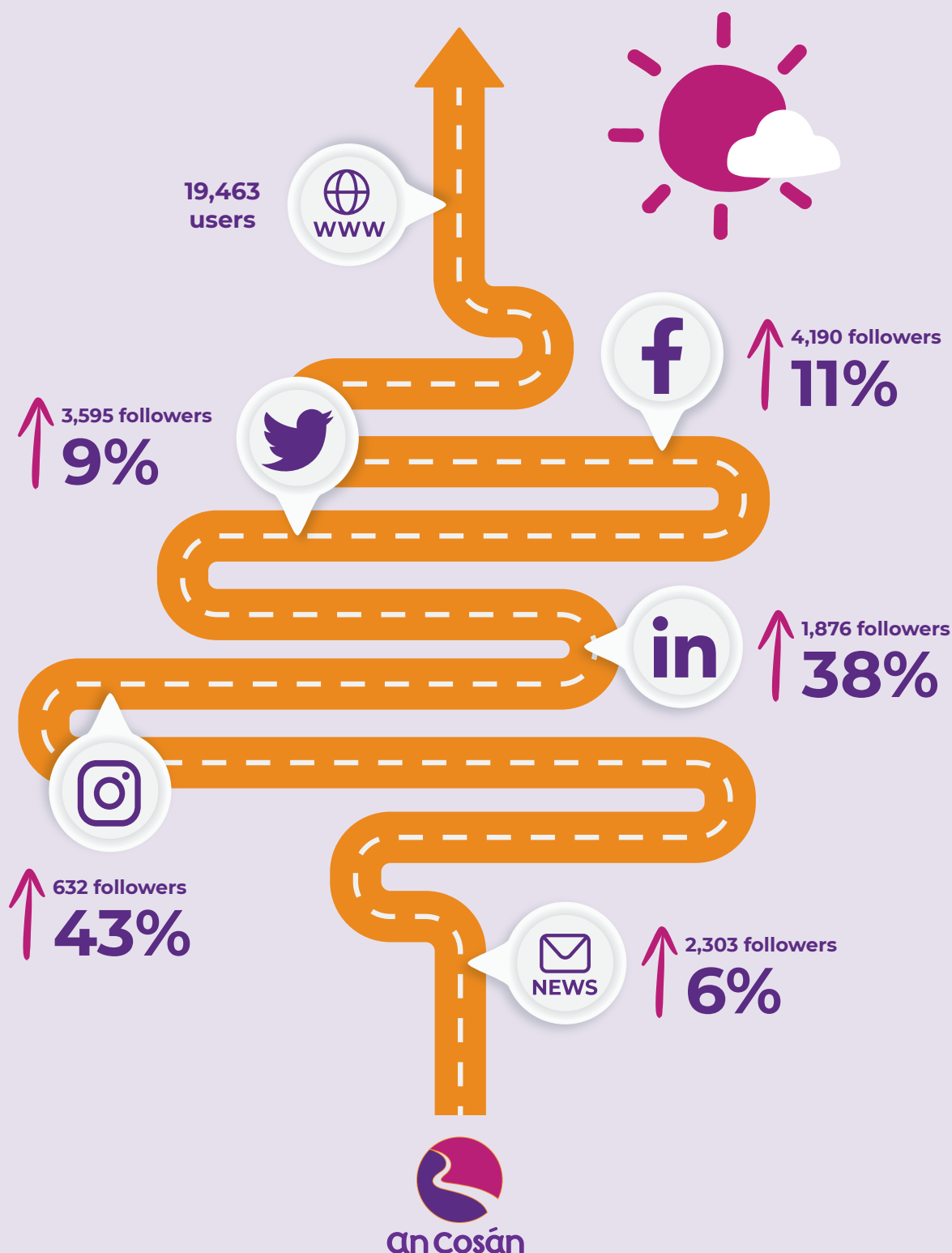
~ our CEO @HeydiFoster shares at @RethinkIreland event how An Cosán's #OneGenerationSolution to poverty is transforming the lives of women, families & communities across Ireland

#UnleashBehindFirst #LifelongLearning



# Our online presence

We continued to grow our online presence in 2022 by sharing a variety of engaging content. Our newsletter continued to prove an important means of communication with our community, corporate and state partners, as did Twitter and LinkedIn, while our website and Facebook and Instagram proved once again to be the best platforms for reaching current and potential learners, parents and other service users.





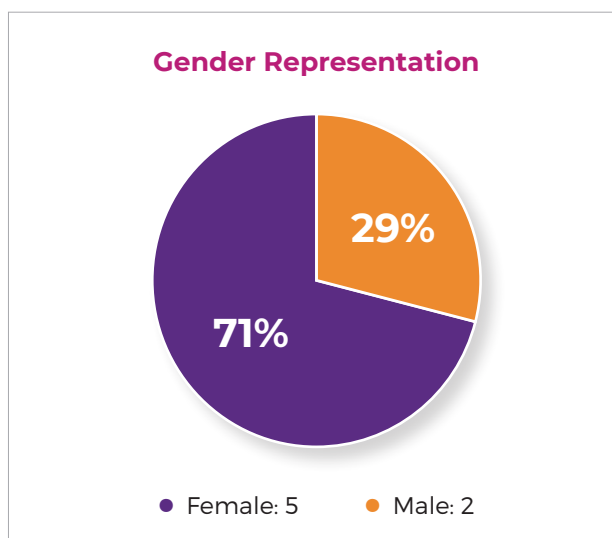
# Finance and Governance

## Governance

The Board was yet again delighted to approve that An Cosán is fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code (as submitted in the Annual Report to the Charities Regulator in October 2022). 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 staff team.

## Board of Directors

Board Member	Role	Appointed / Resigned
Anna Durkan	Chair	Continuing
Conal Henry	Vice Chair	Resigned 31-12-2022
Mairead Butler	Company Secretary	Continuing
Ger French	Director	Continuing
Bill Roche	Director	Continuing
Dee Kehoe	Director	Continuing
Siobhán Wall	Director	Continuing



## Attendance at Board Meetings in 2022

Number of Directors	% Attendance at Board Meetings 2022
2	100%
1	86%
1	71%
3	57%
7 Directors	

### Finance & Risk Committee

Member	Role	Appointed / Resigned
Mairead Butler	Chair	Continuing
Bill Roche	Director	Continuing
Siobhán Wall	Director	Continuing

### Early Years Working Group

Member	Role	Appointed / Resigned
Ger French	Chair	Continuing

### Members

Eileen Durkan  
Dara Hogan  
Brenda O'Malley Farrell

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, D24 R3PN.

### 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

### Auditors

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





## Finance

Thank you to our funders and supporters! Without you, we would not be able to make a difference in the lives of women, families and communities across Ireland.



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



## Support in Kind

We are hugely grateful to all of the companies and individuals who generously donated equipment, time, expertise, or service to An Cosán in 2022, including:



**Accenture** – Their donation of 35 laptops was invaluable in ensuring that every participant on our Business Administration with Digital Skills programme could avail of hands-on experience at anytime. This allowed learners to practise their digital skills, taking their learning from theory to practice.



**Bank of America** ran a weekly work experience session for seven weeks, which gave our Business Administration with Digital Skills learners a valuable insight into the world of work, helping them in their preparation to secure sustainable employment.



**Boru Press** donated a selection of books that are proving invaluable in supporting adult learners on our Community Care and Early Learning and Care programmes. Reading a wide selection of texts is an invaluable part of any education programme.



**Children's Books Ireland** - A donation of 160 books ensured Santa Claus was able to give each and every child across our seven Early Years' services a gift of a book at Christmas time. He knows that encouraging reading at home is an important aspect of our Early Years' education programme!



**EPALE** supported our Digital Inclusion work through sponsorship of elements relating to our Get Yourself Online Week webinar and our Digital Champions.



**EPIC – The Irish Emigration Museum** welcomed our Ukrainian learners and their children and provided a free tour around the museum. Visits like these provide essential opportunities for Ukrainians to learn about our culture and help them feel more settled in Ireland.



**Rethink Ireland** provided support in kind as part of the employability programme funded through the Mná na hÉireann Recovery Fund. This gave participants on our Business Administration with Digital Skills learners the opportunity to gain valuable work experience.



**Robbie Reynolds Photography** was responsible for the fantastic selection of photos at our Further and Higher Education Awards Ceremony in September, many of which appeared across local media.



## Fundraising Highlights

We are immensely grateful to everyone who supported our fundraising events in 2022 by buying tickets, through sponsorship, or by donating an item for raffle or auction. It was the first year since 2019 that we were able to hold all three of our major fundraisers face-to-face.

Our **International Women's Day** Lunch, Golf Classic and Winter Ball are invaluable ways of raising unrestricted funding and we were thrilled that €84,000 was raised in this way in 2022.

It was fantastic to welcome an in-person return to our flagship fundraiser, our International Women's Day lunch, which was centred around the United Nations theme of 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow'. We celebrated our feminist ethos – how providing a wraparound blanket of support, a safe space where women and little ones feel respected, nurtured and cared for, ensures all generations can flourish and go on to achieve great things. We were also inspired by our panel of learners who shared how their lives had been transformed through their involvement with An Cosán. We celebrated women, had great fun and raised €22,000 of unrestricted funds!

A firm favourite in An Cosán's fundraising calendar is our annual **Golf Classic** at Powerscourt Golf Club where fun and competition are in abundance in equal measure. Once again, An Cosán's faithful friends supported us in raising a fantastic €19,000!

Our **Winter Ball** at The Shelbourne proved to be our fundraising jewel in the crown, raising a magnificent €43,000 to ensure we could continue our work with communities across Ireland. It was great to reconnect with friends, family and lifelong supporters of An Cosán in a night of recognition, celebration and dancing!





# International Women's Day





# Golf Classic





# Winter Ball





We are also grateful to our supporters who came up with different and imaginative ways to raise funds for us in 2022, including:

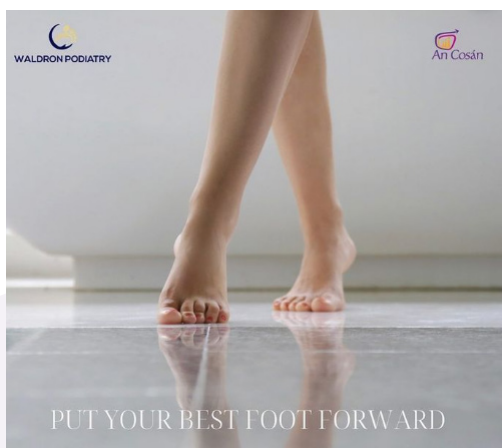
**Four Accenture cycling enthusiasts**, calling themselves *Team Pedal Warriors*, who raised €2,850 by taking part in a 200 kilometre sponsored cycle across the UK.



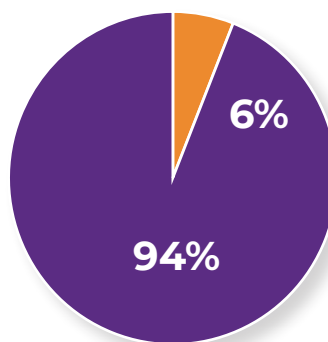
Three of **An Cosán Early Years Jobstown** staff members – Lorraine Quinn, Sally Hartnett and Aga Krzyzanowska – who raised invaluable funds for our Early Years' services by braving the elements to take part in the **VHI Women's Mini Marathon**.



**Saoirse Waldron of Waldron Podiatry** who generously supported us throughout the year. By offering her podiatry services free of charge one Saturday each month and encouraging her clients to make a donation to An Cosán, she raised almost €2k.



**Total Income 2022**  
Unrestricted / Restricted Funding  
€3,976,466



- Unrestricted: €233,743
- Restricted: €3,742,723

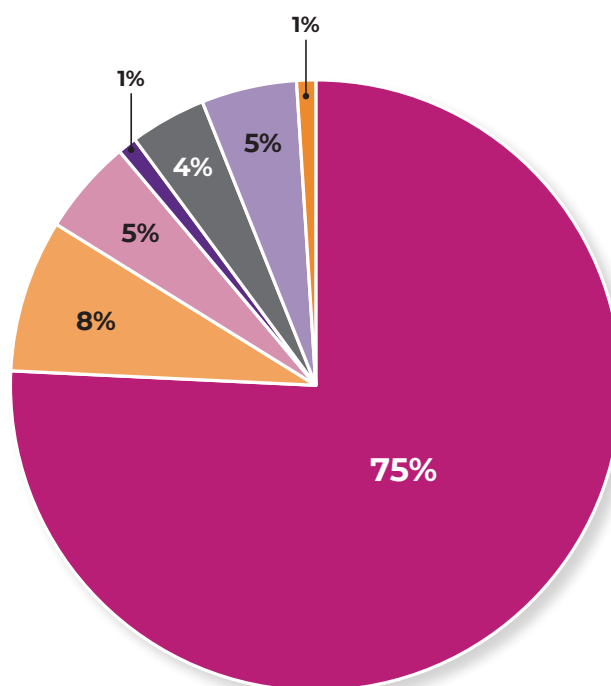
## Statement of Financial Activities

for the year ended 31 December 2022

	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	Total 2022 €	Total 2021 €
<b>Total Income</b>	233,743	3,742,723	<b>3,976,466</b>	4,398,608
<b>Total expenditure</b>	118,489	3,744,433	<b>3,862,922</b>	3,635,302
<b>Net Income</b>	115,254	(1,710)	<b>113,544</b>	763,306
<b>Reserves</b>	309,962	1,326,719	<b>1,636,681</b>	1,523,137

### Total Income 2022

€3,976,466



- State: €2,997,764      ● Donations & Legacies - Private & Corporate: €332,036
- Donations & Legacies - Fundraising Activities: €196,165
- Donated Services "Support in Kind": €37,578      ● Learner Fees: €154,374
- Early Years Education & Care Fees: €203,789      ● Other: €54,760



## Financial Review and Reserves

An Cosán has had a modest year financially of which we are very proud. We have navigated the post Covid-19 horizon, where €629,000 of exceptional income had been received in the prior year from pandemic support State funding streams. Overall, this resulted in a reduction in Government funding of 12% from the prior year. We have also navigated ever growing energy and inflationary costs and have achieved a commendable surplus of €113,544 in 2022.

During 2022 we were happy to receive notification of an ongoing 4% increase applied to our TUSLA funding and have maintained generous core and programme funding from SOLAS. Dublin & Dún Laoghaire Education & Training Board (DDLETB) have also maintained funding levels. These core funding streams allow the organisation to plan and budget with a reasonable level of reassurance and visibility on future funding and help stabilise the financial and organisational capacity of the organisation.

A further development in helping An Cosán to plan and prepare for the future was the excellent news of our first multi-annual core funding from the Department of Social Protection under the Community Services programme. This funding stream was approved for a five-year period and we hope this will encourage other Government departments to fund the not-for-profit sector in such a respectful and prudent manner.

Our Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026 was launched in 2022. Our first strategic goal is to Strengthen Our Core Services. Re-investment of restricted funding in our learners, parents, children and our communities was paramount in setting about to achieve this goal and is reflected by the break-even financial position achieved under our restricted funding in 2022.

This marries with our newly revised Reserves Policy, which clearly states that re-investment in core service delivery and in building organisational capacity to achieve our enabling goals are the priorities for the foreseeable future. It also states that it is the intention of the Board to build small sustainable unrestricted surpluses gradually over time in order to grow our unrestricted reserves. As is the case in 2022, the portion of the overall surplus achieved that relates to unrestricted funding is €115k. This therefore grows the unrestricted balance from €195k to €310k in line with the ambition of our policy.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to the long-term supporters of An Cosán; friends, learners, past and current funders and, of course, our colleagues who organise, attend and support in both financial and non-financial ways to make our fundraising events the successful, informative, impactful, enjoyable and profitable events that they are. In 2022 we were thrilled to be able to return to hosting an in-person International Women's Day Lunch, which has always been our flagship fundraiser. Also, our two other main fundraisers, our Golf Classic and Winter Ball, which have contributed in full to the commendable unrestricted surplus of €115k that we have achieved.

The pro-bono support in kind that we have received throughout 2022 from friends, individuals, corporate and philanthropic funders amounted to €37,578. These donated goods and services prove invaluable to An Cosán and cross many areas of support e.g. prizes for raffles and auctions, laptops for learners, books for children, guest speakers and non-cash supports from various funders.

The exceptional funding received in 2021 (noted above) and the commendable unrestricted surplus achieved in 2022 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.

Total reserves at the end of the financial year are €1,636,681 (2021: €1,523,137), of which €1,326,719 (2021: €1,328,429) is restricted and €309,962 is unrestricted (2021: €194,708).

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 and Family Support.

For 2023, the value of three months' operational expenses equates to approximately €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 €309,962 at year ended 31 December 2022, we have a future target of €630,038 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 is noted in our Reserves Policy.

As part of our recent organisational re-design, two 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 2022

	2022 €	2021 €
<b>Tangible assets</b>	<b>866,506</b>	919,531
<b>Current Assets</b>	<b>1,385,840</b>	1,376,084
<b>Creditors (amounts falling due within one year)</b>	<b>(570,380)</b>	(719,552)
<b>Net Current Assets / (Liabilities)</b>	<b>815,460</b>	656,532
<b>Creditors (amounts falling due after more than one year)</b>	<b>(45,285)</b>	(52,926)
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>1,636,681</b>	1,523,137
<b>Income Funds</b>		
Restricted Funds	<b>1,326,719</b>	1,328,429
Unrestricted funds	<b>309,962</b>	194,708
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>1,636,681</b>	1,523,137



# Final Feedback



## ‘Education has the potential to change your life’

‘When I started with An Cosán, I was living in Kerry in a direct provision centre. It was a very challenging environment, but I enjoyed studying with An Cosán and meeting new people. Most of my fees were paid for with a grant; An Cosán helped us to access the grants. I also got counselling support, and a laptop grant.

‘I really want to play a part in bringing change to people who are faced with stumbling blocks, and I’m now working in Peter McVerry Trust’s stabilisation centre in Phibsborough.

‘It’s never too late to return to education. It’s never too late to go out there and set the world on fire. We can do anything through hard work. Education has the potential to change your life.’

- *Njabuliso Moyo, BA in Applied Addiction Studies & Community Development graduate.*

## ‘With the support of An Cosán, it has been achievable’

‘When I started off doing personal development with An Cosán, I never thought I would end up one day doing a Level 7. Now I’ve finished my first year of a BA degree. It’s been a bit of a journey, considering I went straight from Level 5 to Level 7 but, with the support of An Cosán and all the people here, it has been achievable.

‘I’m absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to avail of this. I love it here at An Cosán. The whole class gets on so well. The classes are mostly online, which is handy, but it’s good to meet in-person too for our face-to-face workshops. It’s been really enjoyable and now I’m looking forward to Year 2.’

- *Debbie Byrne, BA in Leadership and Community Development learner.*



## ‘I know my children are getting the best care’

‘Both my children are very happy at An Cosán St Catherine’s service. From the moment you walk in the door, the staff are very warm and welcoming and are very approachable about any questions you may have.

‘I know my children are getting the best care. I can see how happy they are when they talk about the different activities they do. I notice how much they have come along since they both started. It puts my mind at ease to know that they are getting the time and attention to learn and develop in a relaxed and fun environment.’

- *Nikita, Early Years St Catherine’s parent.*



# Lifelong learning creates brighter futures for everyone









# Investing in women and children is investing in breaking the cycle of poverty

## Donations

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

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

If our vision and mission align with your own, we would ask you to consider setting up a regular donation of an amount that works for you.



**Every supporter  
makes a difference ...  
the more supporters  
we have, the bigger an  
impact we can have**



**Scan this code  
to donate online**

*'I am so grateful to An Cosán for the financial supports. I wouldn't have been able to return to education without them. I will always be grateful to An Cosán for helping me turn my life around – not just for me, but for my kids too' – 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?*

**When you leave An Cosán a legacy, you don't just leave a line in your will  
You leave a gift of HOPE**



# Empowerment Through Education



'An Cosán is a special place with very special people who are making a significant impact on peoples' lives in the most positive and nurturing way. I will always be deeply grateful to you all.'

- Dolores O'Sullivan, An Cosán graduate 2022



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