

Dublin City Libraries

Library Literacy Champion Programme

Handbook
2023



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

Leabharlanna
Libraries



Adult
Literacy
for Life

NALA

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Welcome

Welcome to the Dublin City Libraries Literacy Champion Programme, facilitated by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and funded by the Adult Literacy For Life Collaboration and Innovation Fund 2023. Thank you for your commitment to lifelong learning and literacy.

The programme will help you deepen your understanding of adult literacy and numeracy and to explore how you can be a literacy champion within your role at the library.

The six sessions will cover:

1. Raising awareness of literacy
2. Supports available from Dublin City Library, City of Dublin Education and Training Board (ETB) and NALA
3. Using plain English (2 sessions)
4. Using literacy friendly approaches in the library

What is a literacy champion?

A **literacy champion** in the workplace can:

- begin **conversations** about literacy to reduce stigma and embarrassment;
- promote **literacy friendly approaches**, such as using plain English;
- offer limited **literacy support** (if appropriate and where possible); and
- **promote** literacy and lifelong learning opportunities.

Introduction and aims

NALA is delighted to facilitate this literacy champion programme.

Overall aim

The overall aim of the six sessions is to share knowledge and help you to become a literacy champion in your workplace.

Workshop aims and objectives

Workshop	Date and Time	Venue	Objectives
1: Pre-programme Literacy Awareness Training	Thursday 7 September 2.30 - 3.30	Online	• To give a brief overview of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs in Ireland • Supporting you to build the foundations of good adult literacy work • To signpost adult literacy supports • To provide information about the upcoming literacy champion programme
2: Literacy Awareness Training	Thursday 21 September 2:00 - 4:00	Pearse Street Library	• Hear from adult literacy learners about the experience and impact of unmet literacy needs on adults in Irish society • Identify causes of literacy needs and barriers to using the library • Identify where you can refer people for literacy supports in Dublin. • To begin identifying some changes you might like to make as a result of the course.

3: Plain English Training	Training Group One: Session 1 Tuesday 10 October 2:00 - 4.30	Online	• Know what plain English is and be able to identify what makes material difficult to read and understand; • Write and present information using plain English guidelines; • Improve the language, structure and design of their documents and websites.
	Training Group One: Session 2 Thursday 17 October 2:00 - 4.30		
	Training Group Two: Session 1 Tuesday 12 October 2:00 - 4.30		
	Training Group Two: Session 2 Thursday 19 October 2:00 - 4.30		
4: Using a Literacy Friendly Approach workshop	Thursday 23 November 2:00 - 4:00	Pearse Street Library	• Show how you can use a literacy friendly approach • Give you skills and confidence to use literacy-friendly practices and tips • Look at how you can promote and support literacy friendly approaches • Create a goal for how you would like to use what you've learned
5: Follow-Up / Feedback session	Thursday 14 December 2:00 - 4:00	Pearse Street Library	• Reviewing how a literacy friendly approach is working in practice • Exploring putting plain English into practice • Discuss being a literacy champion • Identify follow on actions and supports

Purpose and expectations

Think about why you are here today and what you want from this programme.

Think about these questions.



You can jot down some answers if you like.

1. Why are you attending this programme?

2. What do you want from this programme?

What do I want for myself?

What do I want for others?

3. Any other points you would like to note.

My experiences

Can you think of a time when you came across a literacy, numeracy or digital literacy need?

This could be in your personal or professional life.



You can jot down some examples.

A large graphic consisting of four rounded squares arranged in a 2x2 grid. In the center of the grid is a circular icon containing a line drawing of an open book with a pencil resting on it, and four arrows pointing outwards from the book.

Definition of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are life skills that allow us to take part in, and make sense of, the world.

NALA defines literacy as:

- listening and speaking;
- reading and writing;
- using numbers; and
- using everyday technology to communicate, to build relationships, to understand information and make informed choices.



Literacy includes more than the technical skills of communications. It's also about the personal, social, emotional and economic parts of our lives.

Literacy increases the opportunity for individuals, families and communities to reflect on their life, explore new possibilities and make changes.

Like life, definitions change and our understanding of literacy changes. The literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills we need for life change all the time, and will continue to change.

A beginner reader is not a beginner thinker.

Literacy needs are not about intelligence.

Literacy in everyday life: socially situated

Literacy as a social practice



We use different literacies for different areas of our lives. For example, health literacy is about being able to understand information about our health and follow instructions for treatment when we are unwell.

The ways we use literacy can be very different. For example, we use our literacy skills talking to family in a WhatsApp group, doing a college course, playing sports in a club, or when we are using public services like the library.

If a person needs to develop confidence and skills in some parts of literacy, it does not mean that they have difficulty with all of the basics. Equally, if a person has a qualification, it does not always mean that they have high levels of literacy. Some will have left school confident about their reading and maths skills but find that changes in everyday life make their skills inadequate as the literacy and numeracy demanded by society constantly changes.

Some adults who have not used their literacy for a number of years lose confidence and skills.

Literacy is like a muscle: use it or lose it.



Supporting literacy needs

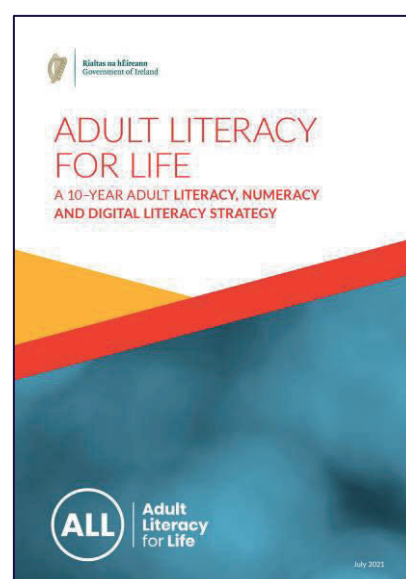
There is an increasing awareness of the need for strong literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills in today's society. We use these skills in many different ways for different situations we face. Adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs can often struggle with accessing and engaging with services. For example, filling in a form or booking an appointment online may be a challenge.

Literacy is one of the most important skills involved in reaching library users and in making the most of the talents of the staff in any organisation. With one in six (18%) adults (aged 16 to 65) struggling to read and understand everyday text and one in four adults (25%) having difficulty doing basic calculations, library users may not be using services effectively or efficiently.

Many organisations are more aware of this now and are looking at how best to support users and customers with literacy needs to access their services. One way is by using a literacy friendly approach.

The **Adult Literacy for Life Strategy** is a 10-year cross-Government, cross-economy and cross-society approach to

“address evidenced unmet needs in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in the adult population in Ireland to ensure full economic and social participation”.



Using a literacy friendly approach

Using a literacy friendly approach means:

- being **aware** of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs,
- **taking account** of these needs,
- **removing literacy related barriers**

It will mean that library users:

- understand and access your services,
- communicate effectively with services, in different ways,
- take part in consultations,
- receive support to help them carry out a necessary task, and
- be treated fairly.

A literacy friendly approach benefits everyone and in particular supports adults with literacy needs who may struggle with accessing essential services.

Contact Information for City of Dublin ETBs September 2023

Note: This list of City of Dublin ETB contacts was prepared for Dublin City Library Staff involved with the Library Literacy Champion training. The Adult Education Service (AES) listed beside each library is the one for that area.

Libraries	Contact Name	Adult Education Service	Contact number(s)
Ballyfermot	Catherine Twomey	Community Education Facilitator D10	0871173753
Ballymun	Clare Campbell	Ballymun	01 8623834 /086 0664749
Cabra	Catherine Smyth	Cabra	0860612062
Central Library, Ilac Centre	Joyce Gough/Anne Stone	Parnell Square East	087 0612149 / 01-8147930 / 01-8147902
Charleville Mall	Joyce Gough/Anne Stone	Parnell Square East	087 0612149 / 01-8147930 / 01-8147902
Coolock	Leah Skipton	Coolock	018487172
Dolphin's Barn	Jennifer Stuart	Crumlin College	014547054
Dolphin's Barn	Sian Crowley	Warrenmount, South Inner-City Dublin	0860358416
Donaghmede	Breda Hayes	Kilbarrack (KLEAR)	0860358417 / 018036238
Drumcondra	Clare Campbell	Ballymun	01 8623834 /086 0664749

Drumcondra	Joyce Gough/Anne Stone	Parnell Square East	087 0612149 / 01- 8147930 / 01- 8147902
Finglas	Orna Fynes	Finglas	0860612532
Kevin Street	Denise Shannon	South Inner-City Dublin	086 103 7904
Kevin Street	Sian Crowley	Warrenmount, South Inner-City Dublin	0860358416
Pearse Street	Denise Shannon	South Inner-City Dublin	086 103 7904
Raheny	Breda Hayes	Kilbarrack (KLEAR)	0860358417 / 018036238
Rathmines	Denise Shannon	South Inner-City Dublin	086 103 7904
Ringsend	Denise Shannon	South Inner-City Dublin	086 103 7904
Terenure	Jennifer Stuart	Crumlin College	014547054
Walkinstown	Jennifer Stuart	Crumlin College	014547054

If a learner lives closer to a different service please feel free to contact that service instead.

Adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs

The 2012 adult literacy survey results show that:



1 in 6 adults find everyday text, such as a bus timetable or medical instructions, hard to read and understand.



1 in 4 adults struggle with everyday maths, such as working out a discount or dividing up a bill.



4 in 10 adults struggle with basic digital tasks such as looking up a website or sending an email.

This means that **18%** of adults (aged 16 to 65) are at or below level 1 of literacy – this is around 521,000 people.

This means that **25%** of adults (aged 16 to 65) are at or below level 1 of numeracy – this is around 754,000 people.

This means **42%** of adults (aged 16 to 65) are at or below level 1 to use technology to solve problems and do tasks – this is 1.2 million people.

Local Adult Literacy Services

- 60,000 students attended group or one-to-one classes in 2022.
- Free classes are delivered by trained tutors through the **16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs)**.



Some causes of literacy needs

There are many reasons why adults have literacy needs. Most of them are because of inequality in society.

Digital and media 	Educational 	Family 
• Unequal access to computers and internet • Limited education, literacy and digital literacy skills • Lack of confidence and fear of using technology • Confused about technology leaving some people feeling excluded and leading to a lack of confidence • Technology changes all the time leaving many people behind • Poor or limited computer and technology supports for adults	• Unequal education system • Poor school attendance due to lack of proper resources, health, cultural, inadequate housing support • Being labelled as 'lacking in ability' • Inadequate learning supports available • Lack of literacy supports or focus across school work • Teaching methods and content did not suit the student	• Parents and grandparents didn't get support for their own literacy needs • Parents have limited time, finances, housing and health support. • Lack of proper support in good time for families in need • Parents don't feel confident supporting their children's learning and development • Inadequate resourcing of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes for parents

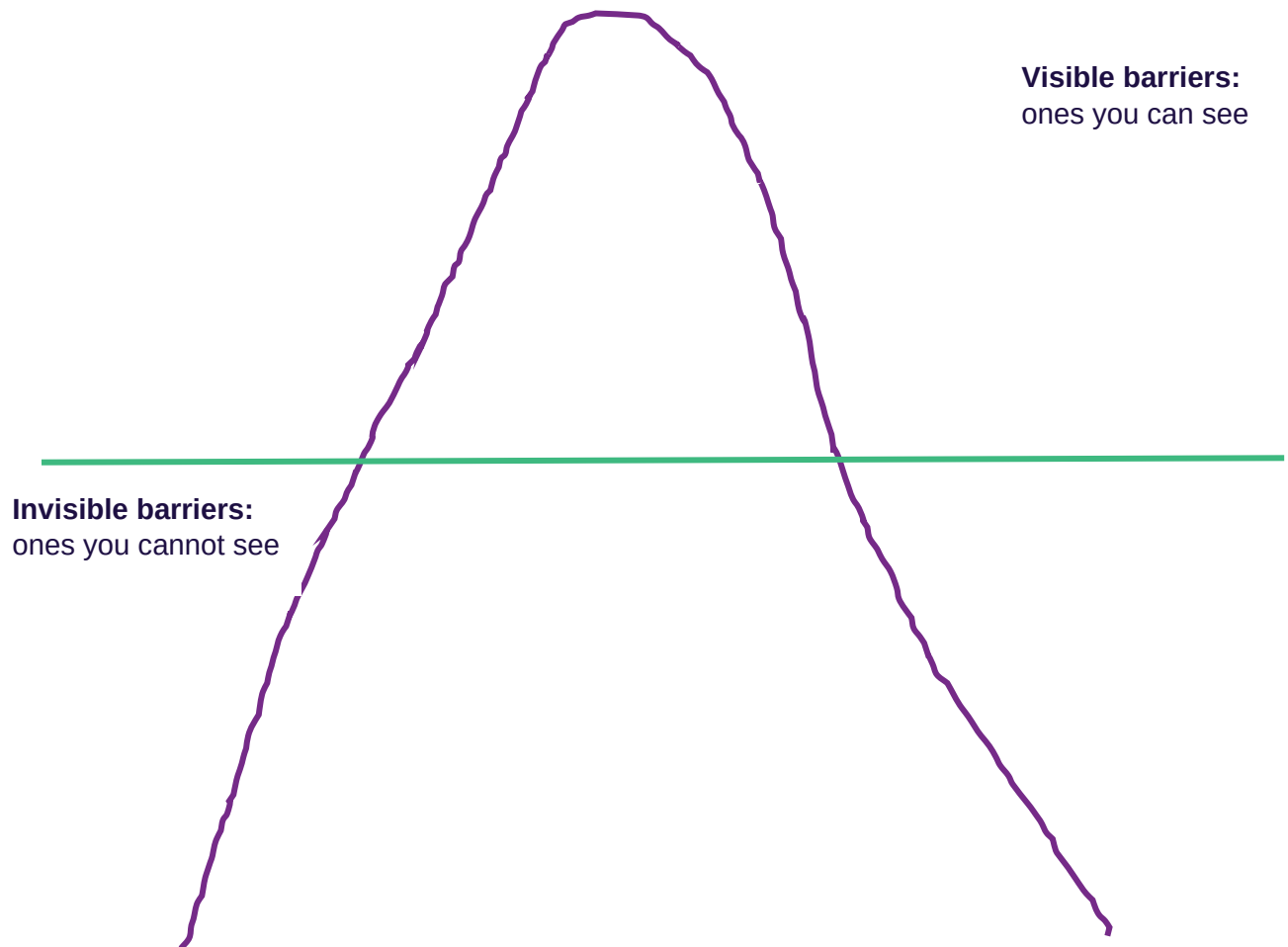
Some causes of unmet literacy needs

Physical and psychological 	Social and economic 
• Not enough systems of support for those with hearing, speech and sight difficulties • Unaddressed childhood illnesses • Poor assessment system and early intervention for children with specific learning needs such as dyslexia and dyscalculia • Lack of proper care and support for mental health and wellbeing	• Big gap between people who have enough money and people that don't. • Lack of money for education, books, computers and other materials among families living in poverty • Housing issues • Parents had to work a lot and not able to help with homework. • Children not going to school due to lack of resources, inadequate healthcare, illness • Lack of free childcare to enable adults to return to education to develop their literacy skills

Barriers to using the library



What are some of the barriers to using the library for adults with unmet literacy needs?



Think about what would support adults with unmet literacy needs to overcome these barriers

Principles of good adult literacy work

Think about these questions.



You can jot down some answers below.

1. What do think about when you hear 'adult literacy work'?

2. From your experience, what would you say principles of good adult literacy work are?

3. Any other points you would like to note.

Principles of good adult literacy work

Adult literacy work in Ireland is based on a belief that effective learning builds on the wealth of life experience that adults bring to their work on literacy development. Adult literacy learning is an active and expressive process. Students have the right to explore their needs and interests, set their own goals and decide how, where and when they wish to learn.

Adult literacy work is based on a philosophy of adult education which is concerned with personal development and social action.



Adult literacy learning is an active and expressive process. Students have the right to explore their needs and interests, set their own goals and decide how, where and when they wish to learn.

Adult literacy work respects different beliefs, cultures and ways of being. An ethical code of trust and confidentiality underpins all aspects of the work.



Students' knowledge and skills are vital for the effective organisation of adult literacy work. Students should have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of provision.

Adults learn best when the decision to return to learning is their own and the environment is supportive, relaxed and friendly.



Tips for responding sensitively

It is important to respond sensitively to someone who has low confidence in their reading, writing, maths or digital skills. This can make a huge difference to people especially if they feel embarrassed or ashamed and are nervous of 'being exposed'.

The Do's and Don'ts

Do	Don't
• Be understanding, sensitive and non-judgemental • Remind the person that what they say is in confidence • Where possible, make time to be supportive • Use plain English when speaking and writing • Give the person plenty of opportunity to ask questions	• Use jargon • Make assumptions • Suggest someone needs to 'learn to read' • Lose patience or shout



Can you think of other ways to respond sensitively?

Reflections

Think about these questions.



You can jot down some answers if you like.



1. What did you think of the exercises you've just done?

2. What will you take away from these exercises?

3. What would you like to learn more about?

Roles and responsibilities



What do you think it means to be a literacy champion?

Roles	Responsibilities

The role in action – what does it look like?

What can you do?

Support conversations about literacy which reduces embarrassment and fear	Offer limited literacy support (functional, not personal)
Promote literacy and learning opportunities	Promote literacy friendly approaches such as using plain English



What supports do you need to be a literacy champion?

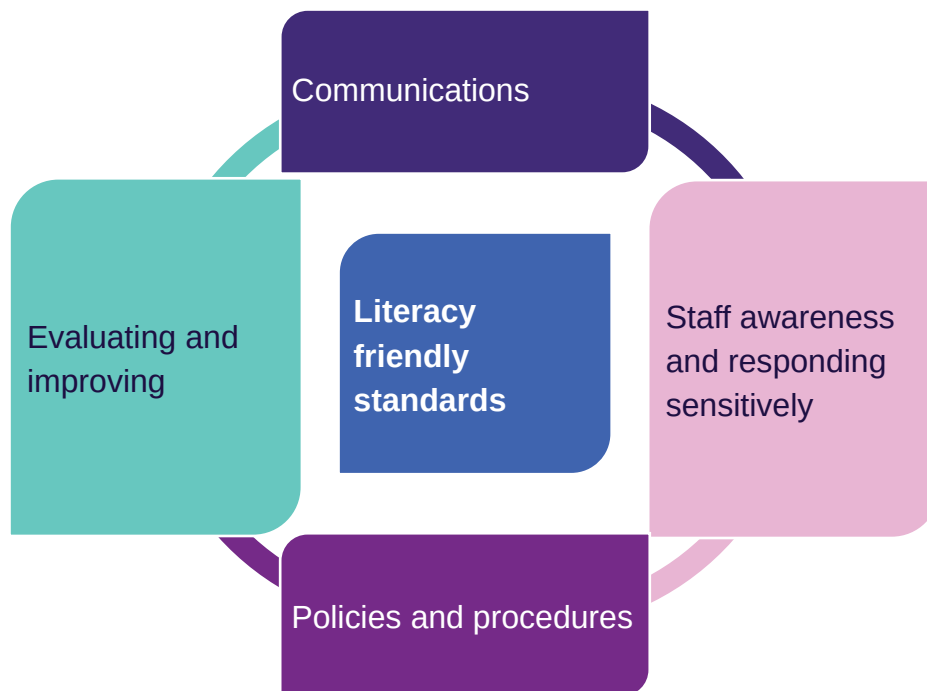


Jot down what contacts you need.

Putting the learning into practice – my goal

1. Brainstorm:

Are there any areas of my work that I could make a change to be more literacy friendly?



2. My goal

What one literacy friendly goal would I like to focus on for my work? Be as detailed as possible.

Consider:

- Can I target an existing pain point for service users who might have literacy needs?
- Is there a small change that would make a big impact?

My goal

Action steps

3. Supports

What will help you with this goal?

4. Success

How will you know you have reached it?

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy and numeracy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice, providing online learning courses, providing a tutoring service and by lobbying for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

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National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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Adult Literacy is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union.