**“Building a grassroots Learner Voice: Using the AONTAS toolkit to develop Local Learner Forums”**

**October 26th Ashling Hotel 9:30-2pm.**

**Overview:**

Adult Learners’ Forum of Ireland (ALFI)

Following on from the first meeting of the ALFI in 2010, AONTAS is bringing learners together to see how we can build a grassroots learner voice that will support a sustainable national voice. At present there is a highly successful learners’ forum in Limerick City and we have been working with them to develop a toolkit to support and encourage other learners to develop their own local structures.

**What will this meeting aim to do?**

1. To update learners on the work of AONTAS since the last Meeting.
2. To introduce the idea of local learner forums
3. To give learners the information they need to start setting up their own local learner forum and launch the toolkit “Hearing Adult Learners’ Voices”
4. To inspire learners that local forums can and do work
5. To see the developments in Ireland as part of a Global Vision for Learners’ Voices
6. To see the value of participation and the strength of a collective voice in Irish society
7. To hear the views of learners in relation to local learner forums
8. To set out what needs to happen, from a learner perspective and from the perspective of AONTAS, to have learner forums act to be the Voice of Adult Learners

**Who is this meeting for?**

Any adult learner who is interested in seeing how their voice can be heard and are looking for ways to organize locally to build a local learner voice. Learners from all backgrounds, involved in any form of adult and community education are welcome to attend (but spaces are limited).

**Why attend?**

* Hear about adult learners’ forums
* Learn about what a forum does from the Limerick City Adult Learners’ Forum
* Meet and Learn from other learners from across the country
* Learn from international expert on Learner Forums and one of the founders of the Global Learners Network, John Gates
* Learn about the AONTAS toolkit to develop Learner Forums
* Hear about participation in society from John Lonergan, former Governor of Mountjoy Prison

**Agenda**

9.30 **Registration**

10.00 **Issues and Actions**

Introduction: Una Buckley, Adult Learner and former AONTAS Executive Committee member

Overview of the day and setting the context: Berni, AONTAS

**How Learner Forums Come together: the AONTAS toolkit**

Damien Walshe, AONTAS

**Why Learner Forums?**

Experience of a local learner forum- what does it mean and what it does: Limerick City Adult Learners’ Forum

Keynote Speaker: John Gates, Adult Learner from the Welsh Adult Learners’ Forum and Global Learner Forum

11.05 ***Coffee break***

11:25 **Discussion session**

Responding to the inputs and discussing the concept of Local Learner Forums and what needs to happen next to develop learner voices across the country.

12:45 **Feedback**

1:35 **Keynote Address:** Active Participation and the learner voice: John Lonergan

2.00 **Close and Lunch**

**Speaker Biographies:**

**John Lonergan**

John Lonergan spent 42 years in the Irish Prison Service and 24 as the Governor of Mountjoy Prison. Since his retirement from his position in 2010, John has published a best-selling account of his life, “The Governor” and has as a highly regarded public speaker he has spoken widely across the country on social justice issues, making a difference to others and the importance of community

**John Gates**

John left school with no qualifications and went to work in the local coal mine as a trainee collier but returned to education, firstly literacy classes, which led to a degree through the Open University. After being made redundant John continued his education and has spoken across the world about adult education and Learner voices. John has been involved in the Global Adult Learners’ Network since the beginning and the development of an International Learners’ Charter and has spent the last 2 years supporting the development of Local Learner Forums in Wales.

**Una Buckley**

Una is an adult learner having undertaken an NUI Certificate in Adult and Community Education and literacy training. As a strong advocate for the right of adult learners to quality education she served as a member of the AONTAS Executive Committee and learner network steering group. At international level she represented Irish learners at the International Adult Learners’ Conference in Scotland (2008) and at CONFINTEA VI (2009) and spoke at the 2010 ALFI meeting.

**Limerick City Adult Learners’ Forum**

It is the only Learner-led Forum for adult learners and originated in 2005 as a project in to celebrate European Year of citizenship through education and has grown to 10 members representing Learners across Limerick City. Their role is to be a voice for learners and currently represents Learners on Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN), has organised its own events and publishes a newsletter.

For more information about this event contact Dympna Larkin at 01 4068220 or dlarkin@aontas.com. To register visit this site to fill out the booking form: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XQYKRJN>