Facilitating Inclusive Learning
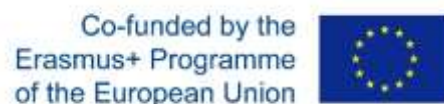
Overview of a Continuous Professional Development Programme (CPD) for staff working with adults with diverse learning abilities in adult, further and community education (2018)

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> **This document provides an overview of a continuous professional development programme which has been developed for adult education staff as part of the ERASMUS+ *Unlocking Freedom* project.**

Terms and abbreviations used in this document:

ERASMUS+   This is the European programme that is funding the Unlocking Freedom project.

CPD   This stands for Continuous Professional Development and refers to the training and learning that educators engage in.

Programme   We refer to the course or training as a 'programme'.

The cover photograph is of the educator group who completed a pilot course in July 2017 in An Cosán, Education and Training Centre, Jobstown, Tallaght. Co. Dublin

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About Unlocking Freedom

Unlocking Freedom is a European Union-funded Erasmus+ research project which aims to support the positive transitions of people with intellectual disabilities into communities through adult education.

The full title of the project is called 'Unlocking Freedom through Adult Education: The role of adult education in supporting people with disabilities in the community' (2015-2018).

This project is led by the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), with partners in:

Finland

Ireland

France

Bulgaria.[1]

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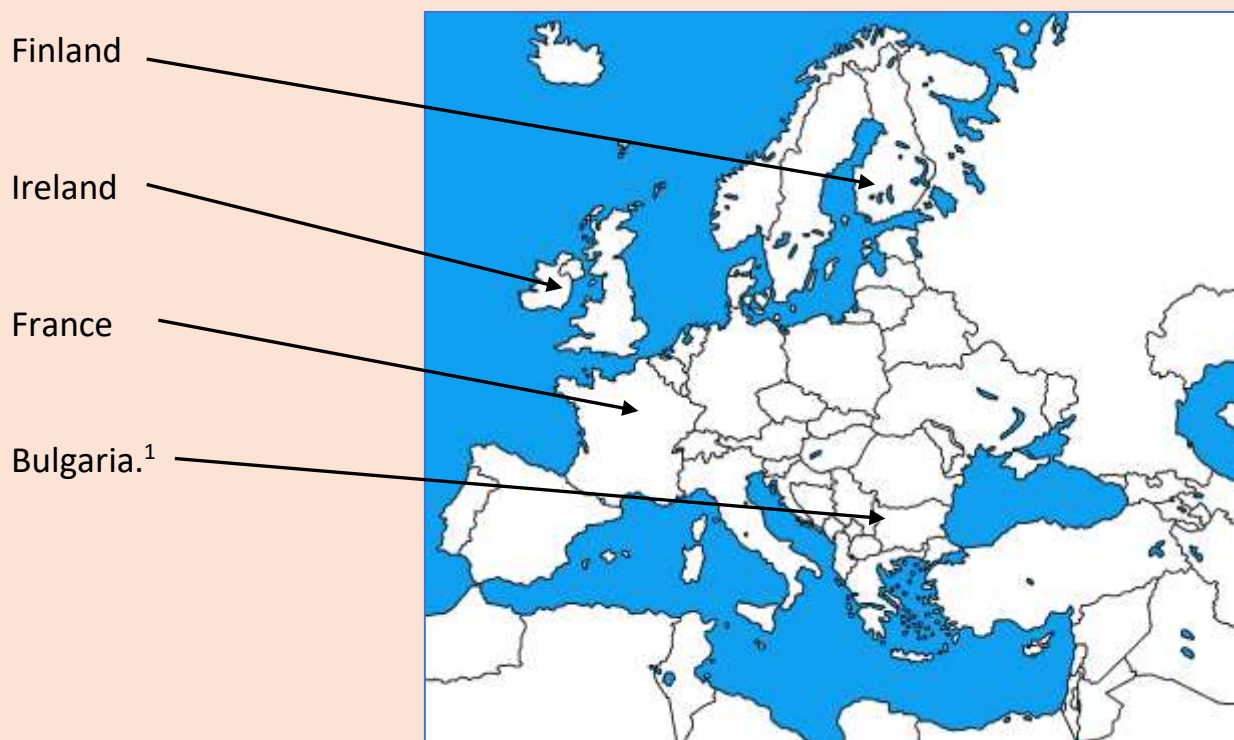
[1] **Ireland** (Maynooth University and Stewarts Care, Ltd), **Bulgaria** (the Institute for Community-based Social Services Foundation), **France** (Universite Paris XII Val de Marne and Centre de la Gabrielle) and **Finland** (Kehitysvammaisten Palvelusaatio).

The project has three key objectives:

- To improve the life-long learning opportunities and social integration of people with intellectual disabilities (ID) through adult and community education;
- To bring local adult education providers together with local community-based services with the aim of devising or adapting curricula to support their new role in including people with ID in their activities;
- To address the formal education needs of staff moving from institutional to community-based provision in order to challenge the institutional culture of the organisation and to maximise their support to integrate people with ID fully into the community.

The Maynooth University team are Laura Burke, Michael Gannon, Bernie Grummell, Josephine Finn, Camilla Fitzsimons, Jerry O'Neill and Mark Smith. With the help of an advisory group, we developed and piloted this resource.

The full CPD curriculum will be published in the autumn of 2018 and will be available on the project website.

Project website:

https://unlockingfreedom.wordpress.com/

An adult and inclusive education approach to educator training.

Everyone who enters a learning group brings experiences, ideas and values with them. As adult educators we believe this is the strongest resource in any group. Our approach to education is to facilitate people to share their thoughts and experiences and to compare these with the thoughts and experiences of other people in the room. This allows us to see what patterns or themes are strong within a group and to introduce new materials and ideas that might be useful. This can be through books, case-studies, or the contributions of the group itself.

*Figure 1: Figure 17: Example of adult education approach to learning Source: Google Images http://www.pinsdaddy.com/counseling-class_j*b*fz3F4VXdNxqXGBR%7CGqxHG%7CLmuzXc6j46hzRPBRk/ [Accessed, May, 2017]*

Unlocking Freedom is about working in a way that is hands-on. Each group is a learning community in its own right and we are interested in uncovering rather than covering contents.

Sometimes this approach can feel different to how most of us imagine continuous professional development (CPD). However, we believe that it is

important to trust in people to create learning content for themselves from their own knowledge and experiences. If the educators undertaking this CPD can do this, they are better able to be open to the challenges and rewards associated with integrated classrooms where people with lots of differences work together.

Figure 2: Some of the group who piloted the course in May 2017 Maynooth University (Source: Laura Burke)

This approach to education is built on the following principles:

- Each of us, regardless of how other people see us, are experts in our own lives.
- People are motivated to learn and act around the issues that they feel strongly about.
- Education works best when it asks questions instead of delivering answers.
- Educators are learners too and should be prepared to share and engage as they feel comfortable to do so.

- There is no such thing as a neutral approach to education. All educators bring their own opinions, life experiences, viewpoints of the world and thoughts on how we should act within it.

- To truly include people, educators must actively create a learning environment where difference is embraced and celebrated.

- An inclusive approach to education means that we are constantly challenged to see the world from the perspective of others.

- Inclusive learning should start with the personal but extend outwards to address how ways in which people perceived as 'disabled' are often affected by stigma, labelling, lack of assistive supports, and other barriers that can prevent their full participation in society.

Overall aims of the Unlocking Freedom CPD programme.

The fundamental aim of this programme is to support adult educators to create emancipatory, inclusive and diverse learning environments.

Core aspects of the CPD programme

The Unlocking Freedom CPD programme is based on adult education values and practice. This means much of the content will emerge from the context, experiences and discussions of the group.   However, there are some fundamental aspects which will be common to each programme wherever and whenever it takes place.

The programme will:

- be co-facilitated by an adult educator with an intellectual disability
- allow space for participants to share and reflect upon their own and each other's experiences
- create a safe space for participants to ask and seek answers to difficult questions
- encourage participants to explore ways to adapt more inclusive teaching and learning methods
- encourage participants to question what needs to change in their institutions and more broadly to enhance inclusion in education.

Outline of the CPD programme

The programme is designed so that it can be adapted by different groups in different contexts.   However, regardless of the context, it will move through the following stages.

Stage one	**Coming together** Introduction to the programme and each other.
Stage two	**Uncovering experiences** Individual and group sharing and discussion of experiences of inclusion and exclusion in education.
Stage three	**The wider context** Exploring the wider context of inclusion (policy and models of inclusion).
Stage four	**Reflecting on our practice** How inclusive is my practice?
Stage five	**Shifting our practice** Co- and re-designing inclusive teaching methods.
Stage six	**Institutional cultures and wider society** What needs to change outside the doors of my class?
Stage seven	**Sustaining our commitment to inclusive practice** How can we support each other after the programme?
Stage eight	**Closing** Reflecting and evaluating the programme

The programme facilitators will ensure that there are lots of opportunities for pause and reflection across all these stages.

A variety of active and creative methods will be used throughout the programme, such as the paint the caterpillar evaluation exercise and the blob tree exercise (see images below).

Figure 3: Sample Course Evaluation entitled "Paint the Caterpillar" facilitated with group in July 2017 (Laura Burke)
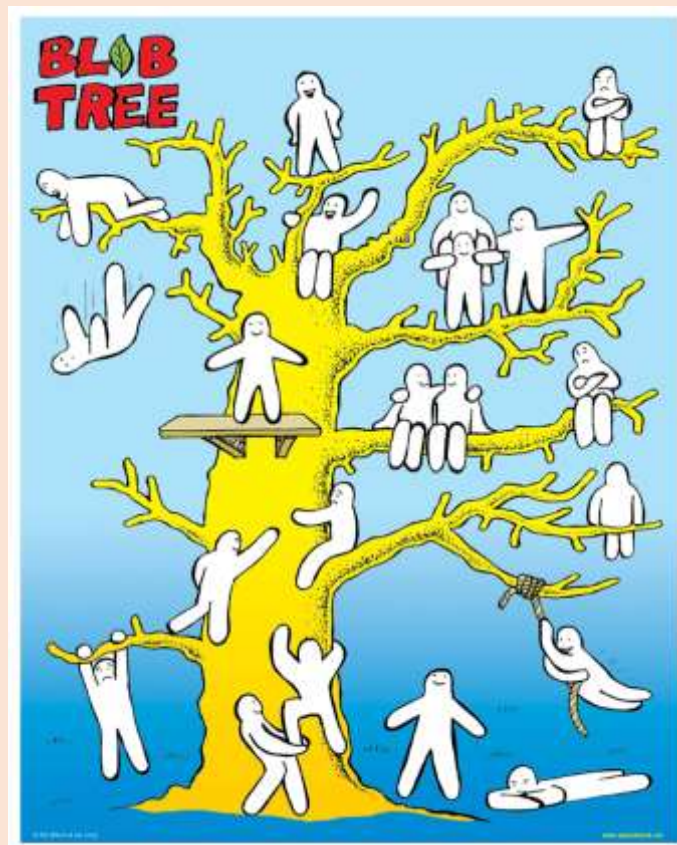

Figure 4:   Figure 13: Picture of Tree Blob handout Source: Google Images http://teacherwithbipolar.blogspot.ie/2014/10/self-awareness-exercise-1-blob-tree.html (Accessed, April, 2017)

Who is this CPD programme for?

This CPD programme is aimed at anyone working in adult, further, community, higher or special needs education as well as those working in intellectual disability services who are interested in developing their practice relative to inclusion, equity and emancipation. For example:

- Trainee educators/teachers in all levels of education
- Educators in the intellectual disability service sector
- Educators in all sectors of education, including further and community education
- People working across local communities (paid and voluntary) such as in youth-centres, women's and men's groups, libraries and sports clubs.