



# Our Impact

## National Learning Network

Investing in People, Changing Perspectives





## Our Impact

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**National Learning Network (NLN) has training colleges all over the country for people who need a little extra support to find a course or career path. NLN provides students with the training and skills they need to either get a job or go on to further education/third level. Courses are free and QQI accredited.**

Learning is at the student's own pace, in small classes and with work experience tailored to individual needs and abilities. All students have access to one-to-one support from instructors in numeracy and literacy, as well as an onsite psychologist. We offer a continuous intake so you can start at any time you please.

We deliver over 140 accredited vocational training programmes at levels 3 – 6 on the (QQI) Quality and Qualifications Framework, supporting students to reach their educational potential. National Learning Network provides training and specialist support to people who, for a variety of reasons, may find it difficult to gain employment. Whether you are experiencing physical or mental ill health or have a disability – National Learning Network can help you.

So, whatever your interests, we have the training programme for you. National Learning Network has helped thousands of people to launch careers in everything from business and computer skills through to graphic design and sport and leisure.

In fact, nine out of ten people who complete our courses progress to employment or further training and education.

**Read the real life stories of our NLN students here and see how learning with National Learning Network has been a life-changing experience for them.**



## Sophia Webb, NLN Bray

"I started the EBT course in April 2019 after it was recommended to me by a friend. I was fed up with searching and applying for jobs and getting very few responses. With Oonagh and Colette's encouragement and assistance, I made a list of organisations I wanted to work for. I have a Bachelor's degree in Public Health Nutrition, so it was mainly food companies I was interested in. I also had some experience in administration and fundraising.

Within a couple of months, however, Oonagh found a job advertisement for an assistant at a summer camp with Wicklow Triple A Alliance, a charity that supports individuals and families affected by Autism, Asperger Syndrome & ADHD. Although I was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome (now part of the autism diagnosis) when I was young, I was still uncomfortable talking about it.

I agreed for Oonagh to contact them, thinking it wouldn't lead to anything. How wrong I was! It turned out that the camp had been cancelled but one of the people organizing it worked at AsIAM and invited me in for an interview there!

I was nervous but excited. At this stage most of my friends didn't even know I was autistic, and yet there I was being interviewed by Ireland's national autism charity!

Colette accompanied me to the interview, which was successful. I started a 6 month work experience at the end of June, working 3 days a week in AsIAM, attending NLN one day a week and volunteering at Kilcoole Thrift Shop on Fridays. I was anxious at the start but soon my confidence grew and I settled in. I helped out at AsIAM's National Autism Conference in September, where I listened to international and national speakers talk about how autistic people can be supported and accommodated in every aspect of life.

By December I had been offered a permanent job! My main task is issuing autism I.D. cards, while also doing general admin and fundraising work. I feel like I've come a long way from the fed up, anxiety-riddled person I was to now "living and breathing" autism every day! I get great satisfaction knowing that my work has a real impact on people like me who are living with autism".



## Amy Rutherford, NLN Mullingar

"My name is Amy. I'm 21 years old and I first joined National Learning Network in November 2018. I've been on the Skills For Life course in NLN, Mullingar for a year now and the best way I can describe the course, is that it's not like school, or college, or any other course I've done before.

When I first came on the course, I was like a kid and slowly through working on myself and working with the staff here in the centre, I've become the adult I am now. I've become an employable, confident, and more self-assured person.

I don't doubt myself as much as I used to and I feel confident and positive about my life now, which I never did before. I'm getting ready to leave now and go onto college to study Digital Marketing.

A year ago I never would have thought that was possible. But, with this course and all the help and support I've received, I'm ready for the world now."



## Darren Moran, NLN Bray

"I'm Darren, I'm 37 years old. Before NLN I mainly did factory work for a long time, but was diagnosed with epilepsy which stopped me from working in that area of work. Because of this I was nervous about going out to the work place and for many years I did nothing. Then I heard about the National Learning

Network Bray. I saw how they have helped out so many people in finding work and getting back to further education.

I decided that NLN would be a good place to try and re-educate myself and try a new career path. I am currently doing an IT and Business Administration course and it is going very well. Since I started in NLN my confidence has improved so much that I am ready to get back into the workplace

as soon as I'm finished my course. I would recommend the National Learning Network to anybody looking to get back into further education or employment.

The support systems they have in NLN are amazing. Whether it's going on to further education, finding a career or job, National Learning Network really has everything you need to put you on the right path. It did for me!"



## Sean Nagle got a job at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre after studying catering in Ennis NLN

When Sean Nagle from Liscannor, Co Clare finished his Leaving Cert Applied, he wasn't sure what to do next or what the future would hold. The 19-year-old was faced with the difficult decision of choosing a course and finding a career path. But traditional post-school study routes don't suit every young person. When a guidance counsellor told him about National Learning Network in Ennis, things fell into place.

"Unlike school, you could start at any time of the year and everyone goes at their own pace. I really wasn't quite sure what to do when I finished my Leaving Cert, it can be a bit overwhelming knowing school is coming to an end and not knowing what to do next. I tried a Sports course, as I had always been into physical fitness and sports, but I didn't get on very well with that. At first, I didn't know what to make of NLN and doing a FETAC course. I worried it was like taking a step backward but I really enjoyed it, it was different from being at

school. I felt relaxed and very supported."

It was while I was on a week's trial at a Catering Assistant Programme in Limerick that I decided to go into the catering and hospitality industry. I was doing some work experience at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre café and I got on so well that I was offered a job that I was delighted to accept. Since NLN, what I am most proud of is getting a job, buying my own car and passing my driving test. I really enjoy working at the Visitor Centre. You get to meet people from all over the world.

Going to college and trying to do courses you end up not liking can be so stressful, it's nice just to come to work and have a routine. I'm not sure I would have found this path if I hadn't gone to NLN. It's helped me to work out what I'm good actually good at and move forward.

As I am still young, I also wouldn't rule out doing further studies down the road and trying my hand at something else I would recommend NLN to anyone who needs a little support to achieve their goals."



## Lola from NLN Portlaoise

"I had a stroke and was hospitalised and had many other complications, I went on to have open heart surgery and I got a new heart. So getting up was a problem in the morning. I was on so many medications, I was struggling and my body wasn't ready for so much medication. I knew it wasn't right to just be in the house, and I was looking for a way out.

Luckily, I went to a GP in Portlaoise and saw an advert on the notice board saying 'If you want to go back to work or you have been in an accident or due to illness', to contact them. And I thought 'Wow'.

Because, up to this, I never knew there was a service like this. I thought NLN was just for individuals with a disability.

The reason why I chose to study at NLN was because it was the only place that could accommodate me. It was the only place that I could get the support that I needed because, as I've said, I'm still on so many medications, and every day is not the same. Sometimes it's so difficult to get up and go. With the support here, it's like a home away from home. The tutors here understand your needs, where you're coming from, they know what you've been through. They take you as you are. I did the Jobstart course and I learned so much about confidence and interaction because, before then, I was into myself. They have a place in the centre

where you can sit and relax. It's a school but it's not rigid like a school. They are very flexible with the support.

One of my goals in the Jobstart programme was to write a book. I wanted to write about the journey, about the whole thing, having been in hospital for almost 3 years. My tutor Eamon supported me with it and I began to write and write and write. It gave me back was my life. Doing this made me realise that I could actually achieve my dreams. I have this new book and I'm going to promote it. I never knew that people could benefit from the NLN service. Don't think that it's for individuals with disabilities alone, it's not. If you've been sick or depressed and you want to go back into the community to work, it's a service for all."



## Pavlina, NLN Portlaoise

"I had two children and I was at home and I knew I wanted to continue studying and I wanted to change the path of my career because, before children, I worked in catering and I have really bad back problems and I knew I wouldn't be able to work in catering anymore.

So I chose the Business and Administration Level 5 and I have to say it's one of the best decisions I have ever made in life. You get one-to-one tutoring if you need it and there are all sorts of resources whether it's online or other people that work with you to make you get 'there'; to help you to resolve something when there is something in your life and you don't know how to go further.

The flexibility is unbelievable because I happened to fall pregnant during my course and I had a gorgeous little baby boy and NLN gave me the opportunity to withdraw just before I had him and take time at home with him and come back when I was ready. If I needed to, say, finish up a little bit early for an appointment, I can catch up easily with the work some other time, it's no problem. I spend two days in the centre for my course and I can be at home the other two days without missing out.

And that kind of flexibility is quite crucial in someone's busy life. I made lots of friends. When I was in school previously in Slovakia, I went through constant bullying and I was really dreading this, and how it would go. But here, I made friends from all different courses at NLN. We really stick together, the centre is like a glue. You never know what's right for you until you try, so don't waste your chances by not trying."



## Alan MacDonald, former NLN Waterford student

**Alan completed the Employer Based Training course at NLN Waterford. As part of the course, he did his work experience at Sunlife Financial and was offered a permanent part-time job.**

'My name is Alan MacDonald and I've been a student here at the National Learning Network in Waterford for a year exactly today; today's my last day. I've had a great year. I've learned a lot, I've got qualifications, I've got a lot of work experience. I've got a lot of information about how to find work and keep it and I've also got a job at the end of it.

'I'll be working for Sunlife Financial which I'm very pleased about. For me, I would strongly recommend that if you're looking to get back into the workplace for whatever reason that you left, come along and give the folks at the National Learning Network a call. They're brilliant and they'll get you back on your feet very quickly'.





## **Kevin Buckley (with his support dog Honey) from NLN Phibsboro**

“My name is Kevin Buckley I’m 26 and I live in Artane. My mam told me about NLN and I came along and had a chat and decided to give it a try. I’m now working as a clerical officer in the Coolock Primary Care centre.

At NLN, I learned things more easily. My course was European Computers Driving Licence; I learned about spreadsheets,

Powerpoint presentations and using the internet and email. I also did art here and liked it. I got experience working on reception, taking phone calls and messages, meeting and greeting new people, teachers and students. It helped to build my confidence and self-esteem as I got to meet new people and make new friends here. It was a new beginning for me at NLN.

At NLN I got help from my teachers who showed me what to do if I got stuck, I wasn’t afraid to ask for help and I managed to figure a lot of things out for myself. I have autism, and have a companion dog who goes everywhere with me in case I get lost or feel alone.

I got her after I finished NLN.

When I was here I did work experience in the HSE building in Blanchardstown, I was there for three years. I learned how to do the post, take room bookings and do admin work. After that I got a job in Coolock Primary Care centre. I felt prepared to take up the job. I was nervous but I soon got over it. I met some really nice people who I get on with well. I had learned all the skills I needed and was able to learn more once I was in the job. Being at NLN opened up work for me; before NLN I dreamed of having a job. I would recommend NLN to anyone who felt they had nowhere to go.”



## Sarah Divilly, from NLN Phibsboro, working for Third Space Café

"I was 19 and I was working in childcare for years until I was in my late 20s. My back pain and my general health was getting worse so I knew I had to do office work. I went to a counsellor as I was suffering a bit with anxiety and it was them who put me on to NLN in Phibsboro, where I started the Business Studies course.

I would only be in school two months of the year because of illness. I am on disability allowance and I have kidney disease, I've had 25 operations. I was told I'd never work. When I left school, I felt glad it was over and that people

would stop screaming at me. At NLN I felt different, I felt in myself ready to give it a go. I'm not as scared now going into courses, I'm at ease with it.

The college staff were understanding and helpful if anything was needed, I think if I'd have gone to any other course the stress would've got to me. They give you a lot more time. They also put me on the reception desk in the college to help me get used to going out to work. You're not just turned out into the world of work with no preparation.

NLN supported me in all aspects of changing career, I wasn't as panicked going out and about, I felt more at ease in there, I didn't feel I was under pressure to get the work done and when it came to going out into a job I felt ready. I'd highly recommend NLN, it's got me where I am. I'd still pop in to see the staff and say hello. They helped me discover my

potential, as anything I struggled with I could talk to the tutors about, even if it wasn't their job to help me with it.

The NLN tutors encouraged me to take on the work experience here at Third Space, doing accounts and Human Resources, saying that they knew I could do it and that I should believe in myself. I decided I would give it a bash and if it didn't work out I would just leave. I'm still here and in a permanent role now.

It's scary, I wasn't too good at maths in school, I hated it, but they encouraged me and I'm happy they did because otherwise I would've walked away. After the 18-month placement I got the job contract for 21 hours, it felt good. I've taken on the HR role for the 22 staff here and I'm going to do more training in that, then I'm going to study Finance and get certified in that."



## Eamon, NLN Phibsboro

“Before NLN, I had been in work since finishing school. I became ill with depression back in 2015 and needed to get treatment for it. That involved going to the Mental Health Clinic in Ballymun and they were great. It was them who put me on to NLN to get me back into a structure and to try and learn some new skills. That’s what got me here, and I’ve been here now for nearly two years.

It’s been a way of getting my confidence back, getting structure and gaining new skills. There’s been no looking back, it’s been the best thing I’ve ever done really.

I chose the course I’m on now because it was QQI Level 5; I like the idea that it was office administration. I wasn’t comfortable using computers. I found it really daunting, I was really put off by them. I wanted to change my career path.

Just because I got ill I didn’t want to be ruled out of the workforce or to keep doing a job I was tired of doing. I chose the office administration with the ECDL qualification with it. That’s what attracted

me, gaining new skills in the hope of starting a new career.

I really enjoyed the ECDL element because it took the anxiety out of using computers. Small things like trying to do up a CV I’d have been panicking about and really didn’t know where to start. I was always getting other people to do it for me. To learn the skill on that level was amazing to be using spreadsheets and databases; it’s great to learn and it’s not as complicated as I thought it was going to be and that was all from my time here. I found the support was brilliant, the instructors will help you with any issue. If you have problems with writing or maths or learning, there are support teachers there who can take you aside and help you out. As well as that if you have psychological problems or have suffered with depression like myself the specialist support is there to help you deal with that, I found that really reassuring.

The mix of the age of people here is great. As a mature student you always fear you’ll be the odd one out but it isn’t like that, I found it brilliant. It definitely has changed my life. It gave me a new outlook at a time when I needed it most. It gave me a structure. They’re also understanding

about if you’re on medication or struggling with new medication it can really knock the socks off you. They’re used to dealing with that here. I used to be a very confident person and I lost all that with the depression issue and NLN has really helped me to get back on track and I’m probably a better person for it.

I’m doing my work experience in Glasnevin cemetery. I have a really keen interest in Irish history and Dublin history so I’m delighted they’re going to take me on there. I will be spending the first half of the day in the museum doing research or office work and the rest of the day I’ll be shadowing the walking tours. All the skills I’ve learned here have made me more confident to re-enter the workplace. I had worked for nearly 20 odd years so to have been out of the workplace for around four years you get into a rut.

I’m much more back to myself. I think if someone is in my position where they’ve been out of work for a while, if they’re considering doing a course I would definitely give NLN a go. They’re so supportive, they’re flexible - if you’re struggling, they will help. There’s no looking back for me.”



## James Doyle from NLN Naas

**James works for Rehab Enterprises in Tallaght after completing a course in NLN Naas. This is his story:**

"I left school around 17 or 18. And I think for two, three, or four years, I was just hanging around doing nothing. Any jobs I applied for I just don't think I had the experience.

My mother told me to try FAS and that's how I got the course in NLN Naas. The lecturer told me there's a job for me when I finish NLN and that led to my job here in Rehab Enterprises in Tallaght.

Up to then, I knew about Rehab but I didn't know what they did, I didn't think that I was qualified. I like building computers, and rebuilding them, and putting new screens on them.

That's what I get to do here. I don't think, if I didn't have this job, that I would be still here today- that's being brutally honest. I think work does help you to just to take your mind off things. It does keep your mind focused on what you're doing."



## Richard from NLN Athlone

**Richard attended the EBT and Fresh Start courses in Athlone and now he has a job that he loves. This is his story:**

"I got to know a lot about career planning and the types of skills I would need to get a job. I learned about communication at work and Health and Safety. Then I did IT Level 4 and it taught me more about what I needed to know about computers. I learned loads. I was looking through a job site and saw a job that would be perfect for me with a warehouse company.

We put in an application and the next day when the centre manager said I had an interview, I couldn't believe it. I was put on a probation period but because of all of the help I got from NLN I was able to use my training.

One day, the manager came over and said I was successful in securing a full-time job. I faced challenges, but Fresh Start taught me when you have challenges you work out ways to solve them, so I did. They build your confidence skills by asking you to stand in front of the class and speak and now I have the confidence to speak to anyone. It changed my life completely. I have a job now and can support my family."



## Ed Devery, NLN Athlone

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**Ed is doing the Turas programme.**

*"My life was full of stress, anxiety and panic attacks. It just left me with no courage, no confidence, no self esteem.*

*When I got to the centre and the staff talked me through the courses I knew it was for me as many were aimed at helping people who have mental health issues.*

*The Turas course was tailor made for me, some flexibility"*



## Claire Murphy from NLN Kilkenny

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**Claire Murphy from NLN Kilkenny had the support of a Special Needs Assistant right throughout her schooling so it was a huge transition for her to come to NLN without the support of an SNA.**

*"I attend National Learning Network as they help you to actually train for a job and achieve the skills you need to get and keep a job. If there is something that you want to do, a goal that you want to reach, the people here will support you in any way they can and they will help you to go forward.*

*I have learned independence skills, computer skills, communication skills and built up the confidence that I have. I believe in myself now, that I can go out and do something different and something new and different for me."*



## **Anne Rachel, NLN Monaghan**

**Anne Rachel, a refugee from Cameroon, attended NLN Monaghan where she gained vital employability skills and turned her life around.**

**After a successful work placement, organised by NLN, she's now working in a nursing home in her local community.**

"I was really glad to come to NLN because

it was a new beginning of education and a different experience of life since I was newly from Direct Provision where I was for almost 8 years. I did a lot of modules; I did math, cooking course, conversations, health and fitness as well, so... a lot of things.

English is not my first language so they helped me with a lot of words I don't know. Even if I wrote something out, sometimes I wrote it out like a French person and they had to write it in proper English words for me, and they helped me to speak English properly.

So, they gave me a lot of support. I did a work placement with my course, and I am now working at a nursing home in County Monaghan. I serve elderly people and I try to make their lives more joyful; smiling with them, chatting politely with them.

It makes them happy and it turns gives me more joy in my heart to see this.

I plan to study Level 5 in Care. I do like it and, everybody around me, we work together, we are happy, all of us. So I will be really happy."



## Derek, NLN Tullamore

"I was bringing my son up and when he started secondary school, I felt a bit lost at home. So I said I need to find something to do, something new. About 6 months before I came here, I had a bit of a nervous breakdown and I was in hospital.

When I came out I said I don't know what I'm gonna do, and my wife said 'you've got to find something to fill the days in'. I joined the NLN course for my wellness and

to learn how to use a computer. Because, when I was at home, my son had a computer, but I never knew how to turn it on or how to work it. So that was my goal when I started here, to learn how to use a computer properly.

When I came to the centre at first, I was a bit apprehensive, but then I said I'll try it out for three weeks and if I don't like it, I'll leave. When the instructor said; 'Derek, what do you think of it after three weeks?' I responded 'I like it... I'll stay'.

We're doing word processing every week so I've learned all about the ribbon on a

computer, what everything is for, tables, indexes, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint... I actually did a PowerPoint presentation in one of my exams and I thought that went well. The instructors can tell by you during the day if you're having a good day or a bad day.

And if you're having a bad day, you can go next door to the instructors and have a chat. You can go to them anytime of the day if you have a problem. It's changed my life in a big way. You make friends, you learn how to use computers and you learn how to study again."



## Sean Francis from NLN Wexford

“It’s helping me to become very skilled and confident. I like making cartoon characters and animation, I have lots of ideas for what I want to create. NLN will give me support so I can one day work in a creative studio.

They have already arranged work experience for me on a shop floor and that’s what I need to get ready for a working environment in the future. The instructors help me in any way they can, they offer outstanding support to me.

It’s a quiet and sedate place, and when I’m studying on the computers, I feel I have the time and space to work at my own pace.”



## Billy White Graphic Design Lecturer, National Learning Network, Sandymount Dublin

“I have been working here for over 20 years now. Before coming here I ran my own graphic design and marketing agency. I really love working with the students on a daily basis and seeing the work they produce and their progress towards qualification and watch them go on to achieve great things in their lives.

Our new IT system, which was implemented recently’ will have a tremendous impact on the work we do here in my Graphic Design class. Having the capability to run a room full of computers using high-end professional design software at fast speed is essential and the ability to access work remotely will be of massive benefit to the students.”





## Lee Mitchell, NLN Bray

"My name is Lee Mitchell. I left school at an early age and then went working in construction. I had always wanted to go back to education but never had the time. In 2009 I had an accident. I came to a crossroads in my life I could not return to the work I used to do. I then thought about going back to education but couldn't make the call. It was my doctor who made the call for me which I am very grateful for.

I started off by going to the Bray Adult Learning Centre. The first day I was nervous but when I started I was made feel welcome and felt at ease. During my time there I did my QQI level 3 and level 4 which helped build my confidence so then I got involved with NALA because I wanted to give something back. With NALA I am involved with helping adults return to education.

During my time at the Bray Adult Learning Centre I learned about the National Learning Network Bray and how it has helped a lot of people get back in to further education. I decide that I would give it a go and see could help me get my QQI level 5 completed.

I decided to that I would give it a go and see if it could help me get my QQI Level 5 completed. Currently, I am doing my QQI level 5 in IT and Business Administration, and it is going very well. I am enjoying it and the class atmosphere is great. I have found that the support systems in NLN Bray are really good and can help me achieve my goals in further education."



## Cian from NLN Wexford

"I'm learning to use the computers, the toolbars, doing creative writing. I'm really good in groups now. It was too crowded before in school and I found it was hard to calm myself down.

The teachers would send me out of the classroom and ask me what was wrong, but I didn't know what was wrong. I've made progress though now in NLN. The instructors here know that I have bottled up emotions.

If I need to go for a walk, it's okay, I can do that, and come back in when I'm ready. Shelley, my instructor, she really understands."



## Stephen Duffy from NLN Monaghan

“My name is Stephen Duffy, I’m from Ballybay in Co Monaghan. I worked in the retail sector for 27 years. In 2015, I was off work for a few months through illness and I saw it as an opportunity to explore something different. The biggest moment was walking into the Monaghan NLN. Having worked so many years in the same environment, I didn’t think I would have had the confidence to go for something different. I was worried they wouldn’t give me a chance without experience but I couldn’t get experience unless I had a chance.

A friend recommended NLN who said I should have a chat with Maureen Gannon, a tutor on the Employer-Based Training. Maureen explained what it entailed and I signed up as it appealed to me. I worked with computers before in a previous job, but I wasn’t used to them. I couldn’t even use Microsoft Word, now I can. I use computers a lot now and if I don’t know what I’m doing, I work it out for myself. I

was always confident in a lot of ways but my lack of education always affected me, I didn’t even sit my Leaving Cert. I failed the Junior Cert as I was such a messer in the classroom and left school after that. I always thought people who had all those things were better than me.

Education was my biggest problem as far as confidence was concerned; that improved by joining NLN. I now see that if I had applied myself in school, or found a college like NLN, I’d have been okay

On the Employer Based Training programme, I did two-days of training every week in the centre learning about computers, manual handling, communication and so on, the other two days I was out on work experience. Maureen sourced a job for me in the Íontus Arts and Resource centre. I was delighted to get it. I discovered a liking for the work and a knack for it. I helped out more and more during the year’s work experience, so much so that I did a SOLAS course on activities with elderly people, for which NLN helped me to get funding. It was great experience and involved going up to Dublin.

I was there with people who were already working as activities coordinators, occupational therapists and nurses. On the first day, we had to sign in and everyone had titles behind their names - I just signed ‘Steven Duffy’. I was going to walk out. I said to the guy running the course that I didn’t think I was supposed to be there. As it went on, I found that I was every bit as capable as the people who had the titles after their names. I got my certificate and I was delighted. It was a great experience. Now I’m a SOLAS - licensed practitioner in working with people with dementia.

Through my work experience I was offered a permanent position in the centre working with elderly people. I do activities with them, help with dinners and serve tea in the morning. My job involves having fun and craic with them. Some of them lead a very isolated lifestyle so they appreciate it when they come in. I have a personal motto - it’s a good day if I can greet them with a smile in the morning and see them smile when they’re leaving. I’m proof that NLN works, the help and support and encouragement are all there, it’s a really good experience.”



## AnnMarie Maxwell, a former NLN Phibsboro student, now working for Third Space Café

"I was 20 when I started in Fresh Start in NLN to just get myself back into the working environment and for me to get back into a routine. I was very sick in 2015. So it took me a long time to recover, I became quite lazy after it.

I didn't want to go anywhere, didn't want to do anything, I didn't want to work again. From what the hospital were telling me, I wouldn't be able to go back to work doing what I wanted to do which was security at gigs and festivals, and big events in Croke Park, Longitude etc. I loved it, interacting

with the crowds etc. But it would've been too much of a risk for me.

My tutors were so good to me, they helped me out a lot saying 'you're well able for this' and 'look - you're flying through this module'. Aoife, one of my tutors, came and told me she had a great place for me to do my work experience, she thought it would really suit me. It was Third Space Café. That was nearly two years ago. I worked here for nearly a year on work experience while I finished my course and Third Space took me on full time in January 2019.

The café is a social enterprise, there are so many different groups coming in to use the space to meet. I love the relationship between the staff and customers. We have an initiative called Square Meal once a month usually for a charity where they will come in and have a big meal, you pay

as much as you want for your food. It's brilliant. The standards are high here but it's also chilled. You feel you're getting the job done but also enjoying it. It's important to me to feel that I'm making a difference.

Before I started in here I was quite negative, I suffered really badly with anxiety as well, even my Mum would say she can't get over the difference in me. I am very positive now. I have a completely different outlook in life. A lady came in here two weeks ago, I was chatting away to her for a few minutes and she said, "do you know what, you're a lovely girl". It doesn't cost me anything, I do my job and have a good chat and good relationship with the customers. I'm happy where I am, I'd like to go on maybe and do a business or marketing course ... may be in a few years. Whether it's the business course, the catering or Fresh Start NLN was brilliant, they go at the pace you want."



## Leanne from NLN Wexford

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"I'm doing the retail skills in National Learning Network in Wexford and I got my friends here so it's a good place to be.

I would recommend NLN because of all the practical skills you learn, especially how to deal with money and how to deal with customers.

The instructors are really nice and I find them very easy to talk to and approach for anything."



## Sam from NLN Wexford

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"I have autism and difficulty with my speech. I've been attending NLN for three years, and I've learned a lot about Health & Safety; I'm brilliant at using my hands, I would love to work with trucks and engines in the future.

In school, they always force you to do things at their pace. Here in NLN, they help you to work at your own pace. They listen to you. Everyone is so friendly. If you want to say something, you're always heard."



## Ricky from NLN Tullamore

"I'm Ricky, I'm 19 years of age. Before NLN, I used to be inside the whole time, playing the PlayStation. I eventually got sick of it after I finished school and my sister told me about NLN. It has improved my confidence.

It's improved a lot of things about me, I

use to always not talk to people. I'd either hit someone if I got irritated or anything like that. I'm after quietening down with my anger. I'm after getting a lot of help with my anger by my instructor Imelda.

A lot of things have impacted my life that I never knew I could achieve from National Learning Network, and I'm proud of it.

The Employment Skills course I'm doing is based on getting either a job or further education; getting to know all the basic

stuff about starting work or even knowing about employees or employers or customers.

You'll get the extra help you need and no one is putting you under pressure. It's a good place to learn about your confidence and your interests and skills. If you're ever bored, it's a place to keep you moving in life, instead of hitting a brick wall. My career hopes are either to join the army or do construction work. Get a good job and keep my life going forward".





# National Learning Network

Investing in People, Changing Perspectives

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## Get in touch!

We would be delighted to hear from you to discuss your individual needs and which course would best suit you.


**For course enquiries call: 1890 283 000**

**For all other queries call: 01 205 7200**

**Email: [info@nlm.ie](mailto:info@nlm.ie)**

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