

## Diary of an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor

*In this article, Jason Donohue describes the service provided by him as an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor in Co Cavan VEC.*



Instead of giving you a snippet from a day in the life of an Adult Guidance Counsellor it may be more beneficial to answer this question. What can someone get from the service?

Information, Support and Encouragement.

Permit me to explain a little more. As one adult learner reminded me recently 'a picture speaks a thousand words', so I have made use of pictures to aid with the explanation. I will expand a little more on their significance below;



I am often reminded that men rarely ask for directions and so often lose their way. I think we all need to turn to different people in our lives at different times to seek advice, to talk things through and to get some idea where we are going. Going it alone can often result in ending up in the wrong place. That leads me to the first picture.

(a) Where am I?

The compass represents finding direction. In times of confusion or at times when the way ahead is unclear we need to slow down and find our present location. Guidance I believe involves helping people take stock of where they are. It is about helping to create a space to view their current situation and look at the experiences and skills collected along the way. It is facilitating individuals to harness their personal strengths.

(b) Where from here?

This picture is of a sat nav. When we know where we want to go it is obviously easier to get there. Another aspect of the service is helping people to look at where they want to go, and then help them plot the journey. Enabling people to look at options, to explore possibilities, to believe in their own ability, to discover what training is needed, where they can do it

(c) I'm on my way

Setting off on a new journey can be both a nervous and exciting experience and, of course, it is very natural to get such feelings. The picture of the young cyclist who has cast off the training wheels reminds me of new beginnings. At first you move cautiously, wobbling a little but not wavering. The training wheels are off but you know they are there if needed. In the same way, returning to education is a big step and the longer we are away from it the bigger it may appear. In supporting Adult Learners, we find that they gain in confidence, gather momentum, make progress. The Guidance Service like the 'training wheels', move aside, but are always there if and when required.

(d) You can do it!

The last picture represents something I believe we all need – encouragement. We can all doubt our own ability or lose motivation and as such may need a boost or a lift to keep us going. The service provides such encouragement to the adult learner.

When we take this time to look at ourselves we often have two options – to accept conditions as they exist for us or accept the responsibility for changing them. In wanting to change or indeed seeking direction one can work with the Adult Education Guidance Counsellor who will in turn endeavor to help people see choices and aspire to their potential.

Good luck to you all in finding and taking the next step on your journey.