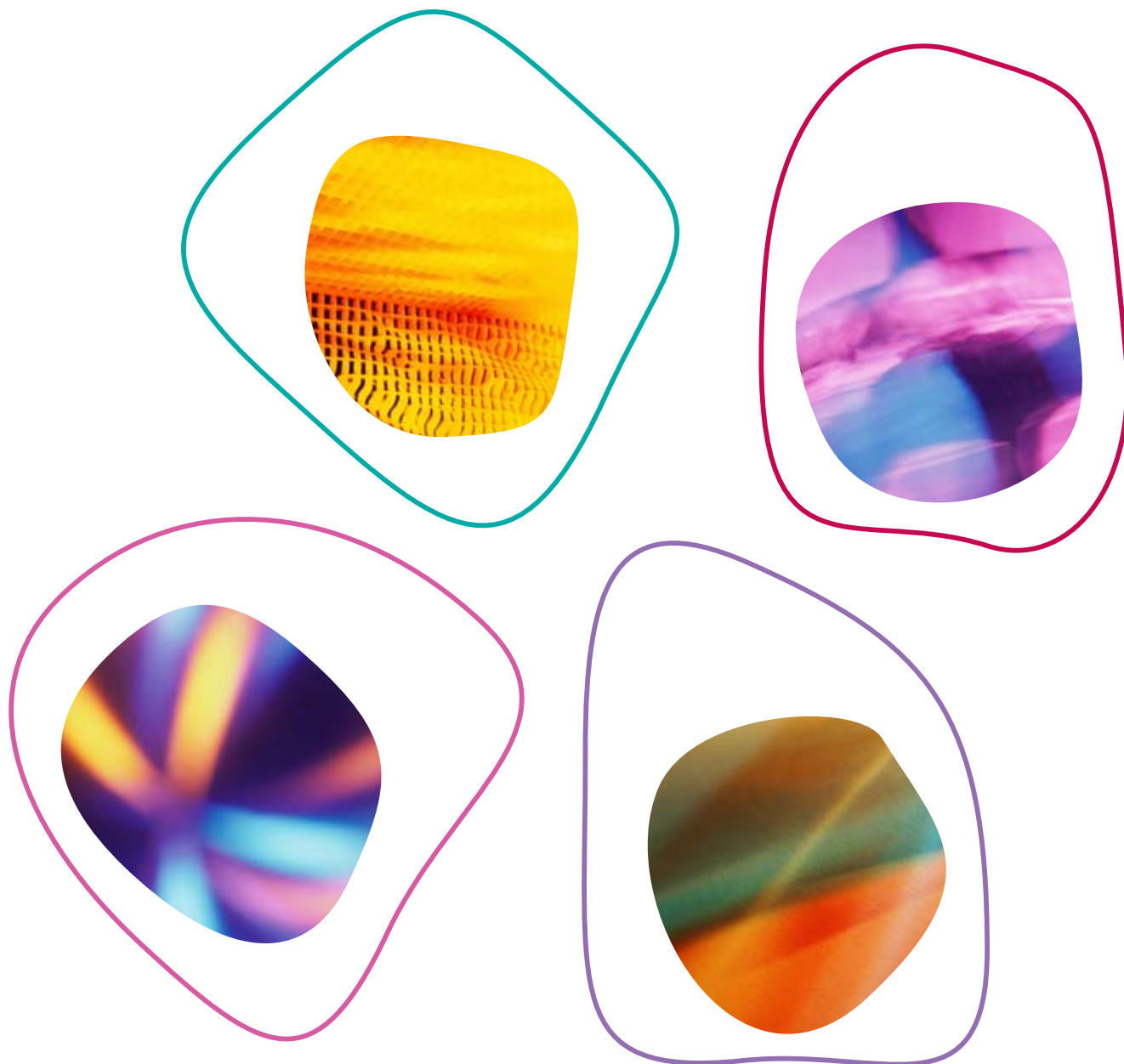


ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007



"Open College Network supports learning and widens opportunity by recognising achievement through credit based courses and qualifications"



A Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues

I am delighted to have served my first year as Chair of the Open College Network Northern Ireland. Our Network continues to serve our membership and customers across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

OCN NI has had another successful year with over 20,000 learners registered on OCN accredited courses and qualifications. We also continue to support the needs of the adult population with just over 50% of learners registered falling into the 26-65 year old category.

The Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI) continues to recognise the crucial importance of working collaboratively to create a cohesive and coherent national credit system to meet the needs of people in a wide variety of contexts. Engagement with qualification reform and the testing and trailing of the new "Qualifications and Credit Framework" in Northern Ireland has been at the forefront of our activities during the annual cycle 2006/07.

In June 2007 Annie Moore our Regional Director retired after a long and distinguished career at the OCN NI. Annie was instrumental in establishing the Network here in Northern Ireland and she has been a vital component in the work of the Network to provide learning opportunities to adults. On behalf of the board and I'm sure all of the existing and past membership, I would like to thank Annie for her contribution to Adult Learning in Northern Ireland and wish her well in her retirement.

The Board took the decision to appoint Martin Flynn our Operations Manager as interim Regional Manager for a period after Annie's retirement. I would like to extend my thanks to Martin for stepping up to this important challenge in steering the Network through this busy period. His work and the work of the team permitted us all time to take stock and plan for our future, during the first half of the 2007/08 annual planning cycle.

A final thanks to all of our membership, our learners and our friends who have contributed so much to the OCN NI. Your involvement and support providing learning for adults is a vital aspect of ensuring that as many people as possible have the opportunity to access learning.

My best wishes for a brilliant year



Gary Haire
Chair OCN NI



Business Development and Expansion into New Markets

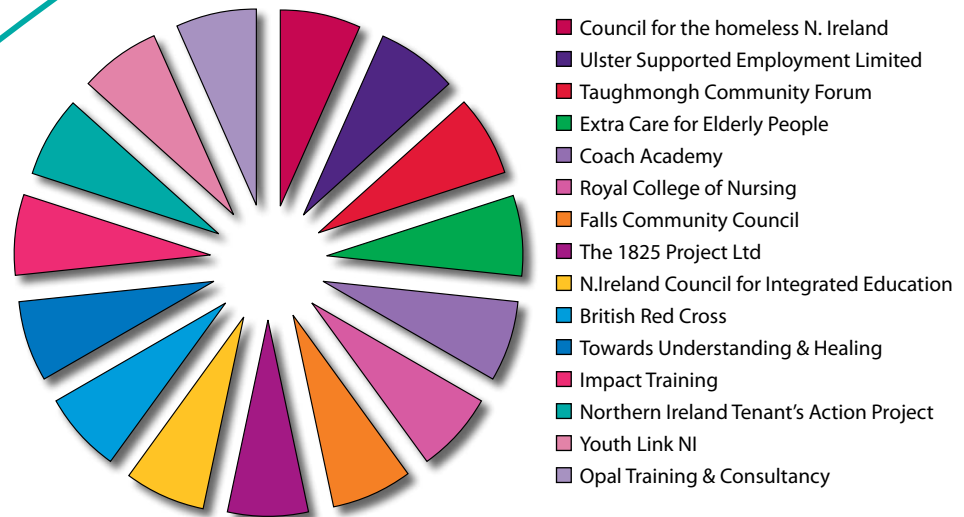
During the annual cycle 2006/07 the Network has been strongly focused on building new markets and finding new customers to replace the traditional markets of the past which are in decline as result of the new policy focus on skills and the economy. The following points reflect the most notable aspects of OCN NI's work during this annual cycle:-

- **A continuing commitment to extending OCN NI work to more employers and learning providers. Over twice as many new customers in 2006/7 from the previous year. Included are:** The Royal College of Nursing, the British Red Cross, Army Recruitment, Council for the Homeless NI, Ulster Supported Employment Limited, Taughmonagh Community Forum, Extra Care for Elderly People Ltd, Coach Academy, Falls Community Council, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Northern Ireland Tenant's Action Project, Impact Training, Youth Link NI and Hugh J O'Boyle are included in this new portfolio of customers.
- Student numbers did fall by 10% in this period, this was an expected reduction as Network members began the **transition to NQF qualifications.**
- The production of a range of information, publicity and promotional material including **the**

Progression Qualification Brochure. This was launched in Belfast Castle in June 07 and the brochure illustrates how this innovative, flexible credit based qualification, which is on the NQF, can be adapted to address a range of learning and development needs.

- Monthly Business Development meetings focus specifically on building our business base with existing and new customers.
- Good progress has been made in ensuring all active customers are centre approved and quality development continues to be a priority; **The developing national quality model, now known as the "Business Process Model" has been monitored closely; A new Quality Reviewers Forum has been firmly established and an Internal Quality Team meets monthly.**
- **Influencing significant external agencies was high on the agenda in 06/07;** A PR company was engaged to raise the profile of OCN accreditation in Northern Ireland and meetings were held with a number of key stakeholders across Northern Ireland.

New Customers 2006/2007



25th Anniversary Event in the Culloden Hotel

On the 2nd of May 2007 OCN NI held a Gala Dinner in the Culloden Hotel to celebrate 25 years of recognising learning throughout the UK. The first OCN was set up in Manchester in 1981 and since then many thousands of learners have received CREDIT for their learning.



The gala evening was a celebration of these achievements in the company of a wide variety of people who have supported the work of the OCN in Northern Ireland. The event was generously sponsored by Grafton Recruitment. Guest speaker Karan Green, Chief Executive of NOCN, spoke of the OCN's distinctive vision to be at the forefront of a comprehensive national credit accumulation and transfer system which promotes social inclusion, wider participation in learning and community transformation. She thanked the team at OCN NI for their consistent approach to offering a high quality service within the Northern Ireland Region.

Peter Wilson, Principal Adviser for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) also addressed guests. He spoke of the influencing role which OCNs have played in shaping the current approach to reforming qualifications in the UK. He also referred to the Manifesto written at the time of setting up the first Open College Network in the early 80's, which committed OCNs to designing flexible courses that allowed adult students in particular to make the fullest use of their learning. This flexibility allowed learners to accumulate **CREDITS** and receive certificates for their learning. OCNs also set out to define **LEVELS** of learning, ranging from basic skills to higher education preparation and these terms are now the common language used within the qualification reform agenda.

Richard Moore, Executive Director of Children in Crossfire, was our after dinner speaker. His work has been the subject of a BBC documentary called 'Blind Vision'. Richard was born and raised in the Creggan Estate in Derry and was shot and blinded by a plastic bullet in May 1972. As an after dinner speaker Richard was both challenging and inspirational. He talked of his own personal experience and how that has shaped his approach to life and work. He explained how he has never allowed bitterness to stunt his personal development. His aspiration is to harness all that he has learned and put it at the service of humanity, particularly children around the world who, like himself, have been caught in the crossfire of violence, as well as poverty and hunger. Richard's organisation Children in Crossfire, have used OCN NI's services to accredit a learning programme for teachers entitled Education for Local & Global Citizenship.

Research into Learner Participation & Progression

OCN NI has acknowledged for some time that to retain our position in the market place we need to demonstrate, using a clear evidence base, that we have the capacity to support the economy and also deliver on widening participation and progression.

To that end OCN NI commissioned a major piece of research into learner participation and progression during 2006/07. The research was carried out on behalf of OCN NI by the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) in conjunction with 5 major providers of education, Belfast Metropolitan College, South Eastern Regional College, Southern Regional College, the Workers Educational Association and Opportunity Youth. The research confirmed the anecdotal evidence we have often heard, that OCN accreditation encourages progression into further learning and into employment.

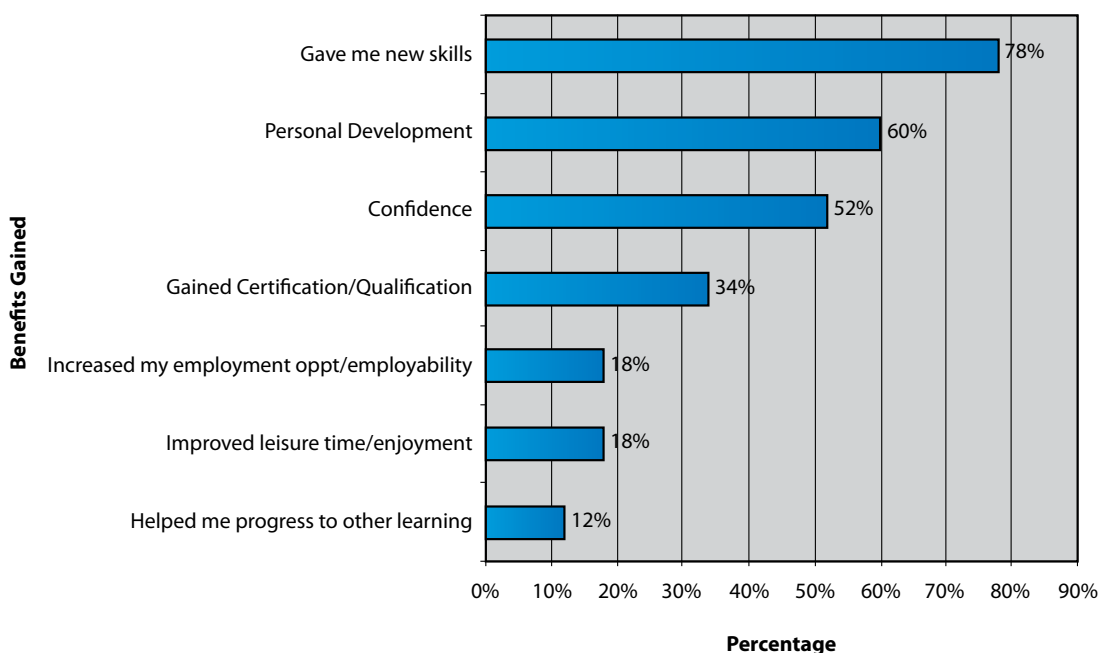
There is clear evidence from the research that provision which is designed to support progression, particularly in vocationally related areas, really works. Learners interviewed highlighted a number of benefits they had experienced from their OCN accredited learning experiences, including increased employment opportunities, re-engagement in the

learning process, progression onto further learning opportunities and the acquisition of new skills.

A significant proportion of learners said they were drawn to their OCN course as they felt it would give them an insight into a particular sphere of learning and that this in turn could help them decide whether to embark on further learning in that area. Re-engagement in the learning process was another reported benefit; a significant proportion of those interviewed noted that they had gone on to further learning. Respondents reported that they were attracted to further learning for personal development reasons, saying that they hoped to gain personal satisfaction, confidence and self-esteem from the course. 52% of those interviewed stated confidence as one of the primary benefits gained and 60% highlighted personal development as a benefit. Employment opportunities were another benefit highlighted and some of the case studies cited in the research report provided excellent examples of this.

Copies of the published research report can be made available by contacting the OCN NI office or by visiting our website at www.ocnni.org.uk

Benefits Gained from undertaking an OCN Course



A Fresh Look for www.ocnni.org.uk

During academic year 06/07 OCN NI invested in the redesign of its website. After consulting with a range of customers from various sector areas, OCN NI began

One of the most significant developments of the new website is the facility for centres to upload student registration files via a secure login area. Username and passwords can be issued to various centre contacts and once logged in customers can upload groups of students, print receipts for the groups they have uploaded and retrieve Recommendation for the Award of Credit (RAC) forms.



Another major development which customers have found invaluable in recent months has been the inclusion of the Progression Qualifications unit library. All 600+ hundreds units that are related to the Progression Qualifications are grouped by curriculum area and can be searched by keyword(s) and/or level. Once the user has found the unit(s) they desire, the unit content can be viewed by clicking on the associated PDF file.

Other key features of the website include;

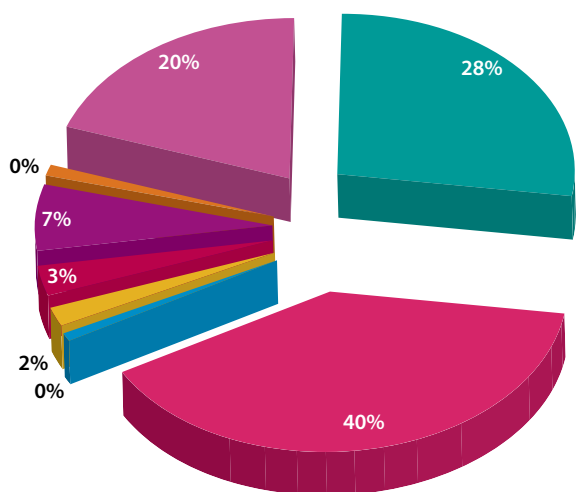
the process of creating a site that would best serve its users. The new website allows OCN NI's customers to quite literally access information at the touch of a button. The 'Home Page' includes a list of menus that link directly to important categories of information and also incorporates a key word search facility, which allows customers quick access to different areas of the site.

- ✓ Direct link to the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ)
- ✓ Booking facility for OCN NI training events
- ✓ Latest news section
- ✓ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- ✓ Testimonials section
- ✓ Document download centre

If you have any suggestions that would help to improve our website and make it more customer focused don't hesitate to contact the OCN NI office.

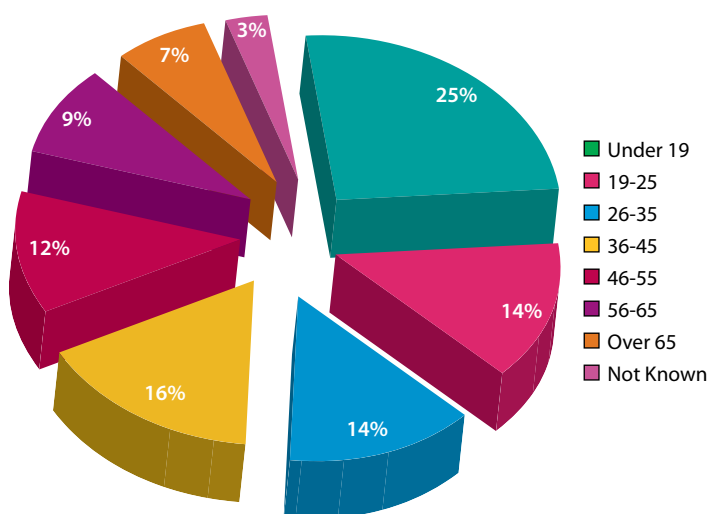
2006-2007 Learner Registration Profiles

% Learners by Centre Type



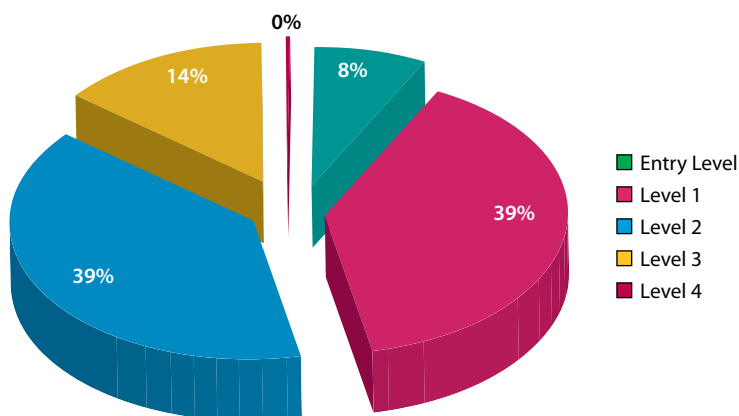
- Adult Education Centre
- FE College / Tertiary Colleges
- HM Prison / Youth Offenders Institution
- Local Government / Central Government / NHS
- Other
- Private Training Provider
- University or Other HE Centres
- Voluntary Organisation

% Learners by Age



- Under 19
- 19-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- Over 65
- Not Known

% Learner Achievement by Level



- Entry Level
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Level 4

Financial Summary

The financial statements of Open College Network Northern Ireland were audited by JL Grant & Co. on the instruction of the trustees.

On 31st July 2007, total funds stood at £536,723, of which £412,894 were unrestricted and £95,000 designated funds.

Total income for 2006/07	Total expenditure for 2006/07
£527,063	£598,221

Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI) is licensed by the National Open College Network (NOCN) and supports learning across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. We offer nationally recognised, flexible, credit-based qualifications which conform to the criteria set out by the Regulatory Authorities.

We work with national and local organisations to develop and widen access to education, training and learning. Since 1995 OCN NI has provided a comprehensive accreditation service to learners throughout Northern Ireland and during that time we have registered over 150,000 learners.

We provide:

- Access to NOCN Vocationally Related Qualifications
- Quality assured accredited learning
- Expertise in credit developments
- A comprehensive programme of training to support delivery
- Advice and guidance with support materials
- Support to all organisations engaged in learning and development

Visit our Website:
www.ocnni.org.uk

Open College Network Northern Ireland
Building 3
212-218 Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast, BT4 3ET
Telephone: (028) 9065 0200
Fax: (028) 9065 5200
Email: info@ocnni.org.uk
Website: www.ocnni.org.uk

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