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Oiliúna Dhún na nGall  
*Donegal Education and  
Training Board*

**Seirbhís Breisoideachas agus Oiliúint (FET)**  
**Further Education and Training (FET) Service**

**Unveiling the Transformative Impact of Mainstreamed VPL Provision in Donegal ETB's FET Service**

Presented by:

**SIOBHAN MURRAY,**  
**VPL COORDINATOR**



**#GoFurtherWithDonegalETB**

# This session aims to:

- Introduce Donegal ETB and our VPL Provision
- Provide evidence of the significance of the VPL process in supporting mobility for individuals.
- Showcase how VPL can transform individual career and educational mobility through the experiences of three recent VPL applicants who experienced challenges due to Brexit, redundancy, and workplace legislation requirements.
- Employer benefits
- Discuss our engagement strategies
- Our vision for the future of VPL within Donegal ETB
- Conclusion and Q&A



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# Donegal Education and Training Board



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## Our Mission

*‘Donegal ETB offers education and training opportunities that helps students to achieve their full potential and to contribute to the social, cultural and economic life of their communities.’*



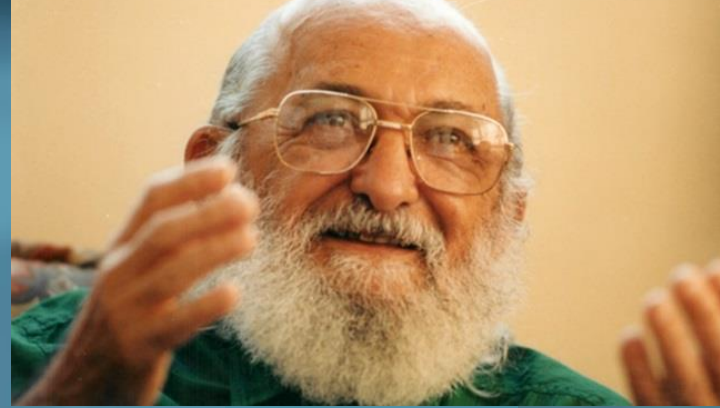
# DLETB's Vision:

Transform Learning,  
Change lives



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- Education either reinforces societal structures or empowers critical engagement and transformation
- Education as a tool for promoting:
  - Social justice
  - Equity
  - Democratic participation
  - Alignment with principles of mobility and democracy in education and career progression

# Call to Action from National and European Legislation



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- VPL was given legal status in Ireland through the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act of 2012.
- Legislation built on European policy including EU Council on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning 2012.
- The significance of these developments in terms of mobility meant:
  - Facilitate movement between educational and training levels.
  - Ensuring inclusivity and fairness
  - Enhance visibility and recognise informal and nonformal learning

Answering the  
call:

2016- 2019

## ‘Initial’ VLP Projects



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2016

DLETB and collaboration with Defence Forces

2017

Year 2 Collaboration with Defence Forces

2018- 2019

Influenced a National VPL Pilot Project, TOBAR in collaboration with the Defence Forces, 10 other ETB's under the auspices of ETB Ireland.

2018

Collaboration with local food group- Foyle Donegal

**August 2020- July 2022**

Validating  
Competencies of  
Care Sector Employees  
(VCCSE )

Collaboration Project  
with LCETB



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VCCSE Project achievements:

- Enhanced alternative assessment for low-qualified participants
- Supported part-time care workers in career development
- Tested replicability with several other sectors
- Defined progression pathways and promoted further engagement with Further Education and Higher Education initiatives

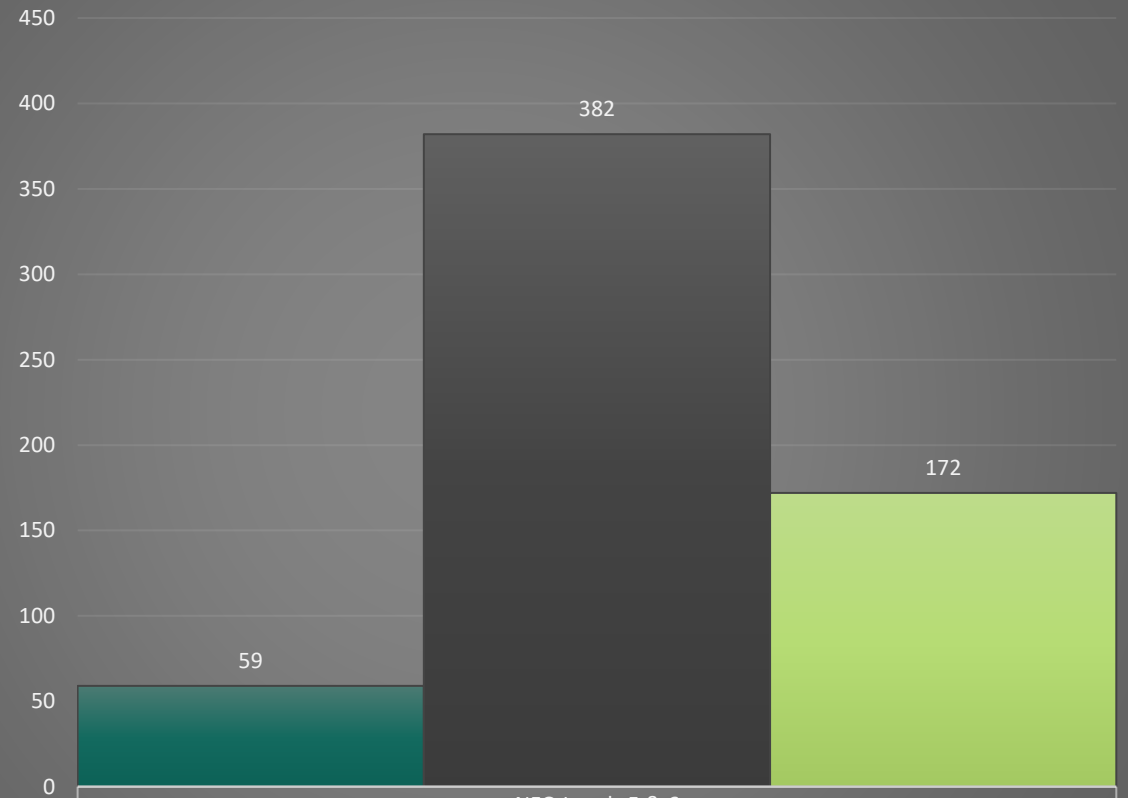
# DLETB VCCSE Beneficiaries



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VCCSE  
DLETB Figures



NFQ Levels 5 & 6	
Aug 2020- Dec 2020	59
Jan 2021- Dec 2021	382
Jan 2022- June 2022	172

# VPL Toolkit



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RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)  
FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FET)



**TOOLKIT FOR EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING PROVIDERS**

# Mainstreamed VPL Provision



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- July 2022 VPL Provision mainstreamed with FET Services
- Jan 2023 Major focus on the childcare sector
- April 2023 VPL Provision moved **to Enterprise Engagement**, under Vinny McGrory, Area Manager.
- Jan 2024 VPL opportunities for the new Advanced Certificate in Early Learning Care (ELC) Stage 1 and Stage 2 (NFQ Levels 4 & 5)
- April 2024 VPL Provision employees:  
F/T Coordinator,  
F/T Administrator,  
15 P/T Mentors,  
6 SME's.  
88 VPL applicants currently registered on the programme.

# Mainstreamed VPL Beneficiaries:

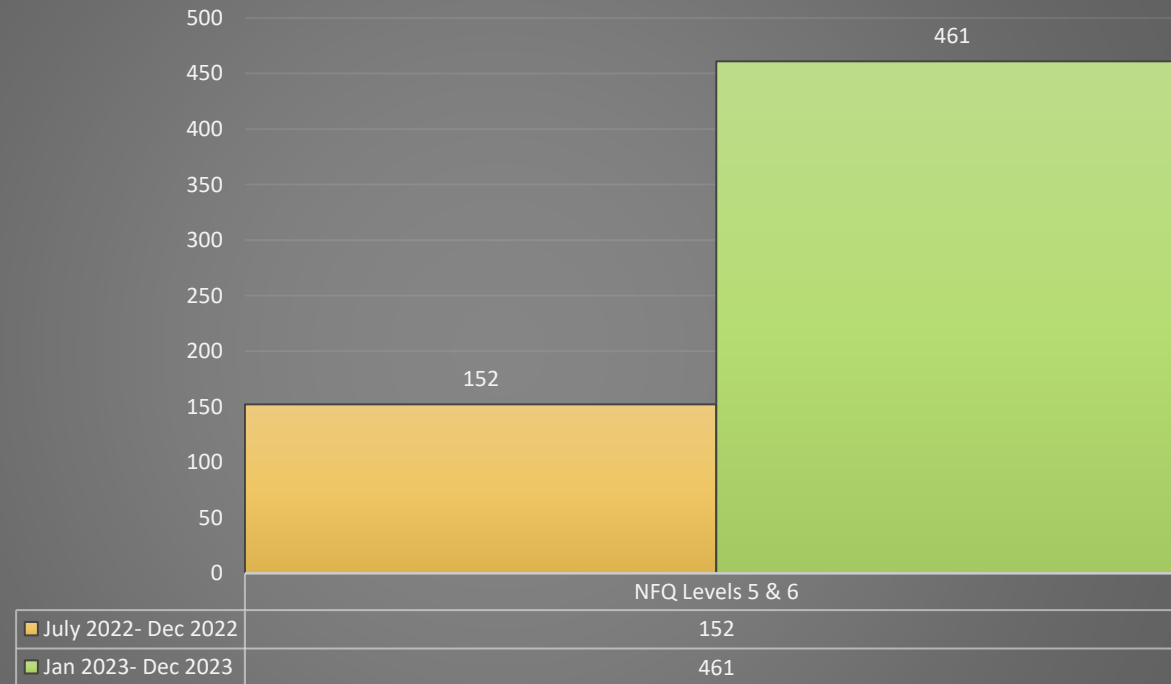
July – Dec. 2022  
and  
Jan. - Dec. 2023



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Mainstreamed Benficaries  
July 2022- Dec 2023



# VPL and the NFQ

VPL career and educational advancement is enabled by the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and the clear standards established through learning outcomes.

Certification through VPL is easily achieved because of:

- Clarity of standards
- VPL's accessible alignment with Learning outcomes
- Documentation of Evidence



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# The role of the VPL Mentor in supporting Career and Educational Mobility



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Mentors empower learners to articulate their learning and gain confidence, enabling them to progress in their careers and further their educational goals.



# Sectors engaging with VPL

There is still a demand from healthcare workers seeking VPL opportunities for awards.

Childcare – with new core funding arrangements, it is a recent requirement for childcare employees to have a relevant QQI Level 6 qualification.

Community and Voluntary sectors including Sports, Community Development, Tourism and Community Employment Schemes.

As Provision becomes more known we are getting referrals from industries outside our current programme offerings, recent requests include Major awards at Level 6 in Software Development and Drama.



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# To Date

Since August 2020- April 2024, **over 1350** beneficiaries have achieved NFQ Major award qualifications at Levels 5-6.

A majority of these have been:

- Level 5** Healthcare  
(Healthcare Support and Health Service Skills)
- Level 5** Business Administration
- Level 6** Management
- Level 6** Business Administration
- Level 6** Business
- Level 6** Early Childhood Education & Curriculum



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# Engagement Strategies:

2020- 2022:

- ☐ Cold calling employers due to Covid- 19 restrictions
- ☐ DLETB Adult Guidance Service

2023- 2024:

- ☐ Promotion through local employment fairs
- ☐ DLETB Programme staff
- ☐ Word of mouth remains the best engagement tool we have.



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# Evelyn Ayton



- Early school leaver who went to work in a local textile manufacturing factory.
- Secured work as a healthcare assistant during COVID-19 due to demand and freeze on qualification requirements.
- Faced significant barriers in completing her awards.



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# Patricia Kelly



- ❖ Faced redundancy after 16 years working for leading financial institutions in various roles including Branch Manager at Ulster Bank. Letterkenny but had no formal qualifications.



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# Nadia Duncan



- ❖ Due to Brexit, moved to Ireland, but her UK qualifications did not meet Irish regulatory standards. Despite having over twenty years of experience working as a Healthcare Assistant, was unable to find employment here.



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# Benefits for the Employer

VPL provides an accelerated route for upskilling pathways. Recognising existing skills (through validation procedures) and working in tandem with skills needs assessment and Donegal ETB's tailored offerings.

VPL enables formal validation of in-house training through certification against national standards.

VPL reduces downtime while employees are engaged in the VPL process whilst recognising the workplace as a learning environment.

Meets regulatory requirements for qualifications.

Provides an efficient route to an award as it avoids duplication of learning already achieved.

Improves mobility opportunities in the workplace.



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# Conclusion

- Changing perspectives: staff embracing VPL's benefits over initial concerns.
- Future plans: A blended approach for all FET learners integrating VPL and up-skilling solutions.
- Final summary of VLP, mobility, and democracy in action



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# Testimonials

“““

“This course has recognised the work that a lot of our care support team had down through the years, particularly older people that never had the confidence to do the paperwork and never thought they could do it and now they see that they can. I have seen their confidence grow.”

**N.H. , Director of Nursing**

“““

“I did my Leaving Certificate and joined the bank soon after and while I have my banking qualifications, these mean nothing to the outside world. Now I have my Level 6 Major award in Management through RPL and have recently signed up with the ETB to do another course. I never thought I could do but now I know I can do and be anything I want to be.”

**UB Customer Service Operator**

“““

“It can be embarrassing to say that you don’t have any qualifications, you just have work experience. So I like the thought of having my qualifications to show that I’m qualified to do the job that I’m doing.”

**A carer for 16 years**



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I would  
now like to  
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For more  
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Contact:



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**Siobhán Murray**  
RPL Coordinator

M. 086 065 5120

T. 074 912 0590

E. [rpl@donegaletb.ie](mailto:rpl@donegaletb.ie)

W. [donegaletb.ie](http://donegaletb.ie)



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