



Coiste Gairmoideachais
Thiobraid Árann Thuaidh

North Tipperary
Vocational Education Committee

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Foreword



David Leahy
Príomhoifigeach Feidhmiúcháin

I have pleasure in writing this foreword to North Tipperary VEC's first Staff Handbook. North Tipperary VEC provides a wide range of services to people within North Tipperary VEC and to do this the Committee employs approximately 700 staff. It is important that staff have an understanding of the organisation and their rights and duties as employees of this organisation.

The purpose of this handbook is therefore to provide members of the staff with general information in relation to their employment with the Committee. The handbook is based on official documents inclusive of relevant legislation and circular letters issued by the Department of Education and Science and is not intended to replace either the legislation or circular letters. In this regard we do not claim complete accuracy or correctness regarding the contents particularly related to legislation and circulars.

In the event that you require further particulars on any of the areas covered it is recommended that you consult with your Principal/Manager in the first instance in order to gain access to the appropriate official documentation.

I thank each member of the staff who contributed to the development of this handbook and I hope it will provide relevant information for all our staff.

David Leahy
Príomhoifigeach Feidhmiúcháin

August 2009

Overview of Services Provided by North Tipperary VEC

Organisational Mission, Aims and Culture

North Tipperary VEC's mission statement states:

It is the mission of North Tipperary VEC to contribute to the development of a democratic, inclusive, accepting and prosperous society by optimising the potential of each learner who uses its service in a caring environment.

Arising out of this statement North Tipperary VEC has derived its organisational aims:

- 1. To keep learners' needs as the central focus of all developments*
- 2. To listen and respond appropriately to relevant staff needs*
- 3. To provide a quality service in a manner which is cost effective*
- 4. To enhance and sustain our capacity to respond to the changing demands and high expectations of service users in an increasingly complex educational environment.*

The organisation's mission and aims will be achieved through the ongoing development and maintenance of an organisational learning culture that will:

Put into practice the essential elements associated with a Community of Learning throughout the organisation.

Overview of North Tipperary VEC

The history of North Tipperary VEC stretches back to 1900 when a Technical Instruction Committee was established. Following this, one of the first major pieces of legislation enacted by the new state, the Vocational Education Act of 1930, enabled the VEC to set about developing a wide range of education and development services for the people of North Tipperary. All our activities now take place in the context of the 1998 Education Act which legislated for the entire education sector, the 1930 Act and the 2001 Vocational Education (Amendment) Act.

Under the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 2001 responsibility for the development of policy rests with the Vocational Education Committee and is a reserved function. The implementation of policy is an executive function.

North Tipperary VEC is funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES) and is advised by them through circular letters and collective agreements (for example, regarding pay and conditions) on an ongoing basis.

North Tipperary VEC provides a broad range of educational services including post primary schools and colleges, further and adult education

- North Tipperary VEC manages five Post-Primary and one Further Education College.
- Its Adult Education Service provides programmes which include the following:
 - Adult Literacy & Basic Education
 - Youthreach

- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)
 - Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)
 - Senior Traveller Training
 - Adult Guidance and Information.
- The Administrative Offices at Church Road Nenagh, provide the essential support services to the Schools, Colleges, Adult Education Centres and Services.
 - North Tipperary VEC also caters for the Youth of the County, employing a Youth Officer to implement a Youth Work development plan and strategy.

Second Level and Adult Education Services

North Tipperary VEC manages and administers five Post Primary schools, one Further Education College and six Adult Education Programmes and services in the county.

SCHOOL/COLLEGE/CENTRE	LOCATION
Nenagh Vocational School	Nenagh
Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed	Thurles
Coláiste Phobal	Roscrea
Borrisokane Community College	Borrisokane
St. Joseph's/Newport College	Newport
St. Sheelan's College of Further Education	Templemore
Teach an Léinn:	Nenagh
– Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)	
– Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)	
– Adult Literacy and Basic Education	
– Further Education Support Services	
Coláiste Éile (VTOS and BTEI)	Thurles
Roscrea Education Centre	Roscrea
– Youthreach and BTEI	
Céim Eile Youthreach Progression	Templemore
Lifelong Learning Service:	Nenagh
– Community Education	
– Back to Education Initiative	
– Research and Development	
– Adult Guidance and Information	
– Adult Education Officer	
– Youth Officer.	

North Tipperary VEC Post Primary Schools and Colleges and Adult Education Programmes and Services

Second Level Provision

Second level education builds on the foundation of primary education. The aim is to provide a comprehensive, high-quality learning environment which enables all students to live full lives appropriate to their stage of development, and to realize their potential as individuals and as citizens. Within this developmental framework other programmes have been introduced to cater for the diverse needs of the learner creating a more inclusive system of education. Second-level education consists of a three-year junior cycle followed by a two or three-year senior cycle.

Junior Cycle

Junior Certificate: The junior cycle covers a vital period in young people's lives when they encounter significant changes in their educational experience. The principal objective of the junior cycle is for students to complete broad, balanced and coherent courses of study in a variety of curricular areas relevant to their own personal development and allow them to achieve a level of competence which will enable them to proceed to senior cycle education. There are two separate programmes in the junior cycle, the Junior Certificate and the Junior Certificate Schools Programme. The Junior Certificate examination is taken after three years.

The Junior Certificate Schools Programme: This is a relatively recent development in the junior cycle which caters for a broader spectrum of learner needs. It is currently being offered in Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed and Newport College.

Senior Cycle

The senior cycle has undergone significant restructuring in recent years and now has four options: Transition Year, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied. The Minister for Education and Science has conducted a major review of the Leaving Certificate through the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. The recommendations arising are currently under consideration.

Transition Year: The transition year programme is part of the senior cycle programme and was introduced as one of the major innovations in Irish education. This programme is optional and provides students with an opportunity to experience a wide range of educational inputs and work experience. This programme is substantially removed from an examination focus.

The Leaving Certificate: The Leaving Certificate examination is held at the end of the senior cycle in post-primary schools. It is the terminal examination of post-primary education. The senior cycle caters for pupils in the 15 to 18 year old age group. Students normally sit for the examination at the age of 17 or 18, after 5 or 6 years of post-primary education. Pupils following the established Leaving Certificate programme must take at least five subjects, including Irish. In recent years more mature students are studying for the Leaving Certificate examination in both second level schools and further education centres. A major review of the Leaving Certificate has been carried out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment at the request of the Minister for Education and Science and, as stated above, the Minister is now considering this review.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP): Students following the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) study the normal Leaving Certificate programme with a concentration on technical subjects and some additions. Because of its high vocational content it attracts funding from the European Social Fund. It was first introduced in 1989. In 1994 it was expanded to broaden the choice of subjects and to strengthen the vocational content by including three link modules on Enterprise Education, Preparation for Work and Work Experience.

Students following the LCVP in its redesigned form study:

-
- Five Leaving Certificate subjects, including two subjects chosen from a set of vocational subjects
 - A recognised course in a modern European language
 - Three mandatory Link Modules.

Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA): This is a self-contained two-year programme replacing and expanding on the existing Senior Certificate and Vocational Preparation and Training programmes. It is person-centred, involving a cross-curricular approach rather than a subject based structure. Its primary objective is the preparation of participants for adult and working life through relevant learning experiences which develop the following areas of human endeavour: spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic and physical. The framework of the Leaving Certificate Applied consists of a number of modules grouped under three general headings:

1. General Education (at least 30%)
2. Vocational Education (at least 30%)
3. Vocational Preparation (at least 25%)

The Leaving Certificate Applied is intended to meet the needs of those students who either choose not to opt for other Leaving Certificate programmes or who are not adequately catered for by other Leaving Certificate programmes.

While certification in the Leaving Certificate Applied is not a qualification for direct entry to third-level courses, students who successfully complete the programme are able to proceed to many Post-Leaving Certificate courses. They can then gain entry to third-level education.

The School Completion Programme (SCP)

This programme is an important part of the Department of Education and Science strategy to discriminate positively in favour of children and young people who are at risk of early school leaving. The School Completion Programme (SCP) aims to develop local strategies to ensure maximum participation levels in the education process. The Programme incorporates the elements of good practice established by the pilot phases of the 8 - 15 Year Old Early School Leaver Initiative (ESLI), and the Stay in School Retention Initiative (SSRI) at second level (outlined below). It is funded on a multi-annual basis under the National Development Plan with assistance from the European Social Fund.

Stay in School Retention Initiative (SSRI)

At the core of this initiative is a multi-annual written retention plan or agreement drawn up between the school and the Department of Education and Science with the requirement that the school as a driver of the initiative operates on a multi-agency basis and establishes cross community links in delivering on its commitments. It is part financed by the European Union Structural Funds under the National Development Plan. From September 2006 these two initiatives, SSRI and SCP will be integrated into the School Support Programme (DÉIS) on a phased basis.

Further Education

The term "Further Education" embraces education and training which occurs after second-level schooling but which is not part of the third-level system. It includes programmes such as Post Leaving Certificate courses, second chance education for the unemployed (the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme), and for early school

leavers in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres, adult literacy and basic education. It also includes second-level schools and self-funded adult programmes.

A distinctive feature of further education generally is its diversity and breadth of provision, and its linkages with other services such as employment, training, partnership, welfare, youth, school, juvenile liaison, justice and community and voluntary sector interests. A wide range of government departments, statutory agencies and voluntary and community organisations provide services in this area. The past twenty years has seen a dramatic growth in further education provision with the establishment of VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme), Youthreach, the rapid expansion of PLC courses (Post Leaving Certificate) and more recently BTEI (Back to Education Initiative).

Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLC): These are full-time one and two year programmes of integrated education, training and work experience provided in schools and colleges outside the third level sector. The post leaving certificate course aims to prepare participants for employment or further education/training, as well as developing the learner's skills for specific occupations.

Adult Literacy and Basic Education: This involves one to one tuition and group tuition throughout North Tipperary. The service is provided by trained personnel and voluntary tutors. Students receive on average two hours tuition per week. Personal development skills are an integral part of this programme. A key element is support for the progression of the learner. North Tipperary VEC has published a series of three basic texts in Mathematics - Foundation Mathematics: Learners' Course Book 1, Learners' Course Book 2, and Learners' Course Book 3 Assessment Workbook.

Youthreach Foundation: Youthreach Foundation is a programme for young people between 15 and 20 years who have left the formal education system without qualifications, or are unemployed. The aim of the programme is to provide participants with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to successfully make the transition to work and adult life. Work experience forms an important part, as does support for the learner to explore progression opportunities.

Youthreach Progression: This programme is for young people aged 16-20 who wish to enhance their employment opportunities by building on the experience gained on foundation courses generally or the Youthreach Foundation programme in particular. There is a strong emphasis on personal development and social integration.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS): This programme is targeted at unemployed people over 21 years of age and aims to provide two years education for participants. Students follow a range of courses including FETAC Levels 3 to 5, Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate. They can form a class group within a recognised centre or enrol as individual students in dispersed mode in PLC courses, for example.

Adult Community Education: This programme aims to support community groups organise and set up learning opportunities in the local community. Community education offers the learners an opportunity to 'taste' lifelong learning. It targets specific groups such as women's groups, men's groups, older people, Travellers, asylum seekers and people with disabilities.

Back to Education Initiative (BTEI): The Back to Education Initiative was introduced to North Tipperary in 2002. The objective is to increase access to education by providing

part-time courses. The target group includes adults with less than upper secondary education. The BTEI also aims to facilitate education at times, venues and through modes of delivery that are learner friendly.

Traveller Education: This is a programme for Travellers who have left the formal education system without qualifications, or are unemployed. The aim of the programme is to provide participants with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to successfully make the transition to work and adult life. Work experience forms an important part, as does support for the learner to explore progression opportunities.

Self-Financing Adult Education: The self-financing adult education programme provides a range of learning opportunities organised by the committee and funded by the participants. The approach to learning in these programmes is one where the tutor and learner are working in partnership. To date this programme consists of the following: skills training, professional development, third level education, community education, hobby and leisure courses. Courses are mainly organised through the post primary schools and further education centres.

Work-place Learning: Workplace Learning within North Tipperary VEC refers to education which takes place in partnership between employers and the VEC. It aims at improving the basic skills of employees in the workplace. Subjects covered include Basic Computers, Personal Development, Communication Skills, Improving English skills and Maths skills. The first Workplace Learning Programme was run from September 2002 to April 2003 in a partnership between local authorities and the VEC. It was very successful and is expanding. In 2005 NTVEC established a Work-Place Learning Steering Groups to evaluate the current context and to develop policies and practices in response to this challenge. North Tipperary VEC now provides workplace education programmes including Skills for Work, Return to Learning, Return to Education, and SkillIVEC.

The North Tipperary Adult Guidance Service

North Tipperary became part of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative Phase Four Pilot project in September 2005; it is staffed by a Guidance Counsellor /Co-Ordinator and an Information Officer. North Tipperary VEC submitted an application for an additional Guidance Counsellor in 2007, however, this application was unsuccessful.

The service was established in response to The White Paper on Adult Education, "Learning for Life". This paper set out proposals for the development of an adult educational guidance service to support participants in VTOS, Adult Literacy and Basic Education, Adult Community Education Programmes and also clients of the Redress Board.

The key activities on a very broad sense are to provide educational and career guidance counselling, and information services to clients and groups, and to provide referral services to other agencies where necessary, also, to liaise with staff and service providers in the area in order to receive and give feedback on clients and groups where appropriate.

Other Services Provided by North Tipperary VEC

Youth Services

The implementation of the Youth Work Act, 2001 has led to the appointment of a Youth Officer to lead and direct the Youth Work functions on behalf of the Committee.

The commencement of these Youth Work functions will be supported and validated by a Youth Work Committee with the composition specified in Section 20 of the Youth Work Act, 2001 to

undertake the functions assigned to the Committee in respect of Youth Work. In addition, the Vocational Education Committee will, in accordance with Section 21 of the Act establish a Voluntary Youth Council to discharge the functions assigned to that Council by the Act.

Legislative Environment and the Changing Context for North Tipperary VEC

In recent years there has been a significant increase in legislation and other initiatives which impacts on the education sector as a whole. Key pieces of legislation and other relevant initiatives are outlined below including:

- Legislation and White Papers
- Education Initiatives, Programmes and Curricula
- Local Government Changes
- EU Initiatives.

Legislation and White Papers

The Education Act, 1998

This is the first comprehensive education legislation enacted by the Irish State. This Act aims to:

- Provide education of all persons including those with disabilities or special educational needs
- Ensure that the education system is accountable
- Enable partnership between all partners in the provision of education
- Recognise and fund education
- Establish the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

A number of important provisions in this Act dealing with schools, the inspectorate, the principal and teachers, the NCCA and examinations and organisational matters will impact on the operation of the second level and further education service of NTVEC.

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999

This act will have a major impact on the Further Education Programme including Post Leaving Certificate courses in second level schools. This Act aims to:

- Establish an administrative structure for the development, recognition and award of education and training qualifications in the state
- Establish the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)
- Provide for the dissolution and repeal of related matters.

Under the Act, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) have been established. These bodies will facilitate, promote and certify programmes of learning and training at each of the levels on the new National Qualifications Framework. These developments will complement and enhance the vision that North Tipperary VEC outlines in this document for all areas of education and training under its remit. Furthermore it provides the

opportunity to develop programmes in education and training and have these certified and accepted nationally and internationally.

The Education Welfare Act, 2000

This act gives important rights for an education to individual students. It has serious implications for admission and exclusion policies of all education providers. It aims to:

- Provide a certain minimum education as an entitlement of every child
- Establish the National Education Welfare Board
- Provide for repeals, amendments and related matters.

The Vocational Education Amendment Act, 2001

This legislation modernises the VEC sector. It provides for:

- A broader, more representative membership
- The preparation of Education and Service plans
- Co-operation between VEC's
- The separation of executive and policy functions. (Policy is the remit of the Vocational Education Committee, while executive functions are reserved to the CEO and management).
- Repeals, amendments and related matters.

The Youth Work Act, 2001

This act will add a Youth Work dimension to the work of the VEC. It provides for:

- Vocational Education Committees to support Youth Work at local level
- The appointment of an assessor of Youth Work
- The establishment of Youth Councils
- The development and co-ordination of organisations and persons engaged in Youth Work
- The establishment of a National Youth Work Advisory Committee
- Repeals, amendments and related matters.

The Teaching Council Act, 2001

The Teaching Council Act will help improve the professional status of teachers. It provides for:

- The promotion of teaching as a profession and the professional development of teachers
- The maintaining and improving of standards within the profession
- The establishment of related policies and procedures
- The registration and regulation of teachers
- The establishment of the Teaching Council
- Repeals, amendments and related matters.

The Official Languages Act 2003

The primary objectives of this act are to:

- Ensure better availability of public services through Irish
- Place a statutory obligation on public bodies to make specific provision for the delivery of services through Irish

NTVEC will, on the basis of a request from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht affairs draw an initial three-year scheme which will identify the services it will provide through Irish.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs 2004

This Act adopts a rights-based approach and will enable parents of children with special educational needs to enforce the right to education through a mediation and appeals systems and ultimately, if necessary, through the courts. The Act provides for:

- The education of people with Special Educational Needs in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs
- The same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs
- Assisting children with special educational needs to leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives
- The greater involvement of parents of children with special educational needs in the education of their children
- The establishment of the National Council for Special Education.

Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2002

This Bill will ensure that persons with disabilities have the same rights to avail and benefit from education provision as their peers. The Act provides for:

- People with disabilities to have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have disabilities
- The support and assistance of children with disabilities to leave school with the skills necessary to participate to the greatest extent practicable, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society.

Other Children's Legislation

NTVEC will ensure that all policies related to children and young people under our care will take account of our obligations as set down under the following legislation:

- *The Children Act 2001*
- *The Ombudsman for Children Act 2002*
- *Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996.*

Immigration Bill 2002

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform described this Bill, at its launch, as an instrument to help achieve the Government's objectives:

“to ensure that anyone arriving in the State who is genuinely in need of the protection of the State is identified as such as soon as possible after they arrive, so that they can immediately start the process of integration into Irish society and take up the rights to which they are entitled under the 1951 Convention on the status of Refugees”

Our history informs us that we as a State, and our education system in particular, has obligations in this area. It is now pay back time to a world that, in the past, received millions of Irish citizens who went abroad in need.

Employment-related Legislation

As an organisation we will continually enhance the quality of the working experience for all our employees by responding appropriately to current and new employment-related legislation including:

- *Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointment) Act 2004*
- *Employment Equality Acts, 1998 - 2007*
- *Equal Status Acts, 2000 - 2004*
- *Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 to 2003*
- *Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004*
- *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005*
- *The Protection Of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003*
- *The Protection Of Employees (Part-time) Act 2001*
- *The Organising of Working Time Act 1997*
- *Adoptive Leave Act 1995*
- *Maternity Protection Act 1994*
- *Redundancy Payment Act 1967 - 1991*
- *Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Act 1967 - 1991*
- *Payment of Wages Act 1991*
- *Industrial Relations Act 1990*
- *The Unfair Dismissals Acts 1997 - 1993*

Accountability and Ethics-related Legislation

NTVEC will carry out all its activities in a transparent and ethical manner and will be informed by current legislation including:

- *Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993*
- *Ethics in Public Office Act 1995*
- *Standards in Public Office Act 2001*
- *Data Protection Acts 1998 to 2003*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1997, as amended 2003*
- *Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1996.*

Learning for Life: White Paper on Lifelong Learning, 2000

This White Paper establishes a framework for the development of lifelong learning and outlines core principles and objectives. The proposed structures outline a clear role for the VEC. The issuing of Circular Letter 46/00 is of even greater significance. This Circular letter establishes a positive framework for the development of further education in second level schools.

Education Programmes, Curricula and Related Initiatives

In recent years the Department of Education and Science have taken a number of important initiatives as the following list demonstrates.

School Development Planning

This initiative is intended to assist schools to meet their obligations under the 1998 Education Act. It involves piloting the concept of school planning, and providing training and support for school boards, principals, and staff in this area. North Tipperary VEC's Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed, Thurles was one of the pilot schools.

School development planning is an integral part of North Tipperary VEC's Education Plan as the plan for each individual school, institution and programme will feed into the overall planning process. Methods similar to those involved with school development planning are used to develop individual plans within schools, education centres and programmes.

Whole School Evaluation

This is an initiative to help provide objective, dependable, high quality data on the education system and individual units within the system. It will help with an ongoing needs analysis for service delivery at second level.

National Educational Psychological Service

This is a dedicated agency established to provide an educational psychological service for all primary and post primary schools. Although the service is being expanded and developed as structured at present it is unable to cope with demand.

Schools IT 2000

The aim here is to ensure that pupils in every school have an opportunity to achieve computer and internet literacy to equip them to participate in the information society.

Curricular / Programme Development

Examples are the new primary curriculum and ongoing revisions and reviews at Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels. In 2004 the NCCA published its review and recommendations of post-primary senior-cycle education, *Developing Senior Cycle Education: Directions for Development*, which provides many challenging propositions for this sector.

Primary Curriculum

The most significant initiative here is the overall reform of the primary school curriculum. This will have implications for the education level and capabilities of students entering second level education as well as for lifelong learning. The teaching of language is an example, with the introduction of European Languages to pupils at Primary level.

The Education Disadvantage Board

This Board has been established to tackle education disadvantage in a coherent way. The work of the Mol an Óige Project is a valuable resource for this Board and will also contribute to ongoing developments in North Tipperary VEC.

Back to Education Initiative

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) was introduced in 2002. This national initiative aims to provide part-time educational opportunities for young people (over fifteen years) and adults with less than upper secondary education. These opportunities are provided in a range of settings i.e. schools, education centres and programmes, by North Tipperary VEC.

The McIver Report (PLC Review), 2002

This report, commissioned by the DES looked at Post Leaving Cert (PLC) programmes and provision in this sector. Its recommendations are aimed at the larger colleges and providers in this area but it does make reference to pro rata provision for units such as VECs. The report acknowledges the contribution that participants in these programmes are making to the Irish economy and recommends a considerable increase in the

allocation of resources including teaching, support and physical resources. While this report is yet to be implemented, North Tipperary VEC has established an organisational structure - Institiúid Thuamhumhan - to manage this sector and to avail of the benefits of its introduction in the interest of learners and of its own role as a provider.

Commission on School Accommodation Report, 2002 "Planning School Provision - Three Praxes"

Included in the terms of reference given to this Commission was a request:

"to provide information on current and projected positions in relation to school provision...and to address specific geographical areas requiring particular attention".

The report and its recommendations are set in present and projected demographic changes, in educational developments and the patronage of schools. The Commission's plans and recommendations will be influenced in no small way by the plans and aspirations of communities in outlining needs both physical and educational. It refers to allocation of facilities being:

"based upon perceived needs in the context of maintaining and improving the range and quality of educational provision in an area".

National Drugs Strategy

The National Drugs Strategy was developed by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs (NACD). As part of that strategy regional drugs task forces have been established. The aim of the strategy is to tackle drug abuse through:

- Improved research
- Establishing the prevalence of drug abuse
- Looking at ways of preventing drug abuse
- Looking at better treatment and rehabilitation
- Considering the consequences for Irish society.

As part of the national drugs strategy each school and centre is required to develop a substance use policy. Policies are in place in all NTVEC schools and centres and will be implemented, monitored, evaluated and adapted to the evolving contexts on an ongoing basis.

Local Government Initiative

Two local government initiatives are discussed in this section - the County Development Board and the Childcare Committee.

County Development Board

The establishment of the County Development Boards as part of the Better Local Government Initiative has important implications for North Tipperary VEC:

- The CEO represents the education sector on the County Development Board. This involves consultation with all of the education partners including FÁS and other education and training providers on the future development of education and training in the county.
- State agencies have agreed to act in partnership to respond to the priorities identified in the County Development Board Plan.

Childcare Committee

The issue of childcare has been under review for a considerable period of time. As a result of references in the National Development Plan and the launch of the National Childcare Strategy, childcare strategy for the region is now under the aegis of the North Tipperary Childcare Committee and the County Development Board. The VEC is represented by the AEO on this committee which operates in collaboration with other organisations such as the HSE and FÁS. Its overall objective is to devise a strategy that will inform and influence the provision of childcare for those in North Tipperary who wish to avail of childcare facilities. Included in this category are parents who work or who wish to avail of educational opportunities.

EU Initiatives

EU initiatives provide an important opportunity for the VEC to extend its horizons. The VEC continues to be involved with EU projects. It is currently involved, with Spain and Turkey, in a Learning Partnership which aims to improve English competencies with groups of non-Irish Nationals.