

# Co. Kildare VEC Community Education Service (CES) Community Education Best Practice Guidelines



**Contact:** Susan Cullinane Community Education Facilitator  
Fiona O'Keeffe Community Education Outreach Worker

Community Education Service  
Jigginstown  
Naas  
Co Kildare

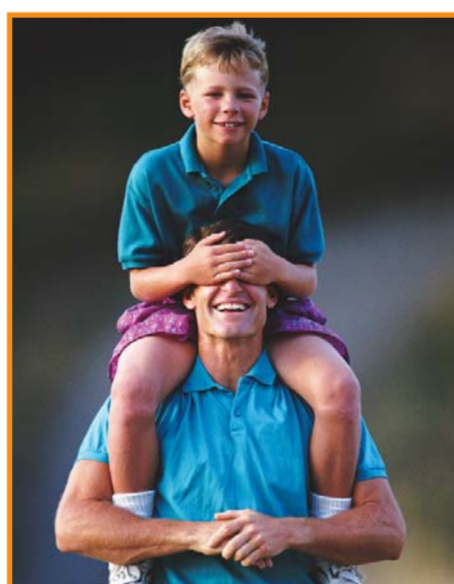
045 881863  
info@abce.ie  
[www.kildarevec.ie/adultfurther-education/community-education](http://www.kildarevec.ie/adultfurther-education/community-education)



Community Education works towards empowering and connecting people and communities, through a process of self discovery, learning and collective action to achieve equality and social and environmental justice

## Background

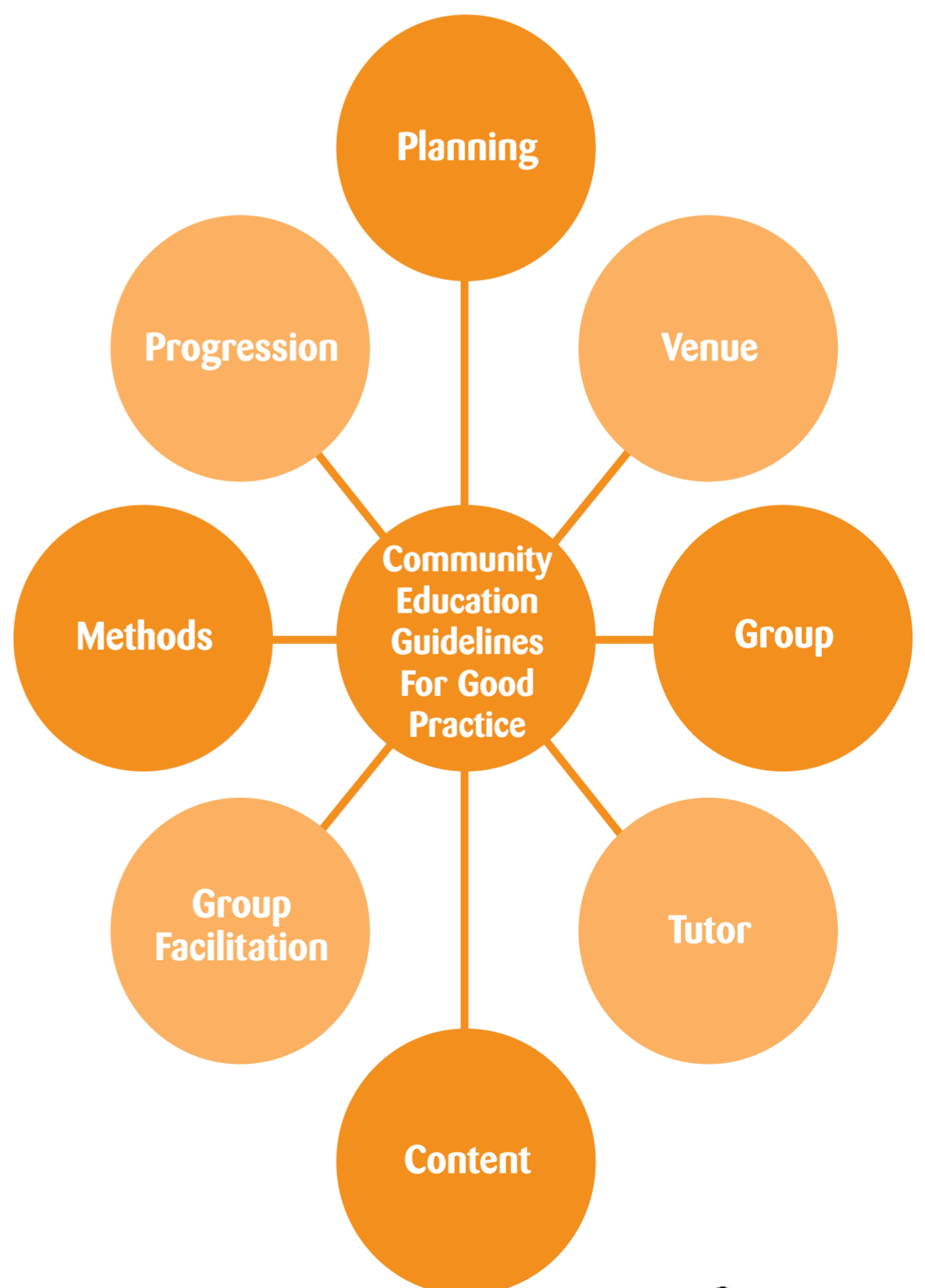
These guidelines and definition were drawn up as a result of a CES Annual Review in June 2009 and two subsequent in-service days on the theme 'Sharing Good Community Education Practice'. Our heartfelt thanks to all those who participated. It was felt that while many groups and organisations offer 'Community Education' there was a lack of clarity about what that means in practice. As a CES we decided to develop these Guidelines so that we are clear about the way we work and hopefully others will find them helpful too.



## What is Community Education?

Community Education is an approach to education. It seeks to support the development of individuals and their communities and was defined as follows by the workshop participants: **Community Education works towards empowering and connecting people and communities, through a process of self discovery, learning and collective action to achieve equality and social and environmental justice.**

It is an approach that operates along a continuum from **Personal Development to Community Development to Social Analysis and Political Participation**. Each area is equally important and in working from best practice we want to integrate the four areas rather than becoming stagnant at any one stage. What follows is a list of factors to take into account when offering Community Education under the headings Planning, Venue, Group, Tutor, Content, Facilitation, Methods and Progression. Alongside the list it is highlighted at which part of the continuum this factor is working. By using these guidelines when planning you will be able to see to what extent you are operating from best practice and which areas of the continuum you are strong in and which need to be more actively addressed.





# CO. KILDARE VEC COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERVICE (CES) COMMUNITY EDUCATION – BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

	Personal	Community	Social Analysis	Political Participation
<b>Planning</b>				
• Participant Led	●	●	●	●
• Holistic	●	●	●	●
• Clear target group and methods to engage them	●	●	●	●
• Identify possible barriers and the supports needed to overcome them	●	●	●	●
• Locally based	●	●	●	●
• Partnership approach	●	●	●	●
• Prioritise those who have not benefited from education to date	●	●	●	●
<b>Learning Venue</b>				
• Welcoming	●	●	●	●
• Comfortable	●	●	●	●
• Accessible	●	●	●	●
• Tea Break	●	●		
<b>Group</b>				
• Size – ideally between 10 and 15 so that there is a good dynamic + everyone has space to participate	●			
• Group Closed after 2nd session	●			
• Follow up participants who miss 2 sessions in a row without explanation	●	●		
• Proactively inclusive	●	●	●	●
• In mixed groups no more than 30% from any group to encourage integration	●	●	●	●
• Where there are participants who are not independent learners, a support person should attend with them so that all participants have a positive experience	●	●	●	●
<b>Tutor – Engage a tutor who...</b>				
• Works from a Community Education perspective	●	●	●	●
• Has good awareness of self and boundaries	●			
• Is congruent, empathetic and displays unconditional positive regard for learners	●			
• Has good listening skills	●			
• Is sensitive to learners needs	●			
• Challenges learners while providing support	●			
• Refers participants to other services where appropriate via the course organiser	●			
• Attends to self care – attends in-service / de briefing with organiser / peer support sessions	●			
• Lives locally if possible	●			
• Is aware of and integrates diversity in the group	●	●	●	●
<b>Content</b>				
• Explore 'hopes' and 'fears' at first session	●			
• Start where the group is and acknowledge and build on previous experience	●	●	●	●
• Agree course content with participants so that it builds confidence while stretching the ability of the group and is meaningful to their lives	●	●		
• Incorporate community development	●	●		
• Incorporate active citizenship	●	●	●	●
• Incorporate global perspectives	●	●	●	●
• Incorporate environmental awareness	●	●	●	●
• Integrate the personal, collective, social analysis and political aspects of each topic	●	●	●	●
<b>Sample Courses</b>				
Parenting, Baby Massage, Structured Play	●	●		
Healthy Eating	●			
Computers for the Terrified, Internet and Email	●			
Stress Management, Yoga	●			
Committee Skills	●	●		
Self + the Bigger Picture	●	●	●	●
Active Citizenship	●	●	●	●
Community Art	●	●	●	●
Community Development	●	●	●	●
Community Leadership	●	●	●	●
Development Education	●	●	●	●
Social Analysis	●	●	●	●
Women's Studies	●	●	●	●
Understanding Local Government	●	●	●	●
<b>Group Facilitation</b>				
• Spend time on introductions so learners get to know each other and build group relationships	●	●		
• Opening and Closing ritual / check in	●	●		
• Agree group contract at first session	●	●		
• Normalise mistakes as part of learning	●			
• Balance task + process – the goal is the growth of each person not only the achievement of certification	●			
• Encourage the development of trust and safety	●	●		
• Validate each persons contribution	●			
• Take account of multiple intelligences and differing learning styles	●			
• Involve participants in group decision making and practicalities of the group	●	●		
• Tune into the group mood and reflect to group e.g. low energy, underlying tension	●	●		
• Include and encourage participants	●			
• Explore individual needs vs. group needs	●	●		
• Expect equality in attitudes + actions - challenge stereotypes / discrimination / stereotyping	●	●	●	●
• Ongoing feedback + review during the course and evaluation at the end	●	●		
<b>Methods</b>				
• Make methods explicit so group knows what is going to happen + the reason e.g. note taking is only for self – can be honest	●			
• Question what we take for granted	●		●	●
• Discussion	●	●		
• Physical movement e.g. mixing learners, physical exercises	●			
• Look at alternatives	●	●	●	●
• Pros + Cons	●			
• Quality of our facts	●		●	●
• Personal vs. Big Picture – what scope for change?	●	●	●	●
• Exploring Power	●	●	●	●
• Current Affairs	●	●	●	●
• Journaling	●			
• Critical Reflection – look at assumptions, ideas, values and beliefs	●	●	●	●
• Showcasing work	●	●	●	●
<b>Progression</b>				
• Identify and explore collective actions the group can take and supports needed to achieve that	●	●		
• Exploring progression – further education, community activism, joining other groups etc	●	●	●	●