

## **National Discussion - Working with Volunteers in ESOL Provision**

Minimum Requirements, Training and Volunteer Support

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2018 GCVS, Glasgow**

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Below are notes taken during our discussion. Some questions were not answered as the discussion was fairly organic. We have left them in for possible future consideration. Some participants offer to share resources they have/know of and we have included this with a bullet point. Where possible we have included links for resources mentioned.

### **Discussion– minimum requirements**

Minimum requirements depends on volunteer role and organisational capacity. Some organisations can ask for a qualification and some provide them.

Available SQA certified courses for potential volunteers can be found here (more information can be found if you sign in to SQA Academy:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42436.html> - SQA qualification in TESOL – 3 levels

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64695.html> PDA in Tutoring Adult Literacies Learning (this is new TQAL)

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/65433.html> PDA in Support Adult Literacies Learning

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42125.html> Community/volunteering awards

Other volunteering roles – it was recognised that non-native speakers, specifically mentioned were VPR Syrian adults who want to help, have skills that would be helpful for ESOL learners, we considered that volunteer projects might think about how to involve people, what they could do and what trying and support they need. The Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages project was mentioned [http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/news\\_and\\_events/blogs/3235\\_sharing\\_lives\\_sharing\\_languages](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/news_and_events/blogs/3235_sharing_lives_sharing_languages)

### **Discussion - Minimum requirement and Training**

#### **1. What topics do you cover during the induction training?**

This varied between participating organisations (Glasgow ESOL Forum invite people to share some basic information about their project for volunteer coordinators and volunteers' use)

<http://www.glasgowesol.org/volunteer-tutor-projects-in-scotland> :

Some examples:

- CELTA equivalent to enrol then 2 x 0.5 days (Glasgow ESOL Forum)
- 2x 0.5 days (reduced from 10 weeks due to time) (Fife Council) Expectations of volunteer and admin. Case studies of learners, preparing a programme of learning.
- 10 weeks – In-house training (for ALN tutors and ESOL- South Ayrshire Council) - barriers, resources, roles, phonics, teaching reading, 'walking in your shoes' (delivered by an ESOL learner, managing trauma. Each session has a reflective assessment.

Standardising the initial training would be a good idea, having a baseline that all volunteer roles (considering all volunteering roles - support, teaching).

Child protection training (and PVG membership) for those working with families.

**2. Is your initial training certificated? If not, do you want it to be?**

Currently one project asks for a CELTA but would like to improve training to accommodate non-CELTA trained potential volunteer which

**3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of providing a qualification at the start?**

Volunteers feel part of a group, and of the organisation

Time commitment on staff and organisations is/would be challenging.

**4. Does your training prepare volunteers for their role?**

All organisations spoke of support issues, which might be able to be addressed by additional training.

**5. How do you know?**

**6. What works and what are the gaps?**

What works – Observation As part of initial training some organisations gave volunteers an opportunity to observe and visit classes, which has been positive support. (in one case a minimum of 3 visits to different levels, after a 3 - week course)

Guidelines and boundaries training help manage volunteer expectation and help coordinators deal with support issues.

Gaps/challenges

Learning in the community vs learning at college –this is worth highlighting to volunteers

Sometimes learners don't value community learning and it needs to be highlighted with volunteers and learners that it is beneficial and valid.

Learners needs vary due to their backgrounds, learning experience, current situation

Projects/organisations need volunteers regularly and time waiting for people to complete or sign up for a course can be challenging.

TESOL literacies is an identified gap.

**7. What resources implications do you need to consider?**

**8. Who can help you?**

Please see below – 'I can share' (page 4)

**Discussion questions – volunteer support**

**1. What type of support are people coming to you with most frequently?**

Planning and selecting resources – what to teach and at what level.

Support for volunteers around learners' attendance

Sensitive situations regarding learners where there is a need to signpost and refer

**2. Are you able to address some/most/all of your volunteer support needs?**

Most needs are addressed but volunteer coordinators know time they can spend on this is limited.

**3. What support mechanisms do you have in place? Peer support, one to one, groups, phone, email, social gatherings**

Teaching support

Level comparisons and guidelines for what can be taught at what level suitable for volunteer tutors to refer (Glasgow ESOL Forum)

Support volunteers to plan for 1<sup>st</sup> 4 weeks and then arrange a support meeting (Fife Council)

Structured support meetings every four weeks for volunteers (this encourages reflective practice) (South Ayrshire)

'Speed dating' model of sources of support (other organisations/agencies) to inform volunteers and staff (South Ayrshire)

Other support for learners

Specific aims for learners can be useful where they are **learning aims** i.e. learning to drive. Some aims learners have lie out with an ESOL tutor's role – advice on how to say no and set boundaries, advice on where to signpost/refer learners to, and who in your organisation is the most appropriate to do so.

A teaching role could be 'language around interviews' but a volunteer should not be more involved than this. (unless specified in the volunteers' role description.)

Volunteer Role Descriptions (Dundee and Angus College – not present- have done work on this)

Peer support

Mentoring and peer support with volunteers in similar roles (Fife Council, Karen)

Digital community for volunteers (South Ayrshire)

**4. Does that highlight a gap in the induction/minimum requirements?**

**5. Are you addressing support needs of volunteers through your induction and minimum requirements?**

**6. How do you evaluate this with volunteers?**

Volunteer get together every term

4 weekly follow up after an induction session

Follow up phone call or email after starting on a volunteer placement

**7. Do induction training sessions and the professionalisation of volunteering raise expectations?**

**8. Do you give too much support? How do you know?**

Other points raised:

Some organisations want to move away from learning in the home. Some project do this well. It was raised that the setting (learning environment) is key to how 'real' the learning was perceived to be.

**I can share**

Possible things to share

- Support and reflection templates (South Ayrshire)
- Boundaries exercise (Glasgow ESOL Forum) to emphasize a volunteer's role.  
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/Teaching%20ESOL%20to%20refugees> (look at bottom of page)
- 2x 1 hour bitesize literacies session– possible cost attached (Glasgow ESOL Forum)
- Peer observation and support (Fife Council)
- Volunteering in ESOL report 2018 <http://www.glasgowesol.org/volunteers-co-ordinators>
- Volunteer role descriptions (Dundee and Angus College TBC re sharing)