National Discussion November 2019:

A framework for good practice in working with volunteers in ESOL

**Summary:** In light of recent developments in ESOL, e.g. the development of an ESOL strategy in England, participants were asked to think of the benefits of having a framework for working with volunteers in ESOL and were given a copy of NATECLA’s Framework for Good Practice in Voluntary ESOL, which can be accessed here: <http://natecla.org.uk/uploads/media/208/16911.pdf>. Participants were then asked to discuss examples of good practice in working with volunteers in ESOL with regard to the following categories:

* Volunteer Roles
* Recruitment and selection
* Day-to-day Support
* Coordination and Management
* Induction Training
* Ongoing Training
* Learner Impact
* Volunteer Progression

Within these categories, participants built on ideas from a previous discussion at NATECLA. These notes can be found in in the document: ‘Group Good Practice from NATECLA’. Participants also looked at an example of a framework to see how it might look. Where relevant they also considered useful resources and questions for reflection on how services might be improved. Participants focused on quality of service and diversity throughout.

Below are notes from the discussions that took place.

**Benefits of Having a Framework**

* Creates shared expectations
* Helps with consistency
* Easier to set boundaries
* Regular
* Ensures a professional support and quality of provision
* Everyone understands the role of volunteers
* Everyone is clear of what good practice entails
* There is a clear vison/baseline of what to work towards.
* Good practice can be shared
* Makes people more aware of volunteer ESOL provision

**Examples of Good Practice**

Volunteer Roles

* Promoting life skills and employability for learners (quality)
* Diversity: Supporting learners to become volunteers, e.g. classroom assistant
* Being cultural advisors in host country
* Encouraging intercultural learning through proactive use of L1
* Helping learners to develop self-awareness, learning skills
* Signposting when learners ask for help

Recruitment and Selection

* PVG checks: clarify when PVGs are appropriate
* Acknowledge skills of unqualified or volunteers with alternative skills
* Recognition of prior learning and/or experience, e.g. SCQF level 2 and above: ‘My skills, My Future’
* Targeted recruitment for under-represented groups, e.g. asylum seekers, refugees and ethnic minorities, etc.
* Building up volunteer profiles, including interests and skills so that these can be used in the classroom, e.g. music, art, STEM subjects
* Setting clear expectations
* Emphasis on induction and initial training

Day-to-day Support

* Every volunteer should have a named contact person to contact if issue arises while volunteering or if the volunteer has difficulties with boundaries.
* Each volunteer will have a clear role
* Access to volunteer handbook
* Access to appropriate resources
* Clarity about expenses availability
* Access to refreshments (if payment is required)
* Level of support dependant on the needs of volunteer- role, experience, personal circumstances, geography, peer support available
* Peer support/staff involvement
* Peer observation and structure to do this
* Recognition of barriers to volunteering
* Motivation of volunteers/ expectations- don’t take personally!
* Regular encouragement from workers or tutors
* Share good news/progress stories to encourage/reflect

Coordination and Management

* Training for volunteer coordinators
* Idevelop-coaching conversations
* Roles for vol. coordinators: pastoral care, teaching support (ESOL)
* Dedicated support roles
* Reviews with volunteers (6 monthly)
* Volunteer team meeting: vols. feel part of something
* Communication
* Celebrating volunteering
* Relationship with vol. and coordinator
* Resources: need to be in support
* Policies
* How do we diversify? E.g. training times, childcare, vol. expenses, aspirations, when vol. opportunities take place?
* Code of ethics
* CLD: saying no, sticking to boundaries

Induction Training

* Put people in touch with a community of practice, e.g. ‘idevelop’, ‘Future Learn’
* Awareness of policies in the organisation
* Include volunteers in organisation policies and structures
* Clear outline of boundaries
* Understanding of language acquisition process of adults
* Understand people’s journeys to the country and difficulties they’ve overcome
* How to draw on volunteers’ pre-existing knowledge and experience
* ‘skills audit’ of volunteers
* Help volunteers take a lead role
* Care of volunteers, know where to draw the line.

Ongoing Training

* Ensure awareness of online resources, including training
* Set aside time
* Share things with colleagues, other volunteers
* Scheduled times during meetings
* CPD logs for volunteers to encourage people to do it.
* End of year survey , on site workers notice gaps in teaching practice
* Get specialists in for training, e.g. Refugee Council, working with trauma
* Peer observation: need to be policy/expectation that this would be part of the role
* Dedicated volunteer training, specifically funded, e.g. PDA TESOL, PDA ESOL literacies
* Smarter use of technology, e.g. online learning

Learner Impact

* Supplement other provision
* Offers additional support to individual learners within the class – ‘fill the gaps’
* Volunteers can be seen as role models for learners – aspirations
* Vols. share own experiences and knowledge
* Creation of ‘safe space’, a ‘go to’ person within the learning environment
* Collaborative work with other agencies to offer vol. opps within local community, i.e. befriending
* Capturing impact of volunteers on learners’ language acquisition and more generic goals -confidence, active in community , knowing where to go for support
* Case studies are powerful

Volunteer Progression

* Teaching goals (professional learning or CPD goal, background to learners.
* Competent practitioners framework (CLD Standards Council- join!)
* Staff Awareness of goals
* Promotion of job opportunities
* Vol awards recognition (volunteer week)- not all vols want- that’s OK! Events, newsletter, “Film this!” learner speech to vols.
* Be aware of training ops (free) e.g. GCVS newsletter and share them with vols.
* Resource: FB page on CLD jobs (CLD Standards Council)