

**Volunteer Adult Literacy Practitioners  
with in  
Scottish Local Authorities**

What roles do volunteer adult literacy practitioners play within delivery of  
Scottish local authorities' adult literacy programmes and how are these  
volunteers supported within their roles?

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of Education, University of Aberdeen**

*'I declare that this dissertation has been composed by myself, that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree, that the work of which it is a record has been done by myself, and that all quotations have been distinguished appropriately and the source of information specifically acknowledged.'*

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*"Many countries are now experiencing the benefits to be gained when individuals are provided the necessary means to undertake voluntary action in their own communities."*

Ad de Raad, Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme

## **Abstract**

This research project enquired into how volunteers are utilised within Scottish Local Authorities (LAs) to assist in the delivery of adult literacy tuition within communities. It focused on LA's adult literacy provision and delivery, the roles undertaken by Volunteer Adult Literacy Practitioners (VALPs), the training requirements of those roles and the support/cpd that might be available to VALPs. Enquiry also researched LAs Community Learning and Development (CLD) and Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) practitioner's experiences regards the use of VALPs, as well as best practice around their recruitment and training requirements.

17 of the 32 Scottish LAs participated within the three stages of this research, providing quantitative and qualitative data which offered insight into the changing face of adult literacy provision currently in Scotland, as well as evidencing the wide use of VALPs, predominately as classroom assistants. Variances were found regards training for VALPs as well as in the processes surrounding their management and support. This report recommends further research into policies and procedures with LAs to assist in setting benchmarks for the recruitment and management of VALPs, as well as research into current endorsed VALP training to evaluate its suitability in the changing demands of adult literacy. It suggests the need for marketing campaigns, a requirement for variance in demographics of VALPS as well as the benefits for improved networking and communication channels between literacy practitioners. Finally, this research has raised questions about the changing landscape and perhaps demising profile of adult literacy and CLD.

## **Key Words**

Adult Literacy Programmes, Volunteer Practitioners, Social Practice Model, Scottish Local Authorities, Training and Continuing Professional Development, Communities of Practice

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# Chapter 1. Introduction and Rationale

Delivery of adult literacy programmes is often undertaken by volunteers and session workers and has been for decades (Isley, 1990; Tett et al, 2012; Brookfield, 1983; Wagner & Venezky, 1999), with these “*good hearted people*” (Hamilton & Hillier, P.60, 2006) carrying out a vital role delivering tuition in our communities. In the five years working as a Community Learning and Development Worker (CLDW) for Aberdeenshire Council I have had responsibility for growing a local team of volunteers who work as adult literacy practitioners to assist in addressing the needs of adult literacy learners within Ellon CLD network. These voluntary adult literacy practitioners (VALPs) come from a variety of backgrounds, with differing life experiences and varying levels of academic achievements. They are not employed or paid and carry out a vital role in delivering this critical service in our communities, assisting the Aberdeenshire local authority (LA), one of 32 LAs in Scotland, to provide services which meet national outcomes and core targets set by Scottish Government. (Scottish Government, 2007).

Willem De Meyer, a champion for volunteering says

*“There is a need in the society for voluntary work and there are people who are ready to help others unconditionally. Even when they are not paid, volunteers work hard, improve their skills and learn new ones”* (EPALE blog, 2015)

Cnaan and Amroffell inform us the term volunteer is traced back to early 1750s where it “applied to civilians mobilized for military service in times of emergency” (P.336. 1994). Within CLD adult literacy, the term volunteer refers to unpaid, uncontracted practitioners who give up their time for free. The use of “free” workers as tutors has always been a contentious issue and a source of conflict and tension within education (Hamilton, Merrifield 1999). With trends in their use or recognition of their use often changing, can we ascertain an accurate picture of their roles and impact within adult literacy provision? In Scotland are our volunteers often invisible, hidden behind generic job titles or reports fail to differentiate between paid and unpaid practitioners meaning we do not know the extent of their involvement within adult literacy provision? For this research, the term volunteer refers to unpaid members of the public who give up their time and services for free to assist in the delivery of adult literacy provision with LAs in Scotland. However, even within this realm, terminology can vary, with titles such as tutor, literacy worker, support worker, peer reader, adult educator, volunteer and class assistant making our understanding of their role ambiguous and difficult to clarify, as evidenced further later in this research.

During World War Two Britain recognised poor literacy levels in adults when the British Army realised it needed to provide Educational Centres for its recruits (Papen, 2005; Hamilton & Hillier, 2006). Around this time, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) was founded,

because of the two world wars, and tasked to build unity and peace. It was to focus on challenges such as delivering equality and literacy in developing countries, and UNESCO devised programmes such as “Education for All”.

(<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all>)

Britain continued to recognise the need for a ‘literate’ nation, and in the 1970s Government backed campaigns like “The Right to Read” which was initiated by volunteer activists, and the BBC’s educational programme ‘On the Move’. These campaigns were often described around their use of VALPs, they raised the profile of literacy and initiated publicly funded programmes like ABE (Adult Basic Education) paving the way for new innovative ways of working with adults and communities (NCSALL, M. Hamilton, 1999). Campbell (2011) reports that through the 70s, 80s and 90s adult literacy provision existed and was maintained predominantly by VALPs who received minimal supervision with varying levels of initial training but very little else. In 1991, the Scottish Adult Basic Education Unit was integrated into the Scottish Community Education Council (Hamilton et al, 1999) and since then has been part of Scotland’s strong community education service, which later evolved into CLD.

Trends and discourse regarding VALPs seems to be ever changing, with the use of volunteer literacy practitioners going in and out of vogue. Whilst it is widespread practice worldwide to use volunteers as tutors (Belzer, 2006. Jones & Charnley 1977. Sandlin & St Clair, 2005) no current definitive statistics are available regarding numbers involved in Scotland or the UK. Anecdotally, numbers are thought to be continually declining. Hamilton and Hillier reported that the number of VALPs involved in adult literacy reached its highest point in the mid 70’s with 45,000 and this number had fallen to 20,000 by the mid 1980’s (2006, P.63). Galloway reported that “*in many Scottish Council areas there has been a significant decline in capacity to deliver literacies learning, since a peak in delivery around 2008-2012*” (P.100. 2016) and implied that that only some of the 32 Scottish LA’s had developed strategies to protect adult literacies learning and delivery despite it being a national priority. She went on to state that many LAs reported a reduction in designated literacies paid staff but no mention was made of numbers of volunteers delivering literacies.

Scottish Government, as part of its ten-year strategy to raise adult literacy levels, identified a need for a professional development framework that would aim to ensure Scotland had a “*targeted professional development of workers*” (Education Scotland, P.7. 2005). This framework took a snapshot of the literacy workforce in Scotland and whilst it reported it to be heavily volunteer dependant, it did not stipulate how many volunteers were utilised. It stated that the DNA of the adult literacy workforce is made up of approx. 2000 people, but made it confusing to differentiate between paid practitioners and volunteers by not being consistent in its use of titles, using terms such as instructors, tutors, tutor assistants and professional

practitioners, again evidencing the issues around understanding who volunteers are and the roles they play within adult literacy in Scotland.

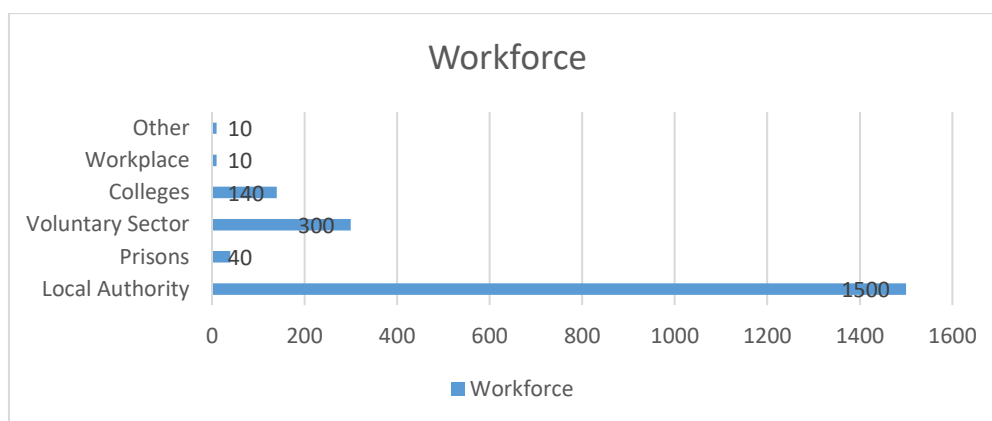


Table 1: Workforce (Education Scotland, 2012, P13)

<https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/AdultLiteraciesCPDFramework.pdf>

Thus, it seems that whilst there is a wealth of research on volunteers and volunteering in general there is very little pertaining specifically to the role of VALPs, who they are and the contribution they currently make to adult literacy provision in Scotland. In addition, little information is recorded by LAs regarding volunteers delivering literacy, and less around sharing good practice regarding recruitment, delivery, monitoring and support. Perhaps LAs localities, variances in need/delivery demographically as well as geographically hinder communication networks.

In my experience Ellon CLD team aims to ensure VALPs deliver literacy tuition flexibly with a prominent level of knowledge and understanding of the required subjects. We focus on “Functional Literacies” guiding tutors to look at the needs of learners relating to the skills which enable them to function in their community, social, work life. ***“A person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group”*** (UNESCO/Gray. 1956)

New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Gee, 2008. Street, 2010) represented a new approach to considering the nature of literacy, focusing not so much on acquisition of skills or deficit model of teaching but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (Street, 1984). The social practice model focuses on a learner-centred approach and developing individual’s personal learning plans. Adult literacy focuses on learners needs regards developing complex capabilities which connects with their everyday lives: with their families, work, employment prospects and educational progression, as well as developing citizenship and learner’s ability to make positive contributions within their communities. It is also about developing skills, knowledge and understanding to assist learners in becoming critical thinkers, in making decisions, solving



problems and expressing views about the world they live in (Freire, 1972). When the social practice approach became a focus within Scotland some argued that you could no longer use VALPs or 1:1 delivery, as this innovative approach was about collaborative learning and participation with others. However, there was also a discourse that argues that of social practice is not simply about everything being done in groups but that everything you learn being embedded in a set of social practices (Smith, 2005).

The volunteer adult literacy tutor training developed and delivered by myself and colleagues within Aberdeenshire CLD adult learning team heavily focuses on using the social practice approach with adult literacy provision (Street, 1984; Crowther & Tett, 2011) as stated in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland (Education Scotland, 2005). This training instructs VALPs to empower learners by involving them in guiding the learning experience, fostering equity of control and a partnership approach towards learning, which enables learning to be contextualised and relevant to the learner's needs, lifestyles, social problems and ideally help overcome previous barriers and negative epistemologies towards education. Is this the case within the other Scottish LAs who utilise VALPs? Crowther et al say *"Scotland provides an interesting context for studying adult literacy in that it is one of the few countries that explicitly acknowledge the idea of literacy as a social practice"* (2011, P.134). This approach is embodied in the Scottish Curriculum Framework for Literacy and Numeracy (Scottish Executive, 2005), which states that: *"We are using a social practices account of adult literacy and numeracy. Rather than seeing literacy and numeracy as the decontextualized, mechanical, manipulation of letters, words and figures, this view shows that literacy and numeracy are located within social, emotional and linguistic contexts"* (Scottish Executive, P.3. 2005). Whilst the hegemony of Scottish Government through national policies and strategies gives influence for this approach to LAs, to what extent is the social practice model really being utilised on the ground? Is it embedded into VALPs training and a natural focus of their practice? As Crowther & Tett specify *"Literacy is a social practice precisely because it is a means of communication (primarily textual) between people that is motivated by a range of purposes that reflect different types of interpersonal and social relationships"* (P.135, 2011), so therefore if Scotland is developing this approach, and the use of VALPs support the building of these relationships, it is critical that VALPs receive clear instruction to ensure they view their own practice within literacies in this way rather than in an autonomous (Street, 1994) or deficit approach which many would have experience of from their own educational involvements when learning to read and write. Campbell stated *"There is good practice in literacies teaching and learning in Scotland at present, although it may not be a fully developed social practices approach"* and went on to suggest along with other factors that TQAL (Teaching Qualification in Adult Literacies) as a professional qualification could further embed the social practice model within practitioners involved in Scottish adult literacy provision, but went on to state that currently *"this approach is theoretically embedded in national policy"* (P.271, 2001). Are LAs paying lip service to this approach in theory rather than in practice? Maclachlan and Tett inform us that in Scotland *"there is*

*still much work to be done around the critical and collective aspects of ALN learning for a social practices model to be fully realised in practice”* (P.195, 2006).

Currently in Scotland the PDA SALL (Professional Development Award Supporting Adult Literacy Learners) is the recommended accredited training for VALPs devised by SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) but in my own practice we adapted and added to the materials given so that they offered a clearer and more focused approach to instructing VALPs on the social practice model and informed why CLD use it within adult literacies provision. It was reported by Hamilton and Hillier (2006) that during the period 1970-2000 there had been ongoing tension around training VALPs, stating that with “no practice or protocol” practitioners often “created imagined worlds.... devised training and created materials”. Today we still have ambiguous guidance or protocol from the Scottish Government who advise that the PDA SALL or similar is the recommended level of basic training programme for any adult literacy practitioner. However, it seems that little monitoring of its use, accreditation take up and its overall suitability is being carried out. Is the creativity around the use of these materials or training packages widespread throughout the Scottish LAs? Do CLD practitioners who manage VALPs need the flexibility and adaptability of training materials to competently instruct the spectrum of VALPs who come into the service? Arguments are often based around VALPs training or their suitability and it is frequently stipulated that learners with the lowest level of ability are frequently given inexperienced or unqualified volunteer practitioners, whilst those who have greater levels of literacy are often placed in group tuition with paid (and therefore assumed better trained) practitioners (Belzer, P. 112. 2006; Sandlin & St Clair, P.140. 2005). Zeiger, McCallum et al reported that *“Volunteer instructors make a substantial contribution to adult literacy, yet little research has been conducted to better understand not only who the volunteers are but what they know about reading instruction”* (2009, Vol. 3 Issue 3, P.131). Is it a fair criticism that inadequate training is available, training which would enable them to deal with differing learning styles, learning disabilities and support learners to overcome previous negative experiences (Sandlin & St Clair, P141, 2005) which then questions their value, performance and perhaps even professionalism? Do VALPs undertake roles which would be best served by a paid practitioner, and therefore could the use of volunteers be de-valuing the professionalism of the service, hinder, or be a barrier to learning or even negate the need for paid or qualified literacy practitioner roles? A concern voiced over time is the drive towards professionalisation and the impact using untrained volunteers has on this, and whether VALPs feel the professionals have lost touch with their grass roots (Kenny, 2001). Professionalisation and change are ongoing topics of debate at many levels within CLD and adult literacy services so how do VALPs deal with the shifts in contexts which they are required to operate? Some believe this is not an issue and that the volunteer “stage” should be short lived and viewed as a progression (Sandlin & St Clair, 2005) to being a qualified, trained professional where-as others offer support for any individual who is motivated, has the time and can have access to professional development but not necessarily a qualification. Campbell (2011) suggested from her research that in Scotland some would prefer all involved to be professionally qualified as they are trying to encourage

professionalisation within literacies rather than a desire to improve delivery by professional development and professionalism of practitioners. Ackland (2006) highlighted that development of a profession could create further conflict as VALPs may not be looking for this structure and they may feel it goes against their motivations as to why they became a VALP. This could create a “them and us” barrier which could lead to volunteers feeling inferior to professionals, leading to further isolation and exclusion. McConnell argues that it is essential for all community educators to have a professional identity (2002).

Whilst the use of VALPs is often a contentious issue it is considered to have many advantages with VALPs often regarded as valuable in offering significant support to adult literacy learners and bringing innovative ideas to the service. Volunteers are frequently attributed to giving a refreshing approach to tasks, to existing literacy programmes and injecting energy into a team, regarded as being free from ‘red tape’ or conditioning of an organisation or culture. However, Ilsley reminds us that “*over time, however, volunteers become socialised to the organisation so that their values often change as well, becoming aligned with those of the organisation and its mission that the volunteers no longer give much conscious thought to why they continue to serve. Their work is simply an accepted part of ‘who they are’.*” (1990, P.31). Belzer (2006) highlights benefits such as such as lowering delivery costs on programmes, flexibility in session times and individual focused instruction. However, are hidden costs such as paid practitioners time for training and supporting these volunteers acknowledged or overlooked? Knox (1993) asks if the cost of management and ongoing support required for VALPs justifies the service they offer. Benefits often associated, however, are increased capacity for tuition and a more flexible approach to delivery but how much time and support is recognised as needed and made available to VALPs once they are delivering? Does their fresh and often innovative approach subside therefore making the transition to invisible workers easy? Do they become an isolated, hidden or a forgotten part of the service, left to fend for themselves due to the limited time and budgets available to support them from a community education service which is often referred to as the poor cousin (McConnell, 2002)?

Within my own practice I have been mindful of these conflicts and tensions and concentrated on trying to ensure that any gulf between practitioners does not appear by encouraging VALPs to joining CLD Standards Council as associate members and gaining them access to CPD support such as i-develop (<http://www.i-develop-cld.org.uk/>). I developed an online community of practice (Wegner. 1998) by creating space for communication, using Google+ communities as a platform for them to develop peer support and learning, source resources and to share good practice between VALPs, CLD workers and adult literacy session workers. Many VALPs were uneasy about becoming part of a “social media” group and initially this community of practice was offered to VALPs but recently has become open to other literacy practitioners. Sandlin and St Clair reporting on literature by Pohl, Ilsley et al, states “*there is a general consensus..... that in addition to initial training, volunteers also need follow-up trainings and ongoing*

*support by programs*” (P.133, 2005). I have established regular tutor support meetings again for all practitioners, volunteers, session workers and CLD workers within Ellon CLD Network and we had a practitioner from WEA (Workers Educational Association) ask to attend to share their knowledge and practice with us. These areas of development in my own practice led me to wonder to what level, if any, do other LAs think about professional learning and do they offer VALPs support and development through learning opportunities, both formal and informal? Have they observed a need to increase or develop internal support mechanisms for VALPs?

If being an adult literacy practitioner is about being professional, qualified and knowledgeable in our communities of practice, understanding our learners’ needs, their communities and lives then should VALPs who invest their own time, skills and knowledge be afforded opportunities like PDA SALL to assist in them developing a full armour of skills to deliver literacies? Should they be required to gain a PDA SALL or TQAL? Should they be taught the CLD approaches, ethics and values? What is being asked of VALPs by the learners and by the LAs they volunteer with? How do the LAs ensure VALPs offer a valuable contribution to the service and the learners? If they are not offered personal development through training and qualifications doesn’t that then contradict CLDs approach to foster equality, equity and opportunity for all? What are the current trends within LAs regards training and support offered to VALPs in LAs Adult Literacy programmes and is it enough for them to then support other often vulnerable adults with literacy?

The more I experience working with VALPs the more ethical and procedural questions concern me and my own practice. As a qualified CLDW who currently enlists, trains and supports VALPs, what right have I to judge their suitability? How do we measure ability? What benchmarks, or systems and procedures are in place to ensure VALPs are treated with equity, clarity and offered professional development as required by our profession, and by our adult learners? These unanswered questions posed from my reading, my practice and the observed practice of others led me to identify the following aims and objectives for this research.

The aims of this research project are to inquire:

1. To what extent volunteers are used to deliver adult literacy within Scottish Local Authorities Adult Literacy programmes?
2. How do local authorities recruit, train and support volunteer adult literacy practitioners and are they in line with CLD ethics and values, and how do they ensure that they can deliver appropriate tuition?

This research will:

- Investigate the types of adult literacy provision being delivered by local authorities in Scotland

- Explore the current volume of use of volunteers as literacy practitioners within Scottish local authority adult literacy provision
- Gather information on the roles played by volunteer adult literacy practitioners within Scottish local authority adult literacy provision
- Investigate policies and procedures in current use regarding recruitment, training, support and evaluation of volunteer adult literacy practitioners within Scottish local authority adult literacy provision
- Gather views and experiences regarding current practice around governing VALPs from the practitioners who have line management responsibility

This research is consistent with Scottish Governments National Outcomes for Adult Literacy:

2.2.11 Promote and increase practitioner-led action research and peer evaluation processes to extend skills, broaden knowledge and improve practice across sectors (Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020, Strategic Guidance, P.21)

## Chapter 2. Literature and Perspectives

### 2.1 History and Use of Volunteers

The history and development of adult literacy in Scotland is interwoven and linked with critical events and politically transitional periods concerning power and language throughout Britain, Europe, America, and Canada. This is also the case regarding UK's involvement with and development of literacy within many third world countries (Freire, 1972; Thomas & Wareing 1999, Street, 2001). VALPs have played a critical role within these developments both nationally and internationally with campaigns such as 'On the Move' directly trying to entuse VALPs to step forward (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006) and volunteer. Whilst there is a wealth of global history and knowledge available regarding the changing personas of adult literacy, this expanse of information has varying degrees of impact or relevance on the changing practices of adult literacy in Scotland. It is not possible to cover this in depth within this research. However, it is important to consider the global context to inform my research and a timeline attached (Appendix 2) provides this information. This literature review will focus on factors which relate directly and have impacted on Scottish literacy awareness and the provision of adult literacy in Scotland, as well the role of VALPs.

Literacy can be regarded as power (Freire, 1972) and has been used to create, maintain and/or enforce power throughout recorded history. Do VALPs have a feeling of power that enables them to support and tutor their learners, or is it more an empathy and desire to do good? Poggi refers to power in its widest meaning as "the *ability* to make a difference" (2001. P.3) and supports Freire's epistemology when he says power is at the essence of mankind, to change and make a difference, to evolve. He states man requires concepts and social co-operation, and society is therefore empowered by norms, rules and rituals, or social practices, which are formed through language by groups who use this power over others. Is power then the main player in the professional conflict reported by Sandlin & St Clair (2011) or a motivator for VALPs, or impact on VALP's and learner's relationships? Maclachlan and Tett inform us that "*literacies learning that is located in a social practices view of learning where the power to determine content and curriculum lie primarily with the learner rather than the educational organisation, can be instrumental in challenging these imbalances of power*" (P.196. 2006). This perhaps accentuates the importance of the social practice model and person-centred approach, where the adult literacy learner is supported to drive the learning to ensure they don't give over the power to someone who they may perceive as better than them. Do LAs have structures in place which understand, support and monitor the power play? Despite most research on voluntarism indicating that VALPs are altruistic (Weymer, 2002) and are motivated purely to help, Weymer goes on to argue that there is no altruistic motivation and VALPs are driven by self-interest. Wareing (Thomas and Wareing, 2000) says power is often "done" through language and mentions how our use of language reinforces the power in relationships, such as parent and child, employer and

worker, but more importantly language is how we learn about the world and how to behave, with those who dominate us using language to oppress or influence. ***“Because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another”*** (Friere, 1973, P77)

Power and oppression is a common theme linked to literacy as it can be seen throughout history creating stigmas, fixing social classes and the limiting access to education (Papen, 2005. Gee, 2008). Papen writes that, when working class activists in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century made claims to get access to education for all politicians were ***“wary of potential consequences of giving literacy to the poor and wanted to see literacy education restricted to work discipline”*** (2005, P78). This has direct links to both early research into primitive-civilized dichotomy (Gee, 2008) as well as the ideological approach of NLS (Papen, 2005, Street 2001) highlighting literacy as a social construction, and the socio-political practices which limited literacy skills and opportunities to the elite and excluded the masses. This shows us literacy was used as a form of power and control to stop a low skilled workforce from developing, and that status of the classes relied on the oppression of lower classes. Is there still a class divide between VALPs and adult literacy learners and do LAs find VALPs struggle to understand the motivators for the learners? Are VALPs in it to help and empower the learners or because they want to help those less fortunate because they feel ***“illiterate adults are missing a meaningful part of their lives by not being able to read”*** or they ***“can’t imagine becoming and adults without the joy of reading simply for pleasure”*** (Weyner, P278. 2002).

Criticising the use of volunteers, Meyer (1995), Ceprano (1995), Pohl (1990) highlight many concerns regarding current practice of using volunteers as literacy tutors. Observers say it is unethical to offer someone who perhaps has had a bad educational experience, or faced difficulties in their previous learning, literacy tuition with a VALP. VALPs may have little or no qualifications or experiences, and therefore could lack skills and understanding compared to a teacher or qualified literacy practitioner. Is it then necessary for Scottish LAs to require a minimum level of education or tutoring qualification and experience before well minded volunteers can become VALPs? Findings from research by Zeigler et al suggests ***“it is not reasonable to assume that volunteers know less than paid instructors do”***. (P.411, 1999) and in 2009 Ziegler, McCallum and Bell, from their research "Who Volunteers to Provide Reading Instruction for Adults and What Do They Know?" reported ***“volunteer instructors vary widely in their educational backgrounds, areas of expertise, prior preparation, and teaching experiences. Importantly, according to our results it is not reasonable to assume that volunteers know less than paid instructors do”***

Also, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) was quoted stating ***“Adults returning to learning and with poor experiences of school often find community-based provision less intimidating***

*when taking their first steps. In addition, there is room in literacy and numeracy provision for trained volunteers to assist learning”* (House of Commons, 2014, P.37)

What makes someone “literate” and able to tutor the “non-literate”? Is it qualifications, experience or passion for language? Perhaps having the right approach or practice is preferential when supporting learners with literacy needs? Street et al (1984) say that with an ideological approach, literacy can be viewed as a social practice, embedded in everyday activities both in and outside formal education settings. Literacy is shaped by the social and cultural context in which it is learned, from families, communities, institutions and life experiences. He argues we do not all have the same opportunities or exposures to literacy as children. Our family and home lives differ, so therefore will the level of positive engagement we experience with literacy, which shapes our belief in our abilities. Meek also agrees that our background can affect our view on literate (1991, P74) and suggests we “emerge” from our preschool childhood with a discourse in literacy, a varying level of basic knowledge through experience and surroundings, before we engage in any formal structured learning. Do these socio-political practices give us a base from which we can develop literacy, perhaps they restrict our self-belief regarding the level of literacy obtainable but is it this that motivates VALPs, an inner belief that they have the literacy skills and knowledge to help others who don’t?

## **2.2 Training Volunteers**

The Moser Report ‘A Fresh Start’ in 1999 included findings from a working group looking at basic skills in the UK. It made many recommendations for new, continued and improved literacy provision, proposing the establishment of a national strategy to tackle poor levels of reading, writing and numbers, and to ensure access to tuition for all, specifying

### **“RECOMMENDATION 14**

*(i) All new staff and volunteers should undertake recognised initial training in teaching literacy and numeracy to adults.*

*(ii) The BSA and the new Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) and others should work together to produce new qualifications for teaching basic skills to adults.*

*(iii) By 2005 all teachers of basic skills should have this qualification or an equivalent”*

Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) report (2001) looked at the issues around adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland made recommendations regarding solutions and policies: **“Recommendation 14: that a national training strategy should provide national training standards for all staff and volunteers whose roles relate to literacy and numeracy tuition and a new qualification for specialist literacy and numeracy practitioners”**. It also recommended **“that staff and volunteers in organisations providing literacy and numeracy tuition should meet the national standards by 2005”**. It also gave clear indications as to roles stating **“Volunteers or paid classroom assistants have an important role to play in offering**



*learners appropriate individual attention and support. Both volunteers and paid classroom assistants can be deployed in a range of situations: supported study centres, short courses, learning groups etc. Volunteers and paid classroom assistants should be recognised as playing a key role in assisting with learning while not replacing the need for specialist practitioners. Long term 1:1 learning using volunteers in isolation from others needs to be avoided where possible. Where 1:1 learning is necessary in rural areas, a specialist practitioner should put together the 1:1 learner's learning plan and then closely supervise and resource the 1:1 pair as a special form of supported distance learning".* Some researchers and educators also argued that volunteer adult literacy tutors should play support roles rather than be involved in direct 1:1 tuition (Pohl, 1990). VALPs 1:1 delivery was often regarded backbone of adult literacy development for over four decades (Hamilton & Merrifield, 1999; Belzer, 2006). In recent years there seems to have been a change in discourse and a move away from a predominant use of volunteers in 1:1 delivery, towards groups and communities of practice, with group delivery using professional paid practitioners to lead becoming more a preferred option to fit new strategies and policies. Between 2001 – 2012 issues around professionalism continued to grow and this is when qualifications like PDA ITALL (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/25149.html>) started to be developed. Did the introduction of this qualification encourage the continued move away from VALP's 1:1 work and focus development of their training and roles toward the classroom/tutor assistant to support literacy as social practices and collaborative learning in groups (Crowther 2011, Campbell, 2001)?

In 2007 the Scottish Government gave recognition to this growing professional occupation around community learning and development when it established a Scottish Standards Council for CLD. The practice of CLD describes the professions who have merged to work together with regards to delivering informal education, social action and development work within Scotland's local communities. This professional body set core values and ethics, and developed quality standards in professional training and competencies for practitioners working in this sector of education, as well as setting up a professional registration scheme for qualified CLD practitioners.

The website for the CLD Standards Council states:

***"The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning has directed the CLD Standards Council to:***

- ***Deliver a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD***
- ***Consider and establish a registration system available to practitioners delivering and active in CLD practice***
- ***Develop and establish a model of supported induction, CPD and training opportunities"***

Stipulating “everyone involved in CLD” and “active in CLD practice”; can we then presume that VALPs can become members, accessing the same models of support for their learning regards induction and CPD, and therefore they should adhere to the same code of ethics and values? Will this be a drive towards professional learning and development for all rather than focusing on the professionalisation of the CLD service?

It seems that in 2016 this was not the case as there remains a lack of guidance, knowledge and clarity surrounding qualifications and training that volunteers (and paid practitioners) delivering adult literacy should hold, and even less information on who those practitioners making up the task force are or should be. Should VALPs hold, or be working towards, a professional qualification in tutoring or teaching? Should there be a minimum requirement level of accreditation in English and maths? The BBC Skillswise website has a page on professional development and gives us another example of the confusion around language and roles for literacy tutors. ‘Becoming a Tutor’ opens by asking if you are interested in helping adults learn English and maths. It then goes on to explain the many titles this role may have however the rest of the article focuses only on teacher training requirements. However, all the documentation mentioned and links on this webpage are no longer relevant, accessible or up to date perhaps indicating the small amount interest that there is in this topic. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/tutors/professional-development>).

In Scotland, SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) offer and promote SALL (Supporting Adult Literacy Learners) as the qualification for individuals who wish to assist with tutoring adults in numeracy and literacy but is this available to VALPs through volunteering pathways? If this is the recommended qualification at SCQF Level 6 do LAs in Scotland require their volunteers to hold or undertake this qualification (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/65432.html>)? What importance or necessity is placed by the LAs on VALPs attaining the accreditation or is value placed on inhouse training or VALPs experience? Belzer recommended that we support VALPs in ways that are most suitable to their needs and perhaps “*less may be more*” regards the initial training they access compared to ongoing or “*just in time*” (P.111, 2006) training which can be tailored to support their learning as and when required based on the combined needs and strengths of both the VALP and the learner. The Professional Development Framework for Scotland’s adult literacies workforce states “*To achieve the outcome ‘Adult literacies learners receive high quality learning and teaching so they can achieve their goals’, professional development for all staff delivering and supporting literacies learning needs to be targeted strategically and its impact measured. Services need to value professional development and provide workers with space, time and, where possible, funding to undertake qualifications and training. Practitioners across a partnership should have equity of access to professional development opportunities, for the sake of the learners and their learning experience*”. There is little evidence to show any impact measured as this framework suggests. Do they include VALPs as practitioners as it is not evidently clear who “all staff” are? It is evident that whilst

Education Scotland have produced a framework for professional development within adult literacies, the document does not set any clear and simple baseline benchmarks regards basic level of qualifications that practitioners should hold. The framework also states that findings from research it commissioned SQA to undertake on Scotland's adult literacy workforce found "*Barriers to accessing qualifications and CPD included: funding; geographical distance; time; and priority being perceived to be given to full-time workers over part-time or voluntary workers.*"

Belzer refers to research by Sandlin and St Clair, Ceprano, Kazemek and Meyer when she says:

*"little research has been done on the quality of instruction when volunteers tutor adult literacy learners..... questions about tutors' efficacy surface frequently and typically revolve around the adequacy of training".* (2006, P.115).

Research carried out by Zeigler et al (2009) suggests that whilst new VALPs receive between 2 and 20 hours training before beginning to deliver with adult literacy learners, there is little correlation between hours of training received and the levels of knowledge gained: - their findings implying that training is superficial and ineffective. They go on to state that due to the multiplicity of people who volunteer then perhaps the training should be equally as diverse in its resources and opportunities. Despite many reports such as Moser(1999), ALNIS(2001) et al making recommendations for professional training and qualifications there is still a strong conflicting discourse around the importance and benefits of learning on the job as knowledge can best be gained through experience and practise. Ceprano (1995) argues that VALPs are unable to devise or select suitable materials for tutoring and that the VALPs are failing to reach their potential due to inadequacies of tutor training. Sandlin and St Clair (2005) reported on research findings by Cook, Dooley & Fuller stating that "After initial training, many tutors still feel underprepared, have a sense of isolation once they begin their tutoring, and suffer from retention problems" (2005, P133). Ackland reports that practitioner's views towards ALNIS recommendations were that they were for "*quality assurance evidence rather than for the development of expertise*" (P. 63, 2011) and that social practices was a term perhaps used as a buffer at that time, to stand against what some felt were "teaching" qualifications being imposed on them as adult literacy services were predominantly located in Education Services within LAs, and these qualifications did not relate to community based literacy learning programmes. With the production and roll out of the PDA SALL recently by SQA and Scottish Education, to further develop a bespoke and suitable qualification for tutoring adult literacy, and one which encompasses the social practice model, do LAs and CLD workers use and value this accredited training package with their VALPs?

### **2.3 Volunteers as Learners**

Plant from voiced in an article regarding a new website to support community learning volunteers that:

*"Volunteering is an increasingly important feature of learning in communities. Evidence consistently shows that where volunteering and learning are developed in an integrated way, it produces better outcomes for individuals. Volunteering gives adults opportunities to learn and practise new skills. It helps to increase independence, raise self-esteem and develop a range of qualities that make them both more effective community activists and more employable."* (L&W Institute, 2014)

This poses the question, could VALPs be viewed as learners? By the act of volunteering do they gain access to training which might add value to their own developing portfolio of skills? Perhaps it is not solely literacy learners who wish to better themselves. As Belzer informs, us volunteering can increase potential for employment prospects and improve an individual's ability to function as an effective citizen (Belzer, 2006).

Sandlin and St Clair bring to our attention that training manuals, tool kits and handbooks for volunteer tutors makes up approximately three quarters of literature on literacy volunteerism (2005). This suggests that despite volunteers being invaluable to the service and there being continual concern around their training most of the literature is off the shelf manuals such as *The Volunteer Tutors Toolbox* by Hermann (1994), and which are generated by the field themselves. This interesting statistic leads us to believe that the focus is on practicalities of VALPs roles with very little emphasis or importance being placed on the informal learning, the need for ongoing support and professional development, the impact they have on the delivery and progression of the service and some might say the most critical factor: the actual impact they have on the adult literacy learners.

There seems to be even less evaluative literature reporting on VALPs themselves and the difference literacy volunteering makes to them and the communities they serve. Why is this? Zeigler et al report that whilst volunteers make a significant contribution to adult literacy delivery ***"very little research has been conducted that focuses exclusively on them and their role in instruction"*** (P. 408). Sandlin and St Clair also report that research they found attempting to address the issues around effectiveness of volunteers, educational practices of volunteers, or looking at comparison of models of volunteer training mainly comes from the 1970s and 1980s. In line with this I have found an abundance of literature and research on trainee educators, or peer readers for children particularly from the USA and Canada (Ceprano, 1995; Wasik, 1997; Zeigler et al, 2009; Belzer 2006), but very little up to date research pertaining to the use of VALPs within adult literacy provision in Scotland. Perhaps difficulties in accessing relevant literature and misunderstandings around who volunteers are and what they do again comes back to the difficulties in determining them by title? Does the ambiguous use of roles and titles prohibit us from being confident as to whom literature refers, ultimately resulting in continuous problems around communication and dissemination of information and research on volunteer adult literacy practitioners (Belzer, 2006; Zeigler et al, 2009; Dennis, 2010; Robinson & Rennie, 2014).

Despite all the literature I have read many questions are left unanswered, such as do LAs and CLD/ALN recognise a value in viewing VALPs as continuous professional learners? Is there a change in practice and thinking around professional learning for VALPs, supporting the more informal learning, ongoing support and professional development for volunteers? Is there evidence to show the benefits of generating your own training or is it historically just what the adult literacy profession does? Has professional learning moved away from formal qualifications and perhaps leans toward a more informal “on the job” training or are VALPs still expected to complete the initial training programme and then drive their own practice and delivery without support and professional development from the LA?

## Chapter 3. Methodology and Ethics

### 3.1 Methodology

Schwandt said *“Human beings do not find or discover knowledge, so much as construct or make it”* (2005, P198).

Interpretivism is an approach that enables researchers to get involved and interpret aspects of an enquiry or study and allows the researcher to incorporate human viewpoints (Myers, 2008) and this methodology believes that reality has multiple aspects. The paradigm of Interpretivism allows for multiple realities depending on variances or differing situations as it follows the belief that knowledge is everywhere and socially constructed by us all in differing ways (Thomas, 2009). This can make it problematic or impossible if your research is searching for fixed certainties or answers. Benefits of this approach is that it enables a flexible approach to the structure of the research, supporting adaptability or change should unexpected variances occur. Built on underpinning knowledge of numerous social and organisational truths or realities, Interpretivism recognises that information and understanding is acquired through social processes such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings (Klein & Myers, 1999). This enables the researcher to have a relationship or involvement in the research, acknowledging their own personal, social and /or professional interest in the topic of research. It supports the relationship between researcher and informers as it believes they are interdependent and therefore allows for interaction, which supports my own position within this research as I am enquiring on an area of interest to me as part of my own practice within adult literacies by engaging with my peers and adult literacy practitioners within other Scottish LAs.

One key factor of Interpretivism is it is interested in people, their views and how they form ideas. Thomas goes on to inform us that Interpretivism empowers the researcher to use their own knowledge of the world they are studying and that the researcher should use their *“own interests and understandings to help interpret the expressed views and behaviour of others”* (Thomas, P.75, 2009) whilst remaining subjective, balanced and fully aware of your position and your own views.

Kruger and Casey quoting Patton say,

*“Do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study.”* (2015, P.218)

Using the Interpretivist paradigm this research incorporated a range of perspectives through investigation of data collated from service managers and adult literacy co-ordinators and practitioners. Thought to have been pioneered by George Herbert Main (Thomas, 2009), it offers researchers the opportunity to *“assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments”* (Myers, 2008, p.38).

This paradigm allowed me, the researcher, to incorporate an action research approach to the inquiry as the design of this research sits comfortably within Interpretivism and action research. Williams, quoting Dick reported “*Action research can be described as a family of research methodologies which pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time*” (P.7, 2006). Action research is an interpretivist method that permits a construction of systematic or statistical knowledge along with a practical element by including participants involvement to voice their assessment of the real world in action, its content as they know it and their reflection of it. This allowed a mix of methods for data collecting to be used, such as questionnaires, a focus group and telephone interviews which assisted in gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data enabled an overview of types of delivery, ratios regarding paid and volunteer staff, and numbers of learners engaging with Scottish LAs literacy programmes. The qualitative data focused on establishing further details regarding volunteer’s actual roles, and their degrees of involvement and development, whilst capturing practitioner’s views and opinions on these topics. Action research is said to transpire when researchers engage with participants in a co-operative process of critical inquiry into problems of social practice, within a learning context. This research will certainly aid and develop my own practice as well as inform the practice of others within CLD Adult Literacies. Williams informed us that “*In action research, the interpretivist philosophy of the method accepts that the researcher is aware of their presence and their research will affect the situation under investigation*” (P.6, 2006). Social psychologist Kurt Lewin initiated the framework of action research after being critical of social research, aiming for action research to enable practitioners to embed real change and action after reflection on the research (Thomas, 2009). Mark Smith used a quote by Lewin to say: “*research needed for social practice..... is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice*” (Lewin 1946, reproduced in Lewin 1948: 202-3)” <http://infed.org/mobi/action-research>

This research project engaged with service managers, CLDW’s and other literacy practitioners within LAs. It had three main stages of investigation (detailed in Appendix 3) Each stage had informed consent from all participants (Appendix 4).

**Stage 1:** Questionnaire emailed to Scottish LA service managers which gathered statistical information related to practitioners, types of delivery (group, 1:1) and volumes of learners. Identical questionnaires ensured data from LAs was comparable and offered a snapshot of current provision. Analysis of this quantitative data produced reports, charts and statistics, ensuring clear recording to enable comparison of similarities and differences in these aspects of LA literacy provision.

**Stage 2:** Questionnaire emailed to LA service managers and their co-ordinating practitioners of literacy provision who engage with VALPs. Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative information gathered provided insight into the role VALPs undertake and the training and support systems in place. This influenced which practitioners I collaborated with for the stage 3, to enable opportunity to gather data from a mix of rural and city LAs who utilise VALPs.

**Stage 3:** Focus group with CLDW's and practitioners who co-ordinate adult literacy programmes within a LA, managing VALPs was conducted. One focus group with a central location was held due to logistical difficulties of those willing and able to attend restricting another group taking place. This semi structured focus group created a platform to facilitate engagement with participating practitioners, including myself, and encouraged exploration of current practice around enrolments, volunteer activities and training. It aided further enquiry into current procedures as well as the opportunity to record participants personal views and experiences regarding the use and management of VALPs. My role was as an equal participant and I contributed fully which fostered an openness of discussion as well as confirmed the safe confidential environment.

Telephone interviews were then conducted to offer those unable to attend in person a chance to participate and share their views and experiences. The same discussion topics were used for both focus group and telephone interviews. The 1:1 interviews enabled more detailed individual data to be recorded but limited the ability to organically spark further discussions and share practice. It was critical to be mindful of the conversation topics from the focus group and allowed for further teasing out of personal views, as well as a greater insight into policies and procedures.

The combination of this rich qualitative data provided an insight into procedural policies and data as well as practitioners opinions regarding VALPs need and support, as well as the skill levels VALPs should possess. Quantitative findings from stage 1 and 2 were collated onto spreadsheets which enabled information to be calculated and compared (see Appendix 5 for full data collated). Splitting stage 1 data into 3 separate excel worksheets allowed for clarity of findings and ease to analyse similarities and differences. I also transported data onto an additional work sheet to record and facilitate the production of ratios regards number of paid and voluntary practitioners delivering literacies in each participating LA. All data and analysis was recorded accurately and fairly, ensuring always that my own bias did not distort the findings by accurately transcribing recordings.

Stage 3 data was obtained by facilitating a focus group and five individual telephone interviews. All were audio recorded as these methods of collecting qualitative information can be difficult to analyse and audio recording enables the researcher to revisit conversation and ensured expressive



validity when analysing data. Words can lose meaning when they are no longer heard, when you lose the articulation of a voice. By repeating statements and clarifying points raised both during conversations and when summarising at the end of the both the focus group and the telephone interviews I endeavoured to ensure I had captured and understood their meaning properly, whilst giving participants opportunity to offer further clarification or correction if they thought I had not fully comprehended their points. All recordings will be kept for 6 months, to evidence research findings, before being deleted.

Notes were not taken during the focus group to allow a free flow of conversation as well as my own participation, however it was possible to take notes during telephone interviews without causing a distraction and hindering the flow of conversation. Transcripts of the recordings enabled me to revisit the conversations many times and fully comprehend the views, meanings, similarities and differences being made by the participants.

*“Interpretivism does not aim to report on an object reality, but rather to understand the world as it is experienced and made meaningful by human beings.”* (Collins, 2010, p.39).

### **3.2 Ethics**

Ethics was regarded at every stage of this work based research project, by ensuring my integrity and the quality of the research. Each stage of the research was clearly explained both in emails and in full detail using an informed consent form which clarified at every stage how data collected was being used and retained (Appendix 4). During stage 3, I verbally reiterated to all participants that they were being recorded for the purposes of the research and they would be erased once the research was completed. All were given the opportunity to disengage with this research at any stage should they so wish.

I endeavoured to ensure my exploration and questioning would not pose any ethical problems for the participants and that there would not be any issues around them accessing information to respond to my questions. Whilst I could not envisage every eventuality, as sole researcher I looked at the processes from every angle to ensure safety, wellbeing and ethical conduct of all collaborating. I am accountable to Aberdeenshire Council, and to The University of Aberdeen, as well as the participants of this research. All participants are stakeholders in this research and conduct was ensured to be ethically sound and valid at all stages by following The University of Aberdeen’s code of conduct for research and referring to BERA guidelines. As a professional CLDW and a member of the CLD Standards Council I am governed by a deontological declaration of professional etiquette and duty as stipulated in the CLD’s code of ethics (CLD Standards Council, 2010)

Whilst remaining critically aware of how people interpret their own worlds, cultures, and experiences during stage 3 of this research, I ensured not to contravene data protection or confidentiality legislation at any stage. Findings from stage 1 and 2 questionnaires have been reported on using the LA they came from, not individuals. It is important to remember that all data requested via stage 1 and 2 could also have been obtained through the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which is why I it is appropriate to reveal the names of the participating LAs. Coding for individual participants during stage 3 ensured anonymity protecting individual's identity but enabled findings to be linked to LAs, which was critical to enable participants at this stage to openly offer their own personal views and experiences on practice and policies pertaining to adult literacy delivery within their LA.

Separate informed consent of all stages of the research supported participants to clarify the nature and purpose of the study, the methods used and their involvement, individual's anonymity, storage of data collected, publishing of the final report and my contact details. Signed forms confirm a commitment to participation, however participants could withdraw at any time up until the report was finalised. This final report has participants consent to be made available publicly ensuring the findings of this research is shared widely to inform understanding, aid development of future practice and gain most impact.

# Chapter 4. Statement of Findings

## 4.1 Stage 1 Research

Quantitative data received in stage one reported on adult literacy activity by each participating LA over the twelve-month period of Jan to Dec 2015 as requested, apart from two LAs (Midlothian and South Ayrshire) who returned information for the twelve-month period of April 2015 to March 2016. All data collected still gives information of a single twelve-month activity period at approximately the same time.

### 4.1.1 Questionnaire on Adult Literacy Provision (see appendix 5 for full data)

Seventeen of the thirty-two local authorities responded to the stage one questionnaire and consented to participate at this stage. Western Isles LA returned two separate responses as their area covers four main islands and is split into two geographical regions which are serviced by two separate teams (Lewis & Harris by Western Isles LA, Uist & Barra by LA funded third sector organisation Cothrom) therefore all information submitted by both bodies for this LA was recorded separately for this stage of the research.

Information returned from stage one questionnaires was split into the three sections for recording and analysing the data.

Local Authority	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
<b>Local Authority</b>	Does ..... Council deliver courses, informal support or tuition which helps adult learners improve their reading, writing	If No, do you know of any organisations in your local authority area who do offer this provision, and if so who are they?	If Yes, what internal teams or service provides this within ..... Council or is it contracted out to a partner/third sector agency?	What adult literacies provision is it that ..... Council provide (ie: group work, classes, 1:1 tuition or other)?
Argyll and Bute	Yes	N/A	Internal: Adult L&N teams geographical	All
Dumfries and Galloway	Yes	No Answer	Internal: CLD or Development area teams	Group, Classes, 1:1
Dundee	Yes	No Answer	Internal: Literacies Team city wide	All
East Lothian	Yes	No Answer	Internal: Adult Learning team	Groups, 1:1
East Renfrewshire	Yes	N/A	Internals: Adult Learning team	All
Falkirk	Yes	N/A	Internal CLD & externally fund WEA	Groups, Classes
Fife	Yes	N/A	Internal: ABE team and External fund LEAD, Rathbone and West Fife Enterprise	Groups
Highland	Yes: via Highlife Highland	N/A	N/A	1:1, Small Group
Midlothian	Yes	No Answer	Internal: Lifelong Learning & Employment	Groups, Classes, 1:1
Moray	Yes	Also by Linking Ed' & Disability	Internal: Essential Skills Team (Libraries: Education&Social Care)	1:1, Some Small Groups
North Lanarkshire	Yes	No Answer	Internal: CLD	All
Perth and Kinross	Yes	No Answer	Internal: CLD. External partners: Fife College/HMP Perth, Church Homeless, NHS, Perth College, PUSH	Groups, Some 1:1
Renfrewshire	Yes	No Answer	Internal: Adult Learning	Groups, Some 1:1
Scottish Borders	Yes	No Answer	Internal: CLD	Small Groups, Some 1:1
South Ayrshire	Yes	N/A	Internal: CLHSP (Community Learning and Home School Partnership). External: (in partnership)South Lanarkshire ALAN strategy group ( South Lanarkshire Leisure Trust, Local FE colleges; Youth Learning; WEA; Hamilton Information Project for Youth (HIPY))	Groups, Classes, Some 1:1
West Lothian	Yes	No	No Answer	1:1, Small Groups
Western Isles (L&H)	Yes	N/A	Internal: Cld (Lewis Harris)	Groups, Classes, 1:1
Western Isles (U&B)	Yes	No Answer	Adult learning team within Cothrom (Uist and Barra)	All

**Table 2: Stage 1 Section 1: Adult literacy provision offered by the LA**

All participating LAs reported to deliver adult literacy provision using internal teams except for Highland and Western Isles LAs. Highland LA have High Life Highland, a charity registered in Scotland “*formed on the 1st October 2011 by The Highland Council to develop and promote opportunities in culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing across 9 services throughout the whole of the Highlands, for both residents and visitors*”. (<https://www.HighLifehighland.com/about/>) Western Isles have Cothrom a charity registered in Scotland to deliver in part of their area (Uist and Barra) “*a Community and Development organisation in South Uist in the Outer Hebrides. Training is the main focus of our work*” (<http://www.cothrom.net/index.htm>).

Within the times scale reported on, all seventeen participating LAs delivered group and class adult literacy provision, with fifteen LAs reporting delivery of some form of 1:1 provision (stand alone or as an introduction/feeder to groups. Falkirk and Fife did not deliver any 1:1 adult literacy provision.

Moray was the only LA to offer information in response to question two regarding knowledge of any other organisation in their area who offered adult literacy provision separate to themselves reporting that Linking Education and Disability (LEAD) also deliver in their area, all sixteen other LAs either did not answer or recorded their answer as N/A (Not applicable). In response to question three however Falkirk said they also externally fund WEA (Workers Educational Association) and Fife stipulated that they also externally fund LEAD, Rathbone and West Fife Enterprises. Perth & Kinross reported six organisations they delivered in partnership with externally through an Adult Literacies Partnership. South Ayrshire also reported to deliver with many external organisations through a partnership approach.

In response to Question 3 West Lothian were the only LA to not give an answer. Six LAs recorded CLD as their internal team, seven LAs reported having internal adult learning or literacy & numeracy teams, and only South Ayrshire stipulated that their internal team incorporated a home school learning partnership within their community learning team (CLHSP). Highland answered, “not applicable” as they stated at Question 1 that “High Life Highland” delivered their adult literacy provision.

Local Authority	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Total Number of Learners
<b>Local Authority</b>	How many adult literacies learners who attended groups/classes did ..... Council engage with, in 2015 (Jan to Dec)?	How many adult literacies learners who attended 1 to 1 tuition or support did ..... Council engage with, in 2015 (Jan to Dec)?	If any, how many adult literacies learners who attended any other literacies provision did ..... Council engage with, in 2015 (Jan to Dec)?	
Argyll and Bute	150 (total number: not split as requested)	See Previous	See Previous	150
Dumfries and Galloway	209	0	12	221
Dundee	332 (total number: no split as requested)	See Previous	See Previous	332
East Lothian	181	0	131	312
East Renfrewshire	32	3	29	64
Falkirk	130 (total number: not split as requested)	See Previous	See Previous	130
Fife	1366 (total number: not split as requested)	See Previous	See Previous	1366
Highland	135	322	145	602
Midlothian	230	29	121	380
Moray	60	81	Not Recorded	141
North Lanarkshire	1066 (total number: no split as requested)	See Previous	See Previous	1066
Perth and Kinross	293	24	524	841
Renfrewshire	60	N/A	Unknown	60
Scottish Borders	163 (total number: not split as requested)	See Previous	See Previous	163
South Ayrshire	435	less than 10	No Answer	444
West Lothian	308	0	0	308
Western Isles (L&H)	93	11	No Answer	104
Western Isles (U&B)	98 (total number: not split as requested)	See Previous	See Previous	98
			<b>Total:</b>	<b>6782</b>

**Table 3: Stage 1 Section 2: Volume of learners participating in the adult literacy provision delivered by the LA**

In total, it was reported that approximately 6782 learners engaged in adult literacy provision between the 17 LAs. Overall total number is approximate due to South Ayrshire recording a “less than ten” figure for their number of learners who engaged with 1:1 tuition.

Figures returned showed a great variance in the numbers of learners who had engaged with adult literacy provision across the seventeen LAs during a twelve-month period, ranging from 60 literacy learners with Renfrewshire compared to 1366 literacy learners with Fife. Seven LAs reported they were unable to divide their total number of learners engaged between specific provision types, therefore a clear overview of the number of learners who engaged with 1:1 tuition is not available across the LAs. Three LAs reported zero numbers for 1:1 tuition and one recorded N/A as their response despite previously answering in section one that they offer 1:1 tuition. Highland (High Life Highland) recorded the most 1:1 engagement with 322 learners.

There was a large variance in the responses returned by the 17 LAs for question 3 with 11 LAs stating unknown or no answer. Of the six who gave figures for adult literacy learners who engaged with ‘other’ literacies provision delivered their answers ranged from 12 to 524 and bore no reflection to the scale of numbers with whom they had engaged with for group or 1:1. Dumfries and Galloway reported 12 ‘others’

compared to 209 in groups/classes, East Renfrewshire had 29 ‘others’ compared to 32 learners within groups/classes whereas Perth and Kinross reported a larger number of adult literacy learners with 524 engaging in “other” provision compared to their 293 who engaged with adult literacy groups/classes. Highland (High Life Highland) also reported a greater number of adult literacy learners engaging within ‘other’ provision compared to groups/classes (145 compared to 135) however they reported 322 adults engaging with them for literacy through their 1:1 provision.

Local Authority	Is your adult literacies provision delivered by different area/network teams within ..... Council area?	How many adult literacies practitioners were involved in the delivery of the adult literacies provision (mentioned above) that ..... Council provided in 2015 (Jan to Dec)?	Of these practitioners, how many were paid full time employees	Of these practitioners how many were paid part time employees	Of these practitioners, how many were paid contracted/ sessional workers	Of these practitioners, how many were volunteers
Argyll and Bute	Yes	Approx 60	0	7	0	50
Dumfries and Galloway	Yes	41	1	7	15	10
Dundee	One team	11	6	5	0	0
East Lothian	No	23	0	3	4	16
East Renfrewshire	No	No Answer	3	0	20	0
Falkirk	Under Restructure	6	1	1	4	18
Fife	ABE Team Fife Wide (Split into 2 teams: North and South)	43	9	10	4	20
Highland	Adult Learning Co-ordinator in each of the 6 localities/areas	108	7	6	10	85
Midlothian	No	No Answer	1	0	9	5
Moray	Yes, Essential Skills team have geographical responsibilities	16	1	5	0	10
North Lanarkshire	Yes, Six localities teams	(1 FTE= 35 hours) 12 FTE	7 FTE	3.3 FTE	1 FTE	0.7 FTE
Perth and Kinross	Adult Literacies Partnership managed by a Partnership Co-ordinator employed by PKC	7 PKC & 11 Lit Partnership	1	12	5	35
Renfrewshire	No	7	1	1	No Answer	20
Scottish Borders	CLD Adult Learning Team	15	6	4	5	5 (unsure)
South Ayrshire	4 Locality teams	No Answer	2	10	0	30
West Lothian	No	21	3	5	1	12
Western Isles (L&H)	Various (Us and Cothrom)	No Answer	0	3	1	4
Western Isles (U&B)	Locality teams	5	0	2	2	1

**Table 4: Stage 1 Section 3: Staff and volunteers delivering the provision**

Accurate recording of responses for section three of stage one was essential but challenging due to many unexpected variables. Some LAs did not answer all questions making totals difficult to calculate as well

as only seven LAs returning figures that tallied. North Lanarkshire responded by giving FTE (Full Time Equivalents) rather than numbers of people/practitioners. Perth and Kinross also reported numbers of people for partnership work but did not stipulate if these were paid practitioners or VALPs, and reported more VALPs than total number of practitioners.

Western Isles (L&H) and Falkirk reported current restructuring of teams taking place within their LAs.

East Renfrewshire and Dundee both reported that no VALPs were used for delivery of any adult literacy provision. In contrast Argyll and Bute reported working with 50 VALPs and Highland (High Life Highland) reporting utilising the service of 85 VALPs. The table below shows the percentage of volunteer practitioners involved in delivery of adult literacy provision from data reported. It should be noted that this table may not be wholly accurate as entries shaded in green were calculated by myself from data given by the LAs, purely to aide this activity.

Local Authority	How many adult literacies practitioners were involved in the delivery of the adult literacies provision (mentioned above) that ..... Council provided in 2015 (Jan to Dec)?	Of these practitioners, how many were paid full time employees	Of these practitioners how many were paid part time employees	Of these practitioners, how many were paid contracted/ sessional workers	Of these practitioners, how many were volunteers	% of volunteers
Argyll and Bute	60	0	7	0	50	83%
Dumfries and Galloway	41	1	7	15	10	24%
Dundee	11	6	5	0	0	0%
East Lothian	23	0	3	4	16	70%
East Renfrewshire	23	3	0	20	0	0%
Falkirk	24	1	1	4	18	75%
Fife	43	9	10	4	20	47%
Highland	108	7	6	10	85	79%
Midlothian	15	1	0	9	5	33%
Moray	16	1	5	0	10	63%
North Lanarkshire	12	7	3	1	1	8%
Perth and Kinross	18	1	12	5	35	194%
Renfrewshire	7	1	1	No Answer	20	286%
Scottish Borders	15	6	4	5	5	33%
South Ayrshire	42	2	10	0	30	71%
West Lothian	21	3	5	1	12	57%
Western Isles (L&H)	8	0	3	1	4	50%
Western Isles (U&B)	5	0	2	2	1	20%
Totals:	492	49	84	81	322	65%

**Table 5: Stage 1 Section 3 Percentages of Volunteers**

From the table above it is easier to see the discrepancy between total number of practitioners given and the breakdown of those figures into the four categories of staffing.

## 4.2 Stage 2 Research

Quantitative data reported on the roles and titles of VALPs, and the policies and procedures regarding their recruitment, induction and training for adult literacy provision within Scottish LAs.

### 4.2.1 Questionnaire on volunteer roles, recruitment and training (see appendix 5 for full data)

Thirteen of the thirty-two LAs responded to the stage two questionnaire and consented to participate at this stage. As at stage 1 Western Isles LA returned two responses as their area (Islands) is split into two geographical regions and serviced by separate teams (Lewis & Harris by Western Isles LA, Uist & Barra by LA funded third sector organisation Cothrom) therefore as previously recorded the information submitted by both teams for Western Isles was recorded separately for this stage of the research.

Local Authority	What roles and job titles do volunteers have with in .....Council's adult literacy programmes	Do those volunteers sign a volunteer agreement or a volunteer contract with ....Council	What qualifications, if any, does ... Council require volunteer adult literacy tutors to have before they can practice as a volunteer tutor	Does .... Council offer volunteer tutors induction training, if yes, in what format and what is its aim	Does ....Council offer literacy tutor training, if yes, in what format and what is its aim	Does ...Council offer accredited qualifications in adult literacy tutoring to your volunteer tutors, if yes, what qualification/s
East Lothian	Volunteer Tutor. ROLE: Support paid tutors within ALN groups	No	None	Yes: Part of volunteer tutor training.	Mandatory 6 week course. After week 3, participants go into a group to shadow. After completed and a 1:1 meeting with ALN Development Officer then placed into a group. AIM: To provide an introduction of adult literacies learning in Scotland and the role of the volunteer tutor within our service.	No
East Renfrewshire	Volunteer Literacy Tutor. ROLE: Support paid group tutors and do some 1:1 with learners needing additional support within the group	Yes - Statement of Commitment	None: However SALL/TALL is desirable	Yes: Induction training is based on individual needs around the social practice model; working in groups, building effective relationships	We do not offer accredited training but we deliver inhouse training around the social practice model	No
Falkirk	Volunteer. ROLE: Support paid tutors in classes (mostly dedicated, occasionally integrated) Some 1:1 for a few weeks to build the learners confidence	Yes - Volunteer Agreement	None	Yes: There is a 6 week induction training (2- 3 hrs per week), which follows SALL/ITALL materials	6 week induction following SALL materials. Volunteers can access additional training and CPD is built into their contracts. This has taken the form of equalities, numeracy, community learning & development opportunities, etc	No. When ITALL stopped we ran SALL once however it didn't seem to fit quite as well. At same time as our service was targeted for cuts and staff were lost and not replaced. Reverted to non accredited induction training
Fife	Volunteer (Tutor Assistant)	Yes - Volunteer Working Agreement	None but willing to undertake PDA SALL	Yes: When training volunteers attend literacies groups with a trained contracted literacies tutor. There is also induction to ABE and working with adult learners attached to the PDA SALL. Child Protection training is compulsory and is undertaken as part of the course	Volunteer Tutor Assistants undertake the PDA SALL – Professional Development Award – Supporting Adult Literacies Learners.	SQA PDA SALL Level 6 qualification is compulsory. Trained and experienced volunteers can also undertake Level 8 PDA TAL, PDA Dyslexia and Dyslexia Awareness training. Child Protection Training is compulsory and undertaken as an integral part of PDA SALL
Highland	NO ANSWER (Refer to them as volunteers and volunteer tutors in their following answers)	No	None	Yes: Induction is embedded into the SALL programme	SALL SQA course as intro training pre deployment. We strongly encourage uptake of the SQA accredited course but not made this mandatory so we do not lose good volunteer tutors who really just don't want to do a qualification.	SALL SQA PDA level 6. We do further in house training with partners eg dyslexia, autism and more. Some vols and staff have done PDA in Dyslexia. Have small teams of people trained specific work such as "Read to Lead". Work with partners including UHI and WEA for ITESOL training and SQA PDA and some literacy volunteers go down this route for development doing both literacies and ESOL work.
Midlothian	NO ANSWER (Refer to them as volunteers in their following answers)	Yes	None but willing to do in house training programme if not experienced	Yes: Tutor training	5 x two hour session: Looks at definitions of adult literacies, barriers and issues adult literacies learners face, learning styles, goal setting & planning, group work skills, strategies and methods for supporting learners with dyslexia plus the different learning needs adult learners can have etc. AIM: To give volunteers a grounding into the work we do and an awareness of some of the issues learners face plus also give knowledge & ideas about different teaching methods and strategies they can use to support our learners.	In the past ITALL. We hope to put future volunteers through SALL.
Moray	NO ANSWER (Refer to them as tutors in their following answers)	Yes - Volunteer Tutor Agreement	None: expected to complete PDA SALL, SCQF 6 during their training period.	Yes: Once completed tutor training and are ready to work with learners. It covers introductions to colleagues, their base and any policies/procedures not already covered in their training course.	All tutors required to complete our training which integrates PDA SALL, SCQF 6. The course runs for approx. 16 weeks 3 hrs per week. AIM: To prepare tutors to be confident to work with adult learners. The course reflects how we work in Moray while also covering all components of the PDA SALL.	All tutors complete PDA SALL, SCQF 6. We deliver and assess.
North Lanarkshire	Tutor Assistant	No	'First Steps to Supporting Adult Literacies Learners' with progression to 'SALL'.	Yes: Tutor training	Yes. Initial 'First Steps' course and then progression on to 'SALL'. This is supported by experiential learning under supervision.	PDA SALL
Perth and Kinross	Volunteer Tutor Assistant. ROLE: Support groups and do 1:1 when no other option is available. They prepare work, carry out reviews and also review the Individual Learning Plan for whichever learner they are responsible for.	Yes	Up to now: PDA ITALL or SALL	No specific induction training, but informal 1:1 meeting covering information about options and opportunities as well as practical things like travel expenses	PDA ITALL/SALL. AIM: To ensure all our volunteers are trained to the same level, have the same foundational knowledge and we can be confident are using the same approach and language, as well as having and have demonstrated an understanding of this area of work and those they will be working with. The requirement for the SALL may change in the future due to financial considerations and losing experienced staff to voluntary severance. May revert to older model of an internal 10 week training that was the norm years ago.	PDA ITALL/SALL for the last 6 years in partnership with Perth College

Table 6: Stage 2: Summary of Data Returned (Continued over)



**Table 6: Continued from previous page**

Local Authority	What roles and job titles do volunteers have with in .....Council's adult literacy programmes	Do those volunteers sign a volunteer agreement or a volunteer contract with ....Council	What qualifications, if any, does ... Council require volunteer adult literacy tutors to have before they can practice as a volunteer tutor	Does .... Council offer volunteer tutors induction training, if yes, in what format and what is its aim	Does .....Council offer literacy tutor training, if yes, in what format and what is its aim	Does ...Council offer accredited qualifications in adult literacy tutoring to your volunteer tutors, if yes, what qualification/s
Renfrewshire	Volunteer Tutor. ROLE: Support learners with Individual Learning Plans, tutor and support them within their literacies learning	No	None	Yes: Health and Safety induction checklist carried out with the volunteers	In-house literacy tutor training runs over an approx 12 week period, 2 1/2 hours per week. Delivered by 2 Community Learning Officer (full time). A literacies tutor (sessional) is currently observing to take over delivery. Week two tutors start volunteering in an adult literacies session to link the theory with the practice, share their experiences and gain feedback.	We hope to be delivering SALL and ITALL in the future
Scottish Borders	Volunteer. ROLE: Support paid adult literacies tutors, in group work or providing individual support for a group member	Yes - Volunteer Role Description, negotiated with each volunteer	None	Yes: 1:1 session with the local CLDS Worker. Aim: Outline expectations of the volunteer, ensure adequately prepared for the role.	Yes. SALL. Aim: To ensure that every volunteer feels adequately prepared to support adult literacies learners, with a full set of skills, knowledge and understanding of literacies learning. We have, on occasions, also offered a shortened in-house version of SALL.	Yes – SALL
West Lothian	Volunteer Tutor. ROLE: Supporting individuals and groups and, depending on training and experience, preparing, delivering and reflecting on learning for an individual learner	Yes - Volunteer Agreement	None	Yes: 12 hours of foundation training to prepare volunteers for a group placement covering Introduction to Adult Learning, working in a group, Health and Safety, POVA	Yes – following initial placement experience, 8 x 2 hour sessions looking at teaching methods, learning strategies and resource design for literacy and numeracy. Following a further term's placement to build experience, 4 x 2 hour sessions looking at negotiating and breaking down a learning goal, using an individual learning plan and recording reflective practice	We are establishing delivery of PDA SALL for volunteers who are nearly ready for this.
Western Isles (L&H)	Volunteer Tutor. ROLE: Support literacies groups. Might do 1:1 sessions for a period of time to support nervous learners	No. Potential volunteers complete an application form and attend an interview prior to training	None. Experience is more important than a qualification but ITALL provided.	Yes: Shadowing experienced tutors	Yes: ITALL will be provided.	When staff capacity allows we can now offer the SQA in ITALL as a PDA
Western Isles (U&B)	Volunteer Tutor	Yes - Volunteer Agreement	None	Yes: 1:1 induction process with training co-ordinator	Yes: PDA ITALL training offered when the numbers allow. Training delivered in a group setting over a number of weeks. Aim: Allows candidates to create a portfolio of evidence through their work with adult learners. Also offer informal training sessions on Dyslexia, Autism etc.	PDA ITALL

Acronyms	
PDA SALL / SALL	Professional Development Award Support Adult Literacies Learning
PDA ITALL / ITALL	Professional Development Award Introduction to Tutoring in Adult Literacies Learning
PDA TAL	Professional Development Award Tutoring Adult Literacies
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority

Data gathered gave some insight into the variances around procedures and policies for induction and training of VALPs. Titles varied between LAs with five stating volunteer tutor, and others using volunteer, tutor, tutor assistant, volunteer literacy tutor.

Five of the fourteen responses stated they do not require VALPs to sign a volunteer agreement or contract. The remaining LA's responses varied between agreements, statement of commitment, working agreement and signed volunteer role description. Western Isles two responses were different showing a change in procedure across their two separate delivery areas.

Qualifications are not a requirement to become a VALP with any of the LAs taking part in this stage of the research. Falkirk reported they use induction training to identify if a potential VALP's personal and literacy skills are 'good enough'. Fife, Scottish Borders and Western Isles proclaimed to prefer VALPs to have

“good literacy, numeracy and IT skills” or “be confident in their skills”. Highland (High Life Highland) were the only LA to advise that they take account of any qualifications noted on application forms but stipulated it is not a requirement to become a VALP but they ask that people are ‘confident’ in their everyday literacy and numeracy. Fife, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Perth & Kinross and Western Isle (L&H) postulate all VALPs must complete their ITALL or SALL but it is uncertain from data returned if this is completion of the training programme or if SQA accreditation is a requirement.

Data gathered at this stage informed this research that induction processes are unclear, with most LAs reporting it as embedded or part of the SALL or tutor training programme they deliver. Perth & Kinross reported carrying out 1:1s after tutor training was completed to discuss opportunities, travel expenses etc. Moray gave a clearer indication towards their induction processes stating that once trained they introduce VALPs to their colleagues, their base and any other relevant policies or procedures they may need to know. Renfrewshire stipulated they completed a Health & Safety Induction checklist whereas Western Isles (U&B) and Scottish Borders have Training Co-ordinators or CLDWs who complete a 1:1 Induction with each VALP.

Information collated during this stage of the research shows that literacy tutor training can take on many guises throughout Scottish LAs, with a mixture of 10 hours, 24 hours, 30 hours, 38 hours, 6-week part time, SALL, ITALL, TAL some PDA accredited versions being reported. Falkirk noted no specific training at present as tutors are ‘homegrown’ and used to be VALP who did the ITALL qualification, going on to mention how tutors and VALP can access additional training. This infers that they may be returning responses about paid practitioners rather than VALPs. Most LAs referred to SALL or ITALL during one or more of their answers to this questionnaire but many reported doing their own version and following materials from these training programmes.

East Lothian, East Renfrewshire and Falkirk revealed that they do not offer accredited qualifications in adult literacy training. The remaining LAs reported using SALL or ITALL in the past and would hope to again should interest, staffing and budgets allow. Fife, Highland, Moray, Scottish Borders, Western Isles were the main LAs still reporting capacity to offer accredited training for all VALPS.

### **4.3 Stage 3 Research**

This stage was completed by collecting qualitative data from one focus group and five individual telephone interviews with CLDWs and practitioners who co-ordinate LA adult literacy programmes and manage volunteer adult literacy tutors

### **4.3.1 Stage 3 Topics for discussion**

Three LAs (LA1, LA2, LA3) attended the focus group and a five LAs (LA4, LA5, LA6, LA7, LA8) participated in individual telephone interviews. Four discussion topics suggested for both the focus group and telephone interviews were given to all participants in advance:

1. Recruitment Procedures and Induction: What are your views? What is base line requirement or good practice? Do you think PVG checks are necessary?
2. Volunteer Adult Literacy Tutor Training: Is it needed? What are the benefits? Should volunteer adult literacy tutors be accredited in adult literacy tuition? Do you think there is any other training required to be undertaken?
3. Line Management: What, if any, management or support do you give or are required to give to volunteer adult literacy practitioners? What are your thoughts about CPD and support?
4. Social Practice Model: If we are using a social practice model for adult literacy provision in Scotland how does this effect the role of these volunteer tutors?

### **4.3.2 Stage 3 Focus Group Main Findings**

#### **4.3.2.1 Recruitment and Induction**

None of the three LAs required any formal or prior measurement of literacy or numeracy skills as part of their recruitment process and all used an in-house application form. LA1 and LA2 mentioned how they use advertising to recruit volunteers but LA3 stipulated they had no need as always have people on a waiting list for training. LA1 also uses their local volunteer centre as an avenue for referrals. LA1 & LA3 complete a volunteer agreement and require written references but only LA1 carries out a PVG check as part of their recruitment process. Discussion was had regards legal requirement and LA1 was unsure if this was still part of their procedure due to historical practice or because VALPs can often work alone with an adult learner out with the classes but within the community centre. All three carry out interviews before offering places on training, however, LA3 require all potential VALPs to participate in a group exercise (NASA) which is observed by experienced literacy learners and literacy workers. Observers discuss suitability of each VALP based on the requirements as well as the opinions from all observers before a place on the training programme is offered. LA3 remarked on ensuring VALPs get an ID badge as part of their induction process. All noted they were happy with their own induction processes, however, LA1 felt their PVG policy may need reviewed and perhaps substituted with references to follow current PVG guidance, however, dialogue was had around the vulnerability of adult literacy learners and all agreed they personally would prefer some sort of PVG background for VALPs as references were not rigorous enough.

#### **4.3.2.2 Training**

All agreed that VALP training was in a state of flux for a variety of reasons, mainly budget cuts, staffing, lack of need and limited resources and were keen to know what others were doing. LA3 was the only LA which still offered and required the recommended PDA (accreditation) part of the current SALL training, but spreads delivery of these modules over a two-year period due to cost, staff cuts and limited resources despite having their own SQA accreditation centre. LA1 stopped the PDA accreditation part of SALL due to cuts in budgets and capacity, despite 90% take up of the qualification previously. LA2 reported they had not delivered any training in several years and the demographics of their volunteer pool was mainly older middle-class people who were not interested in gaining qualifications or career prospects, therefore, they no longer offer the PDA, however, if the need arose they would consider it again but perhaps in partnership to share cost and resources. All had previously adapted the ITALL and SALL training as remarked that whilst it was a good skeleton to follow it was not fully fit for purpose. All commented it was not focused enough on social practices, and perhaps shadowing and gaining experience during training afforded the best way of growing knowledge and understanding of this approach. LA2 reported all literacy delivery is embedded in employability programmes so they required VALP training around employability literacy and developed an understanding of integrated literacy learning and how to deliver it. All offered additional CPD opportunities such as Austim Awareness and Dyslexia but more ad hoc when budgets enabled them to, no-one had a programme of suitable CPD or additional training for VALPs. LA3 uses cognisoft to record the formal training of VALPs but felt there was a gap in mechanisms and approaches regards recording informal CPD and 1:1 support, and its value.

Confidentiality, ICT and data protection was agreed as vital and should be embedded in all tutor training but very little induction processes were reported on. LA3 also incorporate child protection within their training of VALPs. LA1 and LA2 have literacy learners who became volunteer tutors and regarded them invaluable as they had 'empathy'. LA1 reported that their learner/volunteer tutored 1:1 within a class and would prepare work for learners but was not required to undertake SALL or any tutor training as he was "home grown". LA3 offer previous learners with 'lower level' literacy skills some training around induction, confidentiality and procedures. These learners then volunteer as "buddies" and do not get (SALL) tutor training. Buddies offer emotional and practical support should a potential learner be anxious about starting a group, not literacy tuition.

Personal views from the three practitioners varied regards the need and levels of training and qualifications for VALPs, however all agreed that a more flexible approach might be required to suit differing needs or priorities of LAs in Scotland. They all agreed that getting the right person was more important than training and qualifications, however they also decided that VALPs would benefit from additional continuous training, voicing support for an 'on the job' approach to learning for VALPs so they could monitor and

ensure approaches were fully understood. All were clear that they would welcome better policies or benchmarking for the management, use and training of VALPs, but again reiterating they still needed flexibility in these structures. Consensus was that there is definite room for improvement on current practice and ‘an element of choice’ to suit diversity of LAs is required.

#### ***4.3.2.3 Line Management***

A CLDW line managed VALPs for LA1 where as LA2 and LA3 reported their paid sessional practitioners did this. All had procedures for hosting literacy team meetings approx. quarterly or held an annual development day where VALPs were invited with paid practitioners for CPD. None had formal individual support and supervision procedures for VALPs but reported doing them when they could. All said they believed VALPs knew they could come to them direct if they had any issues. No one reported a mechanism or procedure for recording S&S of VALPs, or actual hours VALPs gave to their programmes, remarking that most things were generally informal, ongoing/adhoc and S&S happened mainly in or after the literacy classes if they had time. LA2 felt there had been an increase in attention from LA management regards volunteers and that senior management had developed a formula to calculate annual hours for their annual report

#### ***4.3.2.4 Social Practice Model***

All strongly agreed it was the major focus of tutor training delivered, as well as regular refresher training required to ensure delivery followed this approach. Discussion was had around workbooks and that printed generic worksheets easily “sneak back in”. They all felt that tutors (paid and VALPs) needed reminding to use realia and encouragement to go out and about with learners.

Agreement was had around how some VALPs, often from teaching backgrounds, often struggle with this concept and approach, and have “Red Pen” syndrome whilst wanting to teach from a curriculum or book.

#### ***4.3.2.5 Additional***

There were clear differences within roles and responsibilities of VALPs across the three LAs with statements like “it hadn’t occurred to me that we don’t all do the same” in adult literacies specifically regards management, recruitment and training. Agreement was had around the easy exploitation of VALPs big-heartedness, with discussions around VALPs being expected to be set up before group starts, prepare work for learners and fill in paperwork afterwards “basically doing the same as group tutors but not getting paid for it”, and it was felt senior management often had little understanding or appreciation of the work and value VALPs bring to literacy programmes. LA2 reported a more flexible approach where VALPs negotiate their role with their group tutor. LA3 remarked that she felt they “treat their VALPs very well” throughout the entire process of induction and training. All VALPs across the three LAs are involved in completing individual learning plans and reviews as well as feed into weekly evaluations on learners.

Group tutors are ‘expected’ to oversee and counter-sign, however, there was some lack of confidence around this being consistent.

SQA Core Skills qualifications was discussed as being a growing focus of all three LAs adult learning programmes, with one LA requiring VALPs to assess SQA Core Skills, and cross mark with other assessors. LA2 reported a need to design core skills awareness training so VALPs could support core skills learning, but felt they would not be asked to assess.

All decided that a greater mix of people volunteering was desirable to broaden depth of experience, personalities, knowledge and understanding within their VALPs teams. Discussions were had around the growing necessity to support changing literacy needs of learners (Benefit Systems, ICT, Social Media, emotional barriers and peer pressure younger learners face) and current demographics meant older “well minded” VALPs focusing on learners reading classic novels rather than developing functional literacies.

All remarked that there is little or no opportunity for career progression at present due to continual cuts in staffing, in contrast to the fact that all three confirmed they started as VALPs before training and progressing to paid practitioners within LA.

### ***4.3.3 Stage 3 Telephone Interviews Main Findings***

#### ***4.3.3.1 Recruitment and Induction***

All reported some activity in recruitment, but it varied between ongoing, annual, biennial and triennial across the five LAs. Avenues for recruitment included local volunteer centres, word of mouth and advertising, with only one stipulating they did not need to do any marketing as they always had a database of potential VALPs waiting training. All used application forms but only LA4 reported having a specific application form for adult literacy and numeracy volunteers which focused on personal qualities and attributes, motivations, experience, and relevant skills.

Processes for recruitment were generally the same, with an application form, informal interview or chat, two references and then offering a place on training if suitable. Most had stopped doing PVGs due to VALPs having a classroom or tutor assistant role and therefore not required to be alone with an adult learner. LA6 still carry out a PVG check and LA7 do a basic disclosure with each new VALP. None reported a requirement or a process to ascertain VALPs own qualifications regards literacy. One LA requires VALPs to attend workshops, to observe and assess their interpersonal skills before offering them literacy tutor training. LA4 reported a new position of a volunteer worker within their LA, who is tasked with

coordinating all volunteer policy and procedures as well as developing one overarching volunteer policy, including a generic application form and volunteer contract.

The more rural LAs reported that whilst having paperwork and procedures their literacy teams in differing locality areas carry out their own recruitment and induction, and things can get adapted making the processes or experience of volunteering vary across their team. Generally most stated monitoring of procedures or paperwork used across localities within LAs does not occur, however, all but one uses a form of volunteer agreement or statement of commitment that VALPs are required to sign after induction.

All remarked on how the recruitment process should be about getting to know individual VALPs, their motivations, availability, needs and not about their levels of education. Importance was placed on VALPs being able to understand CLD approach and what adult learner needs and barriers can be.

#### **4.3.3.2 Training**

All had or were using SALL, and had previously used ITALL, but consensus was this training needed adapting and adding too, to make it suitable for their needs. Four of the five LAs reported delivering the PDA element previously however most remarked that this will not continue due to budget cuts and staffing, unless they could deliver in partnership with other LAs or colleges. All stipulated that PDA was not a requirement if VALPs completed the training, however, four of the five LAs reported to having their own shorter “in-house” training or had developed an “introduction to SALL” covering roles, classes, barriers to learning, dyslexia, social practices just so VALPs could get started.

Training in partnership with others was often raised as a “new” avenue of sourcing training due to staffing issues. However, one LA raised concerns that when previously accessed SALL through a college, VALPs returned with little or no understanding of the social practice approach, developing realia for materials or how to address barriers to learning with adults, advising they would not use a college again as they felt formal educators could not deliver informal education training as perhaps they cannot grasp the concepts or benefits themselves.

There were great variances in the CPD procedures and opportunities for VALPs, with one LA offering PDA SALL and no training or CPD after that. In contrast others offered WIGALL (Working in Groups with Adult Literacy Learners), online training modules on Adult Support & Protection, and Child Protection. Some had created their own training on topics such as:- digital awareness, welfare reform, universal job match, skills for work, cognitive thinking processes, curriculum framework, health literacies. Most stipulated training was organic and grew from need rather than procedural.

All reported concerns around CPD and training, with the need to make changes due to budget cuts and limited staffing. Other difficulties connected to training were the large geographical areas of some LAs, meaning VALPs were often isolated or being expected to make long journeys for training or meetings, meaning little or no uptake. No one felt they could enforce attendance to meetings.

#### **4.3.3.3 Line Management**

Lines were sometimes blurred regards line management of VALPs with all LAs reporting they carried out either formal or informal S&S and team meetings, but very little recording of the activities or continuity between LAs regards who carries out these managerial activities, with some being the local CLDW, others leaving it to the class or group tutor, and some being a mix of people depending on activity.

LA4 and LA5 had a more robust approach to line management activities, with 3-4 VALP meetings a year, offering annual S&S as policy, as well as encouraging a more informal approach between VALP and class tutor by encouraging joint reflective activities after sessions. LA4 emphasised the hidden value in embedding procedures for VALPs to meet, to share experience and gain peer support. They would also like to introduce learning plans for VALPs and conveyed the opinion on the benefits of LAs having one worker with the specific role of training, management and S&S for all VALPs.

Majority reported VALPs being mainly of an “older age range” and not looking for career advancement but just something to do and an opportunity to “give back”. Whilst all spoke about the opportunities for professional development, very few reported any progressions of VALP to paid tutor during the past few years.

Two LAs expressed strong opinions regards the benefits of VALPs feeling part of the literacy team but reported little uptake from VALPs in attendance at team meetings so minutes are distributed to all VALPS to keep communication flowing. They also reported trying to create communities of interest and inviting ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) &ALN volunteers and paid practitioners to world cafes, celebration events and any other relevant training offered by partners and celebration events.

One LA informed this research that they have carried out 3 questionnaire surveys with VALPs over past ten years, gathering VALPs views on support they are offered, how often to meet, suggestions for training, any ideas they may have for development of ALN, and that findings have been a key factor regards how they shape their practice.

#### **4.3.3.4 Social Practice Model**

All five LAs resolutely gave opinions that informal education is the foundation of ALN/CLD and that the social practice approach being taken is fundamentally core to success of delivery and engagement with



adult literacy learners. All reported views that whether a VALP or paid ALN worker the philosophical theoretical approaches are the same in informal learning, therefore must be, and is, embedded in all literacy tutor training offered to VALPs so they understand and follow the concept fully.

Whilst all reported that social practice model was core to their training of VALPs, few offered information regards procedures to monitor and ensure this approach was truly followed. Concerns were raised around the difficulties VALPs from formal education backgrounds or with lower level abilities have regards using this concept and they often “defaulted” to a more deficit approach to delivery or to using mass produced worksheets and books.

Several practitioners interviewed voiced their own worries regarding how the social practice approach could also enhance the vulnerability of some learners, as vulnerable adults can disclose personal information verbally or bring in documents to assist/focus learning. Some felt additional checks on VALPs, such as PVG, might assist in ensuring the safety of learners against those who might have opportunity to be fraudulent.

#### **4.3.3.5 Additional**

All gave voice to the immense benefits of having a good VALP within a classroom setting, highlighting the positive impact on a considerable number of learners sustaining and developing in groups by having a more 1:1 approach from a “tutor assistant” and how learners can feel the focus of the learning is on them whilst in a group delivery setting. Most put it down to having VALPs who can forge good working relationships rather than have qualifications, and value personal skills and empathy.

A few commented on how they feel volunteering is on the “UP” and that LA’s are trying to get more VALPs involved in delivery, perhaps due to staffing cuts, so urgently need to improve volunteer policy and procedures. Suggestions were made by three LAs towards central recording of VALPs, or a volunteer database being developed to professionalise LAs approach to all VALPs and encourage working across services and same levels of good practice. It was thought this would also support recording of VALPs practice as that is becoming a bigger part of inspections.

Several practitioners voiced concerns that CLD/ALN as a service has lost identity and is in critical state of flux and transition within LAs, specifically with a move away from traditional ALN to more integrated, focusing on employability, therefore making it difficult to keep CLD/ALN ethos and approaches. Concerns were given around the growing number of literacy learners being referred rather than self-referral, forced rather than own will, creating further barriers to learning and adding pressure to VALPs role with increase in need for support of emotional literacy and motivation.

It was remarked that the profile and national marketing of adult literacy has disappeared over recent years, with most practitioners stating an urgent need for national and local marketing to lower stigma and raise awareness and interest. This goes against guidance from The Moser Report which stipulated the importance of wide ranging publicity saying, “*We envisage a continuous high-profile campaign*” (P.5. 1999). One practitioner stated this research is “well needed” and “a good opportunity to focus on VALPs and highlight their work”. Many confirmed dropping numbers of people volunteering for adult literacy but a rise in interest and popularity for ESOL volunteering opportunities, and felt LAs afforded too much focus on ESOL. Others offered the opinion that ALN had become too embedded, rather than standalone, therefore losing profile and importance. One practitioner offered the opinion that the increase in digital and other literacies has muddied the water as to what literacy tuition is.

# Chapter 5. Analysis and Discussion

## 5.1 Impacting issues

There were expected and unexpected variables all of which had an impact, both positive and negative, to the implementation of this research, the clarity of data collated and additional questions that arose.

### 5.1.1 Access to people within LAs

Considerable additional time was spent acquiring and re-acquiring contact details for CLD/ALN practitioners and managers within the 32 local authorities both during planning and throughout enquiry of the three stages. Difficulties often seemed to be caused by the reported state of flux of the LA, and CLD/ALN teams within mainly due to cuts in budgets and staffing or restructuring services. Job roles and responsibilities changed, practitioners initially engaged with became unavailable due to quick movement into secondments to other teams or organisations, practitioners and managers who engaged positively became no longer in post and often not replaced, making it necessary for the processes of initial contact, introductions and request for support from that local authority to start again. Of the 32 Scottish LAs contacted, 17 engaged and returned data at stage one, 13 at stage two and 8 committing time and resources to participate in all three stages. The 8 practitioners who completed stage 3 did offer qualitative data from a mix of rural and urban delivery ranging from northern Scotland to southern regions.

### 5.1.2 LA Participation

Whilst the 17 LAs who participated voiced continuous genuine and positive interest in this research and stated a keenness to see the findings, interesting questions are raised around why larger LAs such as Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow did not respond or participate in any stage. Is this because there is not one person responsible, with larger teams facilitating adult literacy delivery and less personal responsibility/accountability? It was apparent that the structure of Adult Learning teams within LAs varied considerably with some being an autonomous standalone service within CLD/Education where others were dispersed within Economic Development, Communities or Children's Services. Another possible explanation might be their statistical recording mechanisms were unable to provide the data requested without significant effort and time being required. Perhaps due to staff cuts and current restructuring these LAs were unable to allocate required staff resources to participate. From engagement with LAs and discussions held with practitioners it was apparent there is a deep underlying concern around change and uncertainty within the field of Adult Learning and CLD. Variances around where practitioners sit in LA structures, the seemingly diminishing profile within LAs and the constant change of faces and names adds unease and is only creating questions around the future and stability of the service despite it

delivering core targeted priorities and objectives for Scottish Government. These debates are nothing new, as McConnell reports arguments about Community Education/ALN/CLD, what, who and where it belongs have been ongoing since the establishment of the Scottish Council for Community Education in 1979. He states that change is pervasive and informal educating professions such as CLD will always make formal educational establishments uncomfortable and therefore question their being, advising that CLD must ensure it retains an “*occupational identity*” and needs to continually evidence “*innovation and above all quality of practice*” (P.32. 2002).

### **5.1.3 Comparability of data**

Data provided by LA’s in response to questionnaires was not always accurately comparable. Discrepancies could be attributed to internal systems recording data differently rather than information being requested resulting in data returned for differing periods, however, all reported on the same duration. Other difficulties were around completed questionnaires only providing part information or questions unanswered. In stage two of this research figures returned for ratios of staffing (paid and voluntary) by some LAs did not calculate, making it more of a muddier landscape than a clear picture regarding the percentage of volunteers working with LAs delivering adult literacy provision further illustrating this research’s frustration regards obtaining an accurate picture of the DNA of the adult literacy workforce in Scotland.

### **5.1.4 Focus Group**

The intention of this research was to host several focus groups in various locations, enabling as many participants to attend as possible. However, it was interesting to note that finding venues at times and dates suitable for practitioners engaged with the research proved problematic. Many practitioners reported difficulty with getting support from management regards travelling and time, difficulty in finding venues meant some were being asked to travel a further distance than originally proposed which added barriers to engagement and few practitioners stated they were unable to allocate time away from current workloads often due to reported shortage of team members. This alludes to the state of flux practitioners remarked on and perhaps gives confirmation to some of the unease and change CLD/ALN services within LAs are reported to be in just now. One unanticipated outcome from this was the interest and commitment practitioners showed through their willingness to be involved and participate, enabling the research to host five individual telephone interviews gathering rich data to complement the focus group findings.

## **5.2 Terminology**

The results of this study did show that terminology around VALPS is consistently mixed and confusing, highlighting the difficulty research has when trying to accurately gather data. Often the only inclination of difference in roles is the word paid and can we be assured that it is always used. Practitioners who participated in the focus group and telephone interviews used the titles of volunteers, tutors, assistants,

volunteer practitioners, literacy workers and staff during their discussions about VALPs, whilst also referring to paid practitioners using designations such as tutor, literacy worker and staff so clarity needed to be sought for accuracy. This exhibited the ongoing problems regards the variance in titles that are used when referring to volunteer literacy practitioners, an issue that became very apparent to me when reading literature on VALPs for this research. With so many differing terms being used within policies and documents it is difficult to accurately report on VALPs (Belzer, 2006; Zeigler et al, 2009) therefore stopping us from being assured as to whom literature refers to.

### **5.3 Use of Volunteers and their Roles**

With only two LAs reporting not to use volunteers to deliver adult literacy, and 12 of the remaining 15 reporting 47% or more of their workforce being volunteers, this research highlights inclinations that perhaps within Scottish LAs there is a consensus around the benefits of using volunteers within adult literacy? Is this through necessity due to staff and budget cuts or because of the recognised benefits of VALPs within informal education as previous suggested (House of Commons, 2014. P.37)? Does this prompt a re-think around previous contentious issues (Meyer, 1995. Ceprano, 1995. Pohl 1990) and the historic uncertainty that has shrouded their role and involvement (Zeigler et all, 1999. Zeigler, McCallum and Bell, 2009)? It appears from the information collected from stages 1 and 2 that most VALPs work in classroom/group settings playing a supporting role to the paid literacy tutor with very little 1:1 and often still in a group setting. This supports the literature around the more recent move towards group work and away from 1:1 (Crowther, 2011). On further investigation, it is apparent that often VALPs also have responsibility for completing individual learning plans with literacy learners along with learner reviews, despite the ALNIS report (2001) recommending that a “specialist practitioner” devise and supervise learning plans even if the VALP was working in a 1:1 situation.

One LA stated that a VALP who had not undergone any form of adult literacy tutor training had this responsibility as well as sometimes the devising and preparation of literacy activities for learners, stipulating that this VALP was invaluable and worked well with learners. Information given was, however, inconclusive regards the level of supervision this VALP received from the paid group tutor. Having an untrained VALP goes strongly against the recommendations in the 1999 Moser report which stated that “*All new staff and volunteers should undertake recognised initial training in teach literacy and numeracy to adults*” (P.12, Summary Report) but literacy learner turned VALP illustrates how volunteering gives adults opportunities to learn new skills supporting Belzer’s opinion that volunteering can improve an individual’s ability to function as an effective citizen as well as offer career prospects (Belzer, 2006). It shows how opportunities can arise to increase people’s independence, beliefs and abilities when volunteering and learning go hand in hand. (L&W Institute, 2014). There is also benefit in a learner turned

volunteer as they have empathy and understanding that you cannot gain from training, and therefore have a value as volunteers because of the empathic gratitude they have towards the challenges learners face.

#### **5.4 Recruitment and Induction**

Contrary to CLD Standards Council recommendations for induction, the findings observed a considerable variance regards induction training and paperwork. Is the lack of clarity around these processes historic due to VALPs not being considered a valid part of a CLD workforce? It was interesting that, when questioned on induction processes, most LAs reported-on literacy tutor training rather than induction into their organisation. Practitioners voiced their own views regarding the growing need for VALPs to support continued literacy delivery (due to shrinking budgets and staffing). Most testified there was little or no requirement for signed volunteer agreements, confidentiality statement or statement of commitment. Very few were offering any form of specific literature regarding VALPs roles and responsibilities within the teams, with most relying on an application form and two references as their only documents evidencing a commitment from the VALP and a process for background checks. Some practitioners reported that their LA were currently designing new generic volunteering packs for the whole organisation, with some additional information sheets to explain the varying opportunities, a one size fits all approach to induction paperwork. This takes away from the importance and specificity of these people being involved in adult literacy education, which adds to the historic contention around whether anyone involved in this crucial area of community education should be “generic” or require more specific understanding and training to deliver literacy to a vulnerable group of learners.

From information gathered most LAs did not carry out PVG checks as part of VALP recruitment due to adult literacy learners not being regarded as vulnerable, following the strict guidance by Disclosure Scotland (<https://www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme/types-of-work-covered-by-pvg/>) as well as VALPs mainly having a classroom assistant role, therefore not working alone but in groups, or in public places if rural 1:1 delivery. However, practitioners who engaged in stage 3 of this research voiced strong opinions that they would personally feel better if PVG, disclosure or some background checks were carried out to protect all concerned. They all emphasised that learners with lower literacy levels habitually build strong relationships with VALPs, and VALPs can be quickly placed in a circle of confidence and trust and learners often disclose quite personal information, including documents and paperwork, due to the social practice approach therefore making both VALPs and literacy learners extremely vulnerable to being mistreated.

Some LAs used learners and practitioners to observe potential VALPs during group activities, to help assess suitability from all perspectives. Encouraging the learners to be involved in this process could be viewed as excellent practice and sits Freire’s philosophy regards educating literacy learners. By doing this the ALN team benefit from gathering alternative perspectives as to what makes a good VALP, as well as learners

gain real life opportunities to practice becoming critical thinkers, in making decisions, solving problems and expressing views about the world they live in (Freire. 1972).

### **5.5 Qualifications, Training and Social Practice Approach**

This research found that LAs had no specific requirements for volunteers to hold prior qualifications in literacy/numeracy regards measuring their eligibility to train as a VALP. So how do we know a person is good enough with their own literacy skills to help others? Despite some practitioners raising concerns regarding VALPs having a default to teaching classic texts or the use of generic worksheets, this rather contradictory result regards qualifications being irrelevant may be down to the focus of delivery regards literacy provision being heavily weighted in the Social Practice Approach rather than delivery of literacy qualifications or text book teaching. This could be regarded as further evidencing of Crowther's view that Scotland explicitly acknowledges literacy as social practice (2011, P134) and the practitioners engaged in stage three strongly confirmed their commitment to the ideas around social practices however they did express concerns that VALPs have a default to use scripted worksheets and red pen marking schemes, which highlighted issues around perhaps the quality of current VALP training but also indicated that there may be a shift away from the social practice approach with VALPs not necessarily having the concept, context or expertise. Perhaps the philosophy within CLD should encourage CLD/ALN practitioners and teams who manage VALPs to lean naturally towards focusing on social, community and subjective experiences, attributes and skills, and value these higher than VALPs ascertaining qualifications? It could also be due to the compelling evidence uncovered which highlighted that independent development of in-house VALP training takes place across many LAs by CLD/ALN practitioners. Practitioners reported to "adapt" or "pad" the SQA and Education Scotland's (Professional Development Framework for Scotland's Adult Literacies workforce, 2012) recommended PDA SALL programme so it suited their requirements. This suggests the recommended PDA SALL training urgently needs to be reviewed to measure its suitability since its launch in 2013. Other possible explanations could be perhaps the lack of clarity, guidance and benchmarking regards training from Education Scotland and Scottish Government, within this uncertain and ever changing learning landscape.

<https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/AdultLiteraciesCPDFramework.pdf>) This theory was supported by several practitioners agreeing they could see benefits in having clearer guidelines and benchmarks around recruitment and training of VALPs in Scotland, and welcomed them, as long as they were policies which all LAs would be required to adhere to. However, as practitioners they personally still wanted some flexibility in its interpretation to account for differences such as locality, need and demographics of both learners and VALPs.

Cuts in budgets and staffing were issues reported to have an impact on delivering adult literacy training for tutors, with some reporting that they were unable to offer training at this moment. Some LAs and practitioners reported delivering brief introduction programme adult literacy just to get people started as

VALPs, whilst others had tried working in partnership with other agencies to overcome financial barriers. Could this partnership approach be further developed to create a better “joined up” model when looking at needs of all literacy practitioners? Belzer tells us *“Regardless of the advantages and disadvantages of a volunteer instructional staff, the reality for now is that many adult learners will encounter volunteers as instructors. Given the importance of this effort on the part of learners, the training that tutors receive in preparation for their instructional roles is of great importance”* (P. 112. 2006) but with so many barriers and variances regarding quality and quantity of training being offered to VALPs do LAs understand this critical necessity for comprehensive, relevant training to be delivered? In the Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020 Strategic Guidance, action 2.2.8 seeks to *“Support managers/coordinators to advance their skills in coordinating and developing successful literacies programmes”* (2011, P.20) and Professional Development Framework for Scotland’s Adult Literacies workforce states in its policy *“Increased expectation on professionals will need to be backed up with training to improve workers’ skills in teaching and assessing literacy and numeracy learning and, in some cases, to improve workers’ own literacy and numeracy capabilities”* (2012, P.8) but it is unclear if these statements embrace VALPs as part of their workforce. Perhaps there is a role for CLD Standards Council and Education Scotland to help further develop infrastructure that bridges and connects across LA silos, to support partnership growth. There is also a need for further development regards benchmarking to enable clear guidance on policies and procedures regards quality training and development for VALPs.

## **5.6 Ethics**

No unexpected ethical issues arose during this research with all participants completing the required consent forms at all stages. Stage 3 focus group and telephone interviews were recorded with participants consent, and agreement that the recordings were for the process of this research, for the researcher carry out analysis and aid accurate writing of the findings in this report only, not for public airing.

## **5.7 Recording and Clarity of Findings**

Stages 1 and 2 used questionnaires to collate quantitative data from Scottish LAs around adult literacy provision, the use and roles of VALPS in this provision and the policies and procedures around that. Despite this research’s attempts to use plain English and efforts to make questions as unambiguous as possible, the responses were sometimes varied and unclear therefore these results needed to be interpreted with caution and consistency. Recognising the differences in delivery and procedures across the Western Isles two reporting areas gave reason to wonder if other LAs delivering across differing localities were to give more than one general overarching response, how many more variances in practice and procedures would be uncovered? Practitioners who participated in stage three were very forth coming with information on their current policies and procedures regards VALPs, as well as giving background information on themselves and how things used to be. However, they seemed less willing with information when asked



what they personally thought. Could this be down to the discourse around the climate changes within CLD/ALN that practitioners alluded to inhibiting individuals as they feel less empowered to speak up in fear of risk to current status?

## **5.8 VALP Progression Routes, Support and Development**

An unexpected finding became apparent when interpreting and analysing the focus group and telephone interview recordings. Hamilton and Hillier (2006) report that historically people came into the ALN field through volunteering or ad hoc part time hours and that volunteers were offered work almost immediately in the 70s and 80s. This research found that out of the 8 practitioners who engaged with this stage of research, using these two qualitative methods of data collecting, 4 divulged that they started as VALPs and progressed through training to become paid qualified literacy practitioners/CLDWs. This supports the main theories around importance of professionalism and training, and of viewing VALPs as learners. However, most reported that currently very few volunteers now progress on to become qualified practitioners. The importance of professional development is a core responsibility of the CLD Standards Council “*Deliver a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD*” ([http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/?page\\_id=4](http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/?page_id=4)) as well as a recommendation in The Moser Report “A Fresh Start” (1999) and is also stated in Education Scotland’s Professional Development Framework for Scotland’s Adult Literacies Workforce “*Services need to value professional development and provide workers with space, time and, where possible, funding to undertake qualifications and training. Practitioners across a partnership should have equity of access to professional development opportunities*” (<https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/AdultLiteraciesCPDFramework.pdf>)

It is interesting that very few LAs and practitioners reported on having structures for ongoing support and training for VALPs after they completed initial tutor training, although most practitioners who engaged in stage three commented it is an area they would like to develop but do not have the time or budgets to do it.

## **5.9 Interest in VALPs**

Several practitioners reported being aware of a new and growing interest from their LA management with regards to statistics and structures for measuring the impact VALPs have on reaching LA priority outcomes within Adult Literacy. Some LAs were including volunteer hours in their annual reports, as well as others developing or adapting software and data bases to capture VALP hours as well as recording both accredited and internal training and engagement with teams and CPD events. The beginnings of development towards communities of practice was evident in this research, with some LAs remarking on the benefits of supporting VALPs to connect with all practitioners who have a shared interest and to encourage collaborative working and development of practice. This is supported by the CLD Standards Council, which VALPs can become associate members, who have developed a section on their CPD website (i-develop) stating “*The idea that we learn with experienced others who are pursuing a similar purpose to*

*our own easily resonates with most practitioners' experience of their professional development."* (<http://www.i-develop-cld.org.uk/course/view.php?id=20&section=1>). This is something that can only benefit the role and raise the profile of VALPs, giving further evidence to the critical literacy support the practitioners believe they offer. It also opens avenues for LAs to start to view VALPs as members of our communities who are also learners themselves looking for support with their own development.

### **5.10 Change in Delivery**

Many practitioners remarked that the traditional adult literacy classes are changing and becoming more embedded into thematic tuition such as job clubs, employability training and industry specific training. This was believed to be predominantly down to budget cuts and changes in funding making old-style literacy focused classes and delivery more difficult to evidence as fundable with very soft indicators, outcomes and targets. It was thought that programmes that could evidence hard outcomes and indicators such as progression routes and jobs were able to draw funds and therefore in some areas literacies had become a secondary outcome, embedded in delivery of other programmes. This relates to Galloway's findings around the decline in adult literacy provision in some Scottish LAs and the move away from designated literacies provision. She reported "*the financing of adult literacies learning provision is no longer ring-fenced, following changes in funding arrangements between the Scottish Government and Scottish local councils. Local councils are also restructuring to accommodate financial challenges where adult literacies may be forced to compete for resources with sectors of compulsory education*" (P.1. 2016)

## Chapter 6. Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations

The aim of this research was to broaden current knowledge regards the use of VALPS within adult literacy delivery by LAs in Scotland. It sought to enquire how volunteers are utilised and assist in the delivery of adult literacy tuition within our Scottish communities. The enquiry focused on LAs adult literacy provision and delivery, the roles undertaken by VALPs, the training requirements of those roles and the support/CPD that might be available to VALPs. Enquiry also researched LAs CLD/ALN practitioner's own viewpoints from experience regards the use of VALPs within this landscape, as well as opinions on practice and best practice around recruiting and training requirements.

This study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the roles VALPs have within local authorities, with findings showing the majority take on a classroom assistant role, with enhanced responsibilities around paperwork and delivery, and very little 1:1 work. However, findings are limited due to numbers of LAs who did not participate. A further study engaging all 32 LAs with more focused questions around roles, responsibilities, management and training of VALPs by Scottish LAs would be recommended.

One of the conclusions from this research is that there is much more questioning needed to measure and understand practice as well as best practice for supporting, nurturing and developing VALPs. It was apparent that LA's and the practitioners involved in this research share a view that there is a need and role for clear policies and procedures around VALPs, but with trepidation around it becoming mandatory rather than flexible benchmark to build on. A strong message from this research was that VALPs are a continued and perhaps even growing necessity for adult literacies to continue to be delivered and available to all who need it within our Scottish communities. It is ostensible that the hegemony of the CLD/ALN practitioner's management of VALPs endeavours to be a positive and evolving one. This research has strong threads of evidence throughout regards paid ALN/CLD practitioners at all levels requesting to benefit from understanding what other LAs were doing, what benchmarks were out there, who had innovative ideas and working systems they could share. Current opportunity made available by CLD Standards Council being a platform for hosting communities of practice perhaps needs to be either promoted throughout LAs, or, other avenues for communities of interest and practice to develop are required as ultimately sharing knowledge, practice and learning can only be beneficial for VALPs, literacy practitioners and, ultimately, for adult literacy provision offered in Scotland.

This research raises intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of training available to VALPs. Whilst all were aware of PDA SALL, most were using home grown or adapted versions and very few

delivered training with accreditation. A strong reoccurrence was the diminishing budgets and constant flux within Adult Learning and teams finding it necessary cut to minimise costs and time. Throughout this research there were murmurs and reutterances voicing the underlying fear that volunteers would not want the burden of paperwork and qualifications, as well as how practitioners believed adult literacy teams would have lost VALPs if a PDA qualification was enforced as a necessary requirement. Surely there is a duty of care to literacy learners that all “tutors” paid or unpaid are suitably qualified within literacy tuition, as well as using the social practice approach, to ensure best possible chance of a positive engagement and enhanced learning opportunity. There is abundant room for further progress in determining if losing some VALPs would be a worthwhile casualty. Research is needed to ascertain if the current PDA SALL or equivalent does ensure that VALPs were not only fit for purpose regards tutoring adult literacy to adults, whom many practitioners deemed as vulnerable, but completion of this recognised qualification offered progression and opportunity and supported VALPs as learners and individuals themselves, on a journey of fulfilling potential.

There was an underlying current around the current demographics of VALPs, with this research recordings revealing predominantly that many VALPs were generally older retired middle-class members of our communities. It was reported that few, if any, volunteers stepping forward into this role were the younger and perhaps more vibrant members of our communities who were looking for opportunities or career enhancement. Recommendations of this research would be to consider this fully in further research. If this is the case then why do younger people, perhaps starting off on their career ladder, not view adult education a viable opportunity for career progression? Could this be due to the overall lack of progression routes due to the diminishing profile of a professional service? Is this because of the poor educational development on offer to VALPs, or down to the depleted low profile and non-existent national marketing for Adult Literacy in Scotland from Scottish Government compared to the focused campaigns of the 70s and 80s, which openly offered people opportunities to become literacy tutors? Taking the findings and viewpoints of practitioners involved the only conclusion that is clearly evident at this time is that organisations like Education Scotland working alongside LAs, need to take measurable steps to do more research and figure this conundrum out.

In further investigations, it might be possible to look at one LA at a time, considering the internal differences in policies, procedures and delivery that some LAs require or have, such as:

- Mix of rural and urban landscapes to deliver in
- Internal “locality teams” being autonomous and having separate systems and procedures
- Demographics of volunteers versus demographics of learners
- Teams dispersed within other services and requiring them to meet differing strategic needs and targets (Employability, Economic Development, Children and Family Services)

- Partnership Working for delivery and training
- Local learning partnerships, diminishing responsibilities.

These investigations could dig deeper into the best practice considered regarding support and training required, safeguards needed against possible exploitation of “kind hearted” volunteers and ultimately work towards gaining as much evidence and knowledge possible to progress adult literacy delivery in Scotland being best practice internationally, with its enriched embedding of the social practice approach.

Arising from this study, this is a prominent issue for future research. The OECD survey of adult skills within the UK (2013) reported that the labour market has changed dramatically in the last decade, with an ever-growing demand for a workforce with increasingly developed ICT and literacy skills to assist our commerce as we catapult into a future where high level cognitive and interpersonal skills are critical. It is worrying, therefore, that the UK is viewed as the only economically developed country where 16-24 year olds have the lowest literacy skills of any age group in society. Growth in adult literacy provision along with building a younger literacy workforce seems essential and further research like this into volunteers who carry out an educator’s role within adult literacy is needed. Research with perhaps a more wide-angled lens, using a broader brush approach to truly understand the importance VALPs have in engaging and supporting our learners and ultimately supporting Scottish Government in achieving the nations objective that Scotland (and the UK) becomes a “Literate Nation” by 2025.

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0002/3746/Vision\\_for\\_Literacy\\_2025.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0002/3746/Vision_for_Literacy_2025.pdf).

Whilst this study clearly has some limitations regards non-participation, both from some of the larger LAs and the smaller more isolated LAs, participation which would have allowed a deeper broader picture of the Scottish climate for VALPs, it has, however, gone some way into enhancing our understanding. I hope these findings might assist in answering a few practitioners and VALPs questions as well as suggest several areas for further investigations. Our methods for questioning and ascertaining data could be viewed as a successful endeavour, but work still needs to be done as to how to positively and willingly engage all Scottish LAs in the future. Nevertheless, we believe our work within this study is a positive starting point for further investigations into VALPS within LAs, which may enable some clear benchmarks to be set around requirements (if any) of literacy qualifications, as well as the firming up policies and procedures around the management, recruitment and training processes. It also has highlighted the developing need for improved recording systems to capture and measure VALPs volunteering time and own professional development to further enhance understanding as well as enable recognition, professional growth and development within this field of community volunteering.

In conclusion, the key recommendations of this research are:

- Further study into the 32 Scottish local authorities, focusing on roles, responsibilities and management of VALPs to influence the development of robust policies and procedures and make recommendations on good practice, which will support this growing role and team of adult educators, within adult literacy provision in Scotland's LAs.
- A review of the current SQA PDA SALL regards its current use within the field, by engaging with practitioners and experienced VALPs to ascertain accurate knowledge and understanding of the training requirements current practice has, with possible development of a complementary suite of low cost "off the shelf" or "on line" training packages suitable for more specialised, focused requirements such as differing thematic embedded literacies delivery, all of which encompass an element of experiential training.
- Widespread promotion of CLD Standards Council's i-develop "Communities of Practice" online platform available for all to use. To encourage its use, promote the benefits of peer support and developing communities of interest, through networking in and across local authorities as well as with partner agencies throughout Scotland, UK and Internationally.
- Continuous marketing campaigns at national and local levels. Need to increase awareness of adult literacy provision within LAs, as well as raise the profile of the CLD/ALN service whilst working towards combatting stigmas around having poor literacy skills. Promotion of CLD/ALN as valuable and credible career paths and recognised professions. Work needs to be done to promote this volunteering opportunity to ensure it engages and encourages people of all ages and backgrounds to come forward.
- Deeper investigations into LAs current adult literacy provision and the changing need of adult literacy learners is required to assist in the development of clear guidelines and benchmarks, and to share practice.
- CLD Standards Council and Education Scotland to work with CLD/ALN teams within Scottish LAs to assist in the development of opportunities which will permit and foster sharing of practice between empowered practitioners, as well as develop and progress new innovative channels of communication and place value on improved partnership working across LAs.

This research will be shared with all 32 Scottish LAs who were invited to participate, as well as Education Scotland and CLD Standards Council. This is to share practice, promote awareness and support further development within this field.

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