Working with Volunteers in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Provision in Scotland
2018

A summary of findings to date

Introduction

In January 2018, Glasgow ESOL Forum, in conjunction with Education Scotland, conducted a survey on the role volunteers play in publicly funded ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) provision throughout Scotland. *Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland's National ESOL Strategy 2015-2020*[1] recognises the need for volunteers in ESOL delivery to be "supported to be competent and confident in their support role to learners" (Welcoming our Learners: 22).

The survey examined the journey of a volunteer in ESOL provision by exploring the following points: roles and requirements, recruitment and induction, policies and procedures, retention and progression as well as learner profiles, and organisational information. The survey was followed up by a national discussion in March 2018 which examined the four themes of volunteer recruitment, policies and procedures, ongoing Career-Long Professional Learning (CPL) and measuring impact with regards to working with volunteers in ESOL provision in Scotland. This report aims to present the key themes from these two events and offer recommendations for next steps.

We recognise that volunteers contribute to ESOL delivery throughout Scotland as individuals and a range of organisations and the responses to both the survey and discussion do not represent the full picture. Some of the themes from these findings may reflect similar themes in other learning contexts which may be of interest to services working with other volunteer tutors, such as Community Learning and Development (CLD) or Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN). We hope that the findings and comments in this report will be useful to any organisations currently working with volunteers in ESOL delivery and for those wishing to develop a volunteer tutor project.

Survey and discussion

We sent the survey out to volunteer coordinators throughout the following networks:

> Education Scotland ESOL Network
> Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector Network.

We had 27 responses with 15 completing it fully.

Organisations represented in the survey:

Aberdeenshire Council CLD Service	Perth and Kinross Council
Angus Council Communities Team (ESOL)	Renfrewshire Council
East Lothian Council	Rosemount Lifelong Learning, Glasgow
Glasgow ESOL Forum	Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
Glasgow Life	Stirling Council- Learning and Employability
Inverclyde Council CLD/ALD Service	West Lothian Council
Midlothian Council ALN/ESOL Service	Young People's Futures

Organisations represented at the discussion:

City of Edinburgh Council	Glasgow ESOL Forum
COSLA	Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)- Elmwood Campus
Dundee and Angus College	South Lanarkshire Council
Dundee City Council	Western Isles Council
Education Scotland	
Fife Council	

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[1] Welcoming Our Leaners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015-2020,
https://education.gov.scot/Documents/ESOLStrategy2015to2020.pdf

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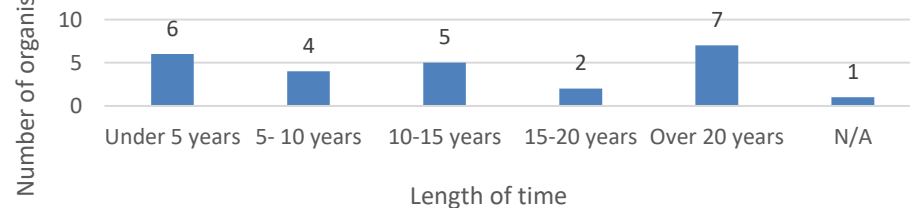## Organisational Information and Funding: Survey Responses

Organisations represented in the survey (out of 27 respondents) are mostly local authority (14) and third sector organisations (8) but also include FE Colleges (3), a church and an Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO).

- 23 out 26 respondents receive public funding to deliver ESOL to adults while 3 do not.
- The organisations represented in the survey have a wealth of experience of involving volunteers in ESOL delivery, in terms of years and volunteering opportunities offered.

Volunteers are involved in:

Group ESOL Tuition	Individual ESOL Tuition
Community events	Literacies support/ adult learning classes
Field trips for learners	Work clubs
Creative classes	ESOL camps
Interpreting	Ceilidhs with other Adult Learners
IT classes	
Creche	

Approximate number of years working with volunteers (out of 25 respondents):

Length of time	Number of organisations
Under 5 years	6
5- 10 years	4
10-15 years	5
15-20 years	2
Over 20 years	7
N/A	1

Volunteers' Roles: Survey Responses

Volunteer provision allows the necessary level of support given to learners, especially at beginner level and those with no or very limited literacy levels in their own language.

- There is a wide use of qualified and experienced volunteers
- Volunteers contribute in many ways to meeting demand and assist in both quantity and quality
- Some organisations expressed reliance on volunteers
- Some organisations use volunteers in a group tutor role, while others operate on a policy that groups are only delivered by paid staff.
- Several respondents work with over **30** volunteers and some work with less than **10**
- As of January 2018, approximately **328** volunteers were currently involved across 23 organisations.

Volunteer roles, out of 32 respondents:	Volunteers help in the following venues:
Classroom support assistant (18)	College classes
One-to-one tutor (16)	College run classes in the community
Conversation groups (11)	Community classes
Conversation one-to-one (9)	Church halls, Schools
Group ESOL Tutor (9)	Libraries
IT Support (6)	Learner's homes
Befriender (2)	Conversation cafés

Volunteer Recruitment: Survey Responses

Generally, the demographic of volunteers ranges from retired people, newly qualified teachers looking for experience or experienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL)/ESOL tutors with aims to share and develop their skills.

- Across respondents, the recruitment process is carried out using established recruitment policies and procedures to find suitable volunteers that have the right skills and commitment to the role.
- Organisations have similar minimum requirements in place, such as a CELTA[2], PDA in iTESOL[3] and English language proficiency (see graph).
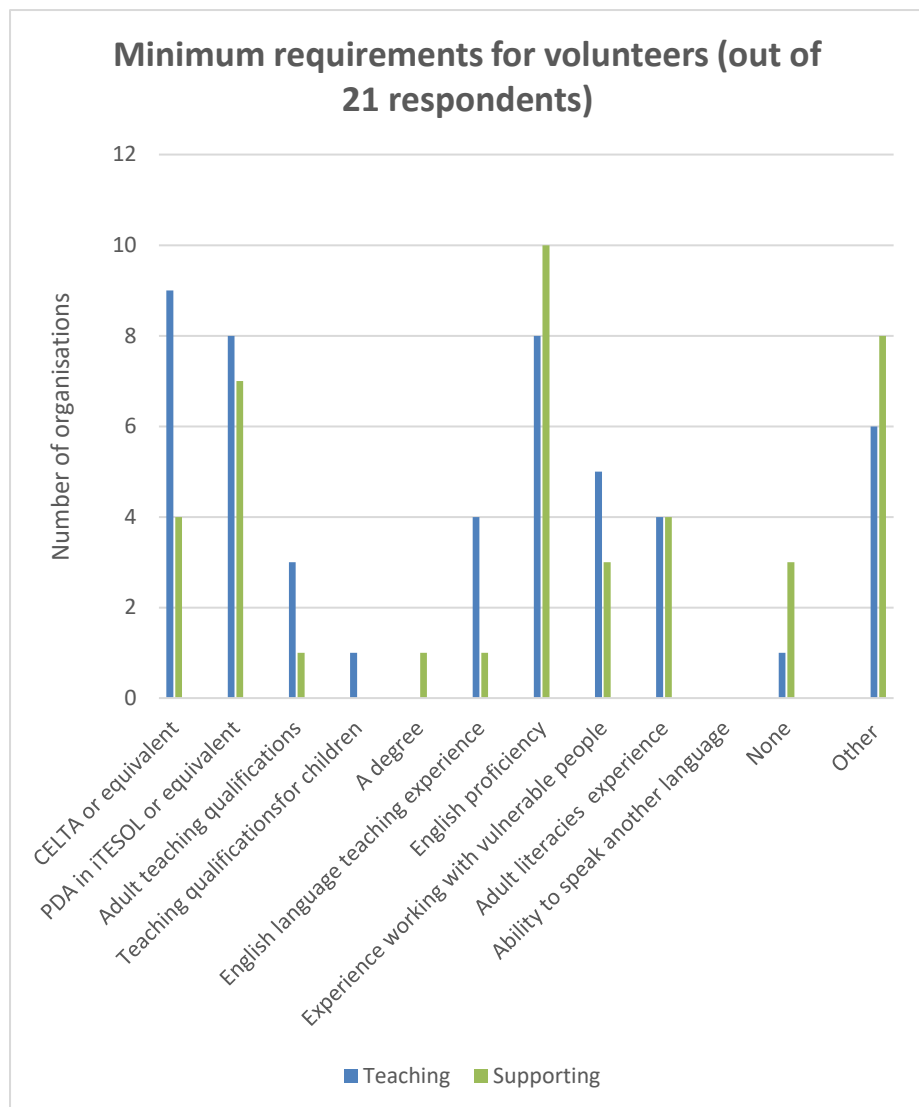
Challenges of volunteer recruitment

- Recruiting suitable volunteers: those who minimum requirements + suitability for working with vulnerable groups, can make a commitment, have appropriate availability and motivation to meet organisations' needs
- Recruiting diverse volunteers
- Resourcing issues – staff time required to dedicate to recruitment, support and training of volunteers; lack of funding for external training or volunteer expenses
- Turning down volunteers who are unsuitable for organisations' requirement

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[2] Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages: http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/teaching-qualifications/celta/

[3] PDA Introduction to Tutoring English to Speakers of Other Languages (ITESOL) https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42436.html

Volunteer Recruitment: Survey Responses (continued)

Minimum requirements for volunteers (out of 21 respondents)

Number of organisations (y-axis: 0 to 12)

Categories (x-axis):
- CELTA or equivalent
- PDA in iTESOL or equivalent
- Adult teaching qualifications
- Teaching qualifications for children
- A degree
- English language teaching experience
- English proficiency
- Experience working with vulnerable people
- Adult literacies experience
- Ability to speak another language
- None
- Other

Legend: ■ Teaching ■ Supporting

Volunteer Recruitment: National Discussion summaries

Most participants commented on the importance of word of mouth when recruiting volunteers. Many organisations shared similar challenges and recommend creating a resource for organisations to use when establishing a volunteer tutor project.

What works well:

- Publicising work to attract volunteers via Social Media and newspapers
- Having an initial interview to learn more about each volunteer
- Higher level ESOL students in volunteering roles
- Connections with Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) volunteers/tutors
- Highlands Council piloted a program of local high school students teaching English to young refugees in the community
- Word of Mouth, particularly in small communities
- Having different training courses for different requirements/ tutor roles

Challenges that arose during the discussion echoed those on page 4, Survey responses. Additional challenges were:

- Low number of volunteers at different times of the year
- Managing initial expectations
- Following a volunteer development plan
- Funding available for publicity, recruitment and staff time
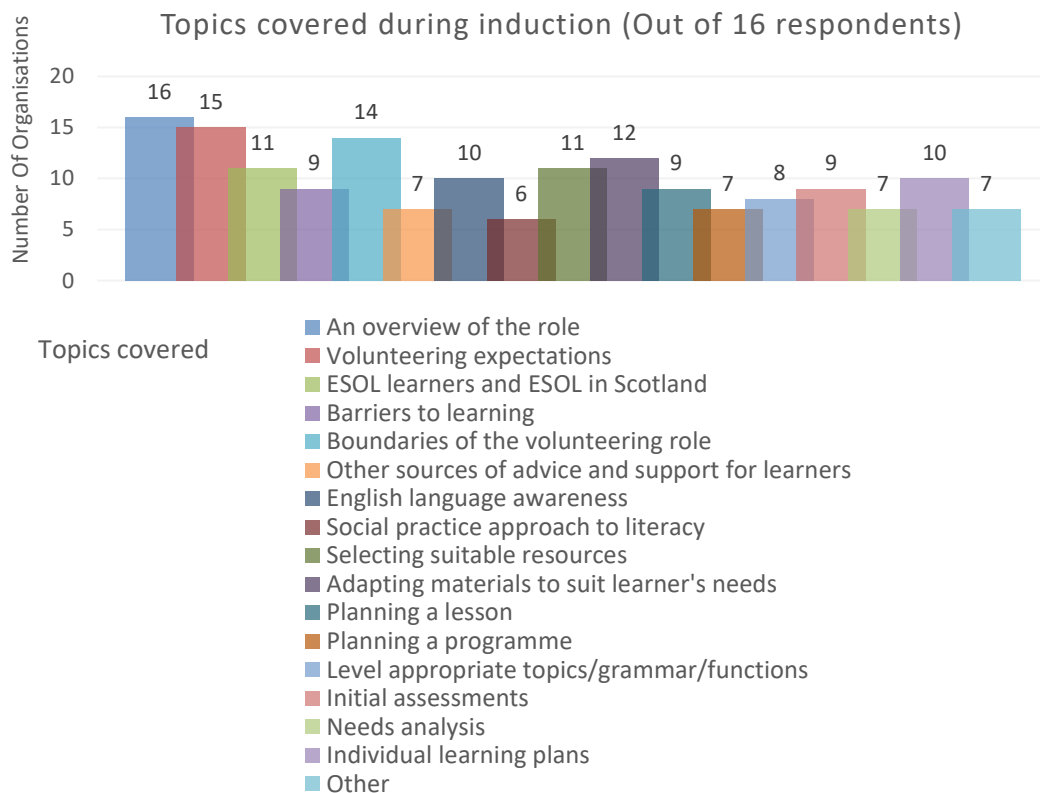
Suggested next steps for support:

- Share resources related to volunteer recruitment
- Develop guidance for setting up a volunteer project with examples of good practice
- Attend meetings and share good practice

Volunteer Induction: Survey Responses

Most respondents offer some form of induction training prior to beginning a volunteer placement.

- Training offered depends on the role, for example, one respondent offers Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) accredited iTESOL training for supporting volunteer tutors and in-house bespoke training for conversation support.
- Some respondents deliver induction training in partnership with other organisations, as and when required.

Topics covered during induction (Out of 16 respondents)

Number Of Organisations

16, 15, 11, 9, 14, 7, 10, 6, 11, 12, 9, 7, 8, 9, 7, 10, 7

Topics covered

- ■ An overview of the role
- ■ Volunteering expectations
- ■ ESOL learners and ESOL in Scotland
- ■ Barriers to learning
- ■ Boundaries of the volunteering role
- ■ Other sources of advice and support for learners
- ■ English language awareness
- ■ Social practice approach to literacy
- ■ Selecting suitable resources
- ■ Adapting materials to suit learner's needs
- ■ Planning a lesson
- ■ Planning a programme
- ■ Level appropriate topics/grammar/functions
- ■ Initial assessments
- ■ Needs analysis
- ■ Individual learning plans
- ■ Other

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[4] Professional Development Award: Support Adult Literacies Learning
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/65432.html

Volunteer Induction: Survey Responses (continued)

Other topics covered during induction training sessions include:

- Professional Development Award: Support Adult Literacies Learning[4] (PDA SALL) 25hr plus 25hr of ESOL (with 4 skills)
- The ESOL landscape in Glasgow
- Information about other support organisations
- English Language teaching methodologies

Evaluation of induction training:

- 68.75% of respondents reported they meet most or all of volunteers' needs during their induction.

- Where further needs are identified, respondents are aware of this and attempt to meet these through ongoing training and support, often focusing on particular needs of individuals.

- Challenges include having adequate resources and getting volunteers to attend all required sessions.

- Evaluation methods include forms, interviews- formal and informal, self-evaluation, distance travelled comments and discussion.

- After attending, volunteers generally express enthusiasm about starting in their role and report appreciating the opportunity meeting other volunteers.

Volunteer Policies: Survey Responses

Most respondents have volunteer policies and procedures[5] in place, designed to clearly define roles, support volunteers and pre-empt challenges.

- Organisations expressed finding time to review and develop policies a challenge though one mentioned a yearly review plan.

Volunteer policies across organisations (out of 21 respondents)

Policies In Place

- ■ Volunteer role descriptor
- ■ Volunteer Handbook- includes volunteering expectations
- ■ Volunteer agreement
- ■ Policies for working with vulnerable adults
- ■ Volunteering policy
- ■ Expenses policy
- ■ Working in learners' homes
- ■ Data protection policy
- ■ Volunteer expenses policy
- ■ End of volunteering policy
- ■ Problem-solving policy
- ■ Counselling out policy
- ■ Volunteer complaints policy
- ■ N/A
- ■ Other

Policies and Procedures: National Discussion summaries

What works well

- Volunteer coordinators rely on instinct, trust and building good relations.
- Having a 'Volunteer Agreement' and Role descriptors to define relationships.
- Having an expenses policy
- In larger organisations, a hands-off approach to working with volunteers can be useful but also challenging.

Challenges

- Policies don't fit because they are blanket, old or inherited and not specific to ESOL volunteers, more common in larger organisations.
- Supporting volunteers to stay within the boundaries of their role.
- Ensuring procedures are clear from the start of volunteering.
- Providing individual support can take a lot of time.

Suggested next steps for support

- Share and compare agreements made between ESOL teachers and volunteer support assistants.
- Organisations with policies, procedures and boundaries are invited to share nationally, for use by other organisations.

Proctecting of Vulnerable Groups (PVG)[6] Scheme:

- 8 out of 17 organisations require PVG checks, with some organisations having a blanket policy on involving volunteers.

Challenges with joining the PVG scheme include:

- Literacy and ESOL learners are not deemed as being vulnerable by Disclosure Scotland.
- The cost and time taken to join the scheme.

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[5] Glasgow ESOL Forum's polices are available to be adapted and used here: http://www.glasgowesol.org/volunteer-policies

[6] For more information, see: https://www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme/?via=https://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/disclosureinformation/pvgscheme.htm

Ongoing Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) and Support for Volunteers: Survey Responses

Organisations represented in the survey recognise the benefits of providing ongoing CPL opportunities alongside various mechanisms for supporting volunteers.
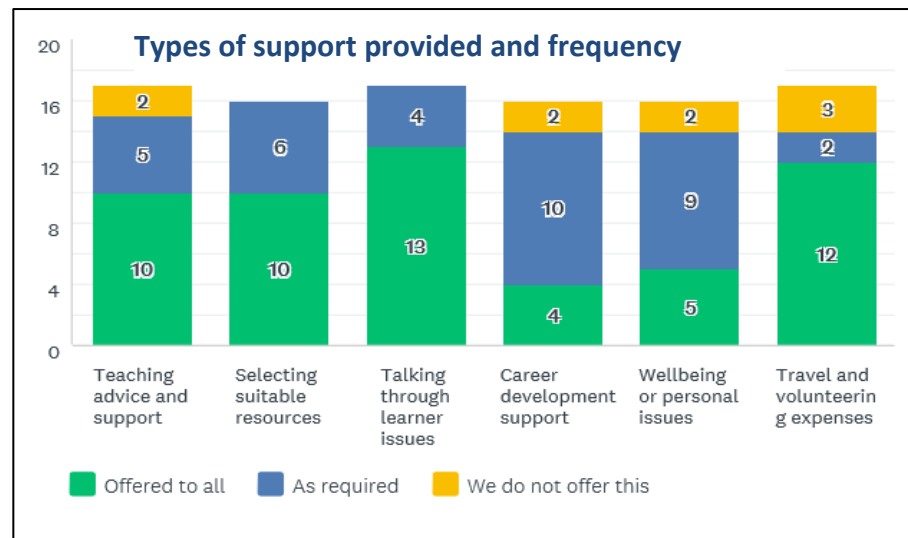
- Respondents could offer on average **2-4** training sessions a year.
- Training gives volunteers an opportunity to develop their skills and it plays a part in cutting down time spent on individual support. Volunteers valued learning from each other.
- There was a willingness to share resources in principle but there was recognition that sessions generally needed to be delivered by those who have developed them, including external trainers.
- With increased organisational capacity, volunteer coordinators would offer more training, and more opportunities to get together.

Mechanisms in place for supporting volunteers who are not as effective as they could be:

- Team meetings
- 1:1 support- informally and structured
- Support with an action plan
- Offer of training or shadowing
- Management support
- Counselling out if necessary

Ongoing Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) and Support for Volunteers: Survey Responses (continued)

Types of support provided and frequency

Legend: Offered to all (green), As required (blue), We do not offer this (yellow)

Common training topics include:	Other useful topics:
• Adapting materials • Working with mixed levels • Planning a learning programme • Teaching ESOL literacies[7]	• Cultural awareness • Scottish Qualifications Authority awareness • Pronunciation • Using a smartboard • Engaging and motivating learners • Boosting confidence and self-esteem • Trauma in the classroom • Scottish culture in the classroom

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[7] For more information on ESOL Literacies, see:
http://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/staff-room/teaching-articles/working-esol-learners-basic-literacy-needs

Career-Long Professional Learning and Support: National
Discussion summaries

What works well

- Supporting volunteers to find suitable resources online and in organisations' resources library
- Ensuring availability of support worker in different ways e.g. email/phone
- Free Future Learn courses on volunteering with refugees or teaching English[8]
- Volunteers input into training topics
- Regular volunteer meetings/support sessions (team and individual)
- Regional volunteer get-togethers
- Regular newsletters with updates by post or email
- Supporting volunteers to see the progress that learners are making.
- Partnership working e.g. in Highlands, both Workers Educational Association (WEA) TEFL Org UK[9] provided ESOL training/ free places in an online course
- Peer support opportunities e.g. 1:1 tutors working with learners of the same level plan together and share experiences

Challenges

- No or low budget for volunteer support or cost of training/external trainers
- Supporting volunteers to deal with challenging situations e.g. trauma
- Providing training at times that suit volunteers and staff
- Volunteers don't always take up CLPL opportunities available
- Volunteers have diverse needs-hard to meet all expectations
- Keeping volunteers engaged while waiting to be matched

Suggested next steps for support:

- e-Sgoil[10] or webinars for training/induction sessions
- Create a national, annual calendar of CLPL sessions for online delivery and sharing
- Regular national and regional events for volunteers
- Ensure that people are aware of online resources

Volunteer Retention: Survey Responses
Respondents reported most of their volunteers commit to their role for over a year and in some cases, much longer.

- The length of volunteering time varies: from very short, generally young CELTA qualified volunteers leaving to teach abroad, to over 5 years with retired volunteers.
- Some volunteers tend to drop out immediately following induction when they realise the time commitment required or time it takes to be matched.

Ways of showing volunteer appreciation:

- Making volunteers feel valued e.g. certificate of appreciation/invites to events with ESOL learners to feel part of a wider community
- Projects have ways to value volunteers e.g. end of term parties, sending cards, saying thank you

Main reasons for leaving voluntary role

-Moving on to employment in ESOL/ EFL   -Caring and family responsibilities

-Time restrictions   -Health

Volunteer Progression: Survey Responses
Respondents are aware of their volunteers' aims to progress and take measures to support their professional development.
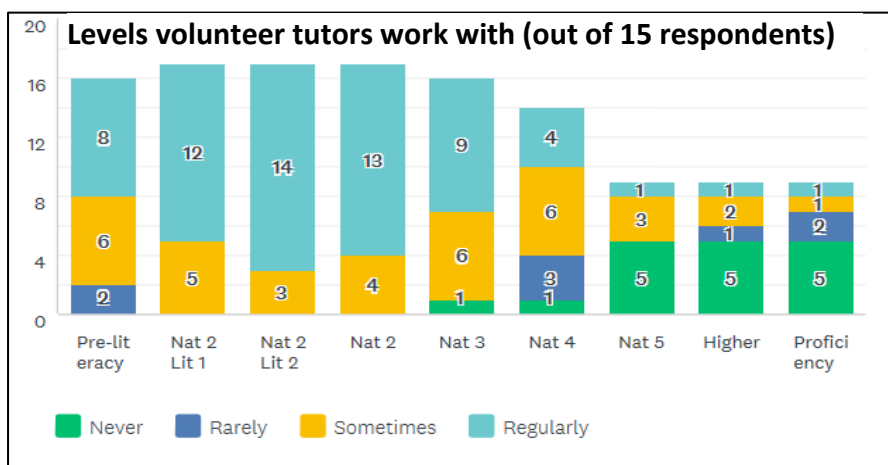
- Some volunteers are already in paid work as ESOL tutors and some are volunteering to increase their employability.
- Some volunteers are not looking for paid work at all.
- Experience and skills developed through volunteering **contribute** to the professional ESOL workforce in Scotland.

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[8] For more information, see: https://www.futurelearn.com/
[9] For more information, see: www.tefl.org

[10] E-Sgoil is an online learning platform. For more information, see: http://e-sgoil.com/

Learners: Survey Responses

Volunteers in all organisations represented work with ESOL learners from mixed backgrounds, with refugees and asylum seekers and EU Nationals being the largest groups.

- Respondents report that learners find out about services organisations provided via word of mouth, self-referrals and referrals by staff or external organisations.
- Volunteers mostly work with lower level learners: Pre-literacy to National 4.[11]
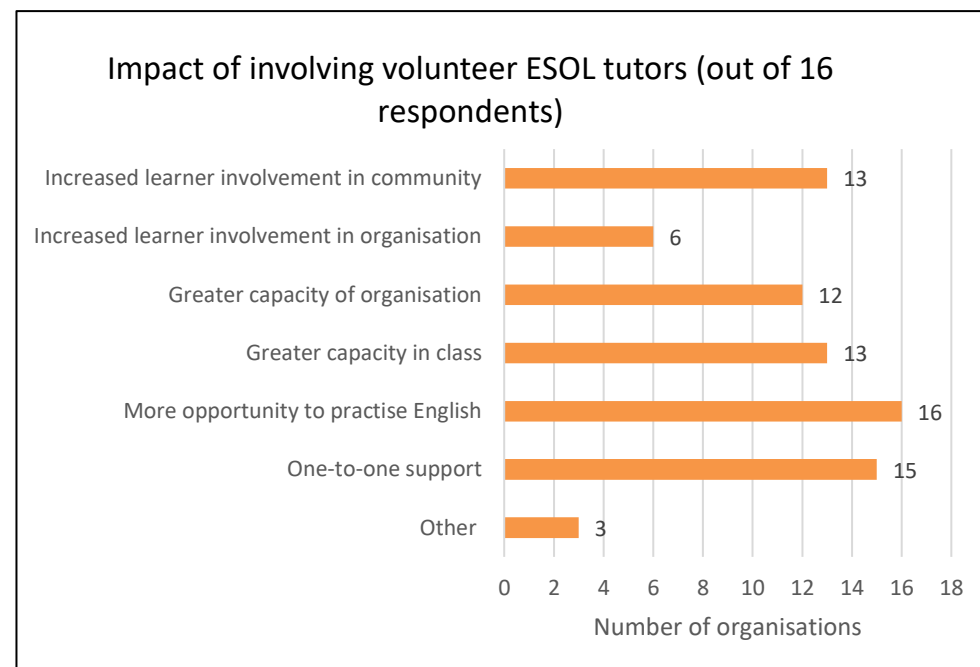

Learner documentation organisations have in place:

- Learner handbooks
- Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)
- Needs analysis forms
- Evaluation forms
- Record of lessons
- Registers
- Referral forms
- Learning materials
- Welcome leaflets in community languages, i.e. Russian and Polish

Measuring Impact: Survey Responses

Respondents report that involving volunteers in the community benefits learners in a variety of ways. For example, volunteers foster learners' integration and provide an opportunity to get to know people from Scotland in a less formal context

Methods of monitoring and evaluating impact of volunteering

- Informal observations and chats
- Tracking the numbers of learners progressing to college
- Feedback from support staff
- Questionnaires and surveys
- Volunteer interviews

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[11] For more information on SQA ESOL levels, see: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45678.html

Measuring Impact: National Discussion summaries

What works well

- Writing and following learning plans and providing support to do it
- Having a consistent approach to evaluation- processes, frequency, method, formal and informal evaluations
- Good working relationship between Volunteer Tutor and Volunteer Coordinator ensures evaluation processes are carried out.
- Use of survey/feedback forms to evaluate impact – summary every month and follow up
- Evaluate training sessions to ensure relevance in meeting learner needs
- Self-assessment forms and questionnaires to evaluate volunteer tutor experience
- Considered placement of volunteers to meet learner needs

Challenges

- Difficulty in supporting volunteers to follow an individual learning plan due to capacity
- How to measure the impact of the role of the Volunteer Tutor within the class or organisation
- Capturing anecdotal evidence
- Language barrier during evaluations

Suggested next steps for support

- New monitoring /evaluations processes and requirements – need to find best method for ensuring they are carried out.

National Discussion Next Steps

Participants identified the following short term and long term next steps:

Short term

- Begin sharing resources [12]
- Create a national newsletter for ESOL Volunteers in Scotland
- Invite volunteers into the discussion via a survey

Long term

- Create a small scale harmonised training calendar/ video conference training, linking in with projects around the country
- Central online hub for ESOL in Scotland: "a one stop shop"
- Create a National Framework for Volunteering in ESOL with:
  - Mission statement/Rationale
  - How we support volunteers
  - A promise or entitlement to volunteers

- Establish national record of achievement for volunteers – recognise what they've done

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[12] For useful teaching links and additional sources of advice and support, see
http://www.glasgowesol.org/Resources

Conclusions

From the responses to the survey and attendance at the national discussion, we can conclude that there is a wealth of experience in working with volunteers in ESOL delivery and a willingness to share practice. Volunteers provide organisations with greater flexibility and increased capacity to work with learners, especially at lower levels, which enhances their learning experience. Some organisations face challenges regarding resources for meeting the needs of volunteers and ensuring that volunteers are confident, competent and well supported in their role.

Glasgow ESOL Forum Recommendations

Linking up volunteer tutor projects and coordinators across the country would benefit resource sharing and learning on a national scale.

To build on this research, Glasgow ESOL Forum invites volunteer coordinators to continue communicating about their practice.

Get involved

-Add your organisation's details to our website: http://www.glasgowesol.org/volunteer-tutor-projects-in-scotland

We are looking for any organisation that is recruiting volunteers to support ESOL delivery.

-Attend future events for volunteer co-ordinators by joining our mailing list.

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[13] For more information, see https://beta.gov.scot/policies/poverty-and-social-justice/funding/