

THE ADULT ESOL STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND

**ENTERPRISE, TRANSPORT AND LIFELONG LEARNING DEPARTMENT
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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

The importance of supporting the acquisition of English language skills for those for whom English is a second or other language is at the core of participation in a democratic society. Without adequate language skills, people can neither fully participate in their local and national communities nor are they given the opportunity to meet their full potential. New Scots - as the First Minister's Fresh Talent Initiative outlines - are key to the future of Scotland. We want to attract and retain bright, hard working and motivated people from outwith Scotland to live, study and work here. We want them to make a positive contribution to the economy and to society. To enable them to do that, we need a coherent, learner-centred approach to ease their integration into Scotland.

Like many European countries, Scotland is undergoing significant demographic change. This brings challenges – but also offers great opportunities. We are determined to improve the English language skills of both New Scots and, where appropriate, members of settled ethnic minority communities. We expect great benefits to come from this – for individuals, for communities and for our nation.

Education and learning are vital if we are to secure a more productive, cohesive and successful Scotland through improved opportunities and quality of life for all. We have a long history of supporting second language acquisition. Immigration, migration and emigration have long been a feature of our history. Many of us are the descendants of immigrants, migrants or émigrés, some of whom were also constrained - amongst other factors - by barriers to them acquiring full language skills. We know that the provision of effective English language tuition is central to the successful integration of New Scots.

This adult ESOL strategy for Scotland will help to address the needs of ESOL learners more effectively - for the Scottish Executive and its agencies, ESOL providers, local government, employers, the wider education community and other local services.

Demographic change and globalisation provide great opportunities for us to create a better Scotland. Our international profile is growing. Let's work together to increase this, to encourage greater numbers of talented people to come to Scotland and contribute to social, cultural and economic growth, and to realise our vision of a Scotland where everyone has the chance to become the best they can be.

NICOL STEPHEN
Deputy First Minister
and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning

RHONA BRANKIN
Minister for Communities

March 2007

1. VISION

The provision of high quality, accessible and affordable English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is key to supporting the Scottish Executive's ambitions of growing the economy and of encouraging active citizenship in a diverse and pluralistic society. We recognise the vital contribution which New Scots and settled minority ethnic communities make to our society and in the Scottish labour market. Therefore, the vision of this strategy is:

That all Scottish residents¹ for whom English is not a first language have the opportunity to access high quality English language provision so that they can acquire the language skills to enable them to participate in Scottish life: in the workplace, through further study, within the family, the local community, Scottish society and the economy. These language skills are central to giving people a democratic voice and supporting them to contribute to the society in which they live.

¹ The term Scottish resident carries no legal definition. However, there are a number of eligibility criteria, currently used in Scotland, for access to funding for learning. These are set out in the Scottish Executive's guide to learner funding, *Helping you meet the costs of learning: Your guide to Funding*, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/03/29162117/21195>, and on the Scottish Executive's website at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/fundingforlearners>. Adult ESOL literacy learners – i.e. those who have little or no literacy in their own mother-tongue and who have little or no literacy in English and whose spoken English may range from basic to fluent – are eligible for free ESOL with literacies courses, funded under adult literacy and numeracy streams.

2. PRINCIPLES

The strategy aspires to the following guiding principles for adult ESOL provision in Scotland:

INCLUSION

- ✓ Provision which supports migrant and refugee settlement, and aids inclusion and full participation in Scottish society and the economy

DIVERSITY

- ✓ Provision which recognises and values the cultures of learners and the contribution that New Scots make to society and the economy

QUALITY

- ✓ Provision which is high quality, easily accessible, cost-effective and uses best practice in the teaching and learning of languages

ACHIEVEMENT

- ✓ Provision which contributes to wider national literacies targets and promotes attainment and personal and social achievement

PROGRESSION

- ✓ Provision which supports and encourages routes into further learning, employment and in local community life

These principles complement the Scottish Executive's existing vision for:

- community learning and development (CLD), as set out in *Working and learning together to build stronger communities*;
- adult literacy and numeracy (ALN), as set out in the *Adult Literacy and Numeracy In Scotland (2001) report*; and
- lifelong learning, as set out in *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life*.

The adult ESOL strategy for Scotland is also a key component of the Executive's commitment to the formulation of a national languages strategy for Scotland.

3. PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

This strategy focuses on the provision of publicly funded ESOL in Scotland for a community of learners which includes new migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, along with settled minority ethnic communities. We also recognise the contribution that Scotland's thriving commercial EFL (English as a Foreign Language) sector makes, to meeting the needs of international students wishing to learn English.

Coherent provision and consistent high quality will benefit all learners within ESOL and EFL provision. Through this strategy, good practice will be recognised and shared.

The *Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland – Action Plan* (March 2007) sets out the main actions we will take to implement the strategy, with indicative timescales.

For the purposes of this strategy, adult ESOL learners are defined as those for whom English is not a first language and who need spoken and written English for everyday life and to participate in the labour market, learning, their local communities and wider society.

Changing Demographics

Since 2000, the demographics of ESOL provision in Scotland have changed considerably, due to:

- significantly higher numbers of asylum seekers and refugees settled in Scotland, particularly in Glasgow, since 2000;
- an influx of migrant workers coming from EU accession states to work across Scotland; and
- increasing numbers of people, who may need access to ESOL provision, coming to live and work in Scotland with the encouragement of the First Minister's *Fresh Talent Initiative*.

Changes to UK naturalisation regulations have also contributed to an increase in demand for ESOL provision in Scotland. These regulations stipulate that an applicant for British citizenship has to show, 'sufficient knowledge of a language [English, Welsh or Scots' Gaelic]', to be determined by possession of 'a specified qualification' or by taking the citizenship test. The regulations have been extended by the Home Office to include all those who have permanent leave to remain in the UK.

The response of ESOL providers

ESOL providers in all sectors have responded admirably to this growth in demand.

- ☑ The FE college sector, helped by additional Scottish Executive funding, has expanded considerably the provision of English language classes and thereby helped reduce waiting lists, particularly in the Central Belt.

- ✔ Outside the Central Belt, where there has been a marked influx of new migrant workers from the EU expansion states, CLD and ALN partnerships have been delivering the majority of ESOL provision.
- ✔ Some employers, too, have shown a willingness to support ESOL provision for their migrant workers, through allowing time off, providing a venue and learning resources.

In 2003, the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (SRIF) recommended the development of a national (Scottish) strategy for ESOL (action 51). The recommendations of the SRIF action plan were endorsed by Scottish Ministers and *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life* (2003) pledged the Scottish Executive to, 'implement the relevant recommendations... with regard to the creation of learning opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers'.

Developing the Strategy

Until 2005, research data on the supply and demand of ESOL in Scotland was limited. The Scottish Executive's Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department (ETLLD), in conjunction with Learning Connections, commissioned research to map all ESOL provision and demand across Scotland in May 2004 to provide some robust figures on demand for, type, quantity and quality of provision in Scotland as a basis upon which to formulate a national ESOL strategy.

The *National 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' (ESOL) Strategy: Mapping Exercise and Scoping Study* (hereafter referred to as the ESOL report) was published in January 2005.

This research, complemented by recommendations from the ESOL Steering Group and examples of international good practice, informed the development of the ESOL strategy.

Public consultation on the draft strategy was held between July and October 2005. Respondents broadly endorsed the proposed vision and principles of the strategy. A summary of the main findings from analysis of the consultation responses is at Appendix A.

4. THE ADULT ESOL STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND

This strategy provides a blueprint for the direction and structure of ESOL provision in Scotland and support for the ESOL teaching community in their delivery of, and further professionalisation for, ESOL in the 21st century. In this, the strategy is aided by the enthusiasm and commitment of practitioners, and existing developments from within the profession.

Our vision for adult ESOL provision will be achieved by:

- * Improving collaboration and coordination;
- * Raising quality through learning and teaching;
- * Supporting learning and progression.

- * **Improving Collaboration and Co-ordination**

Guiding principles

- ✓ Provision which supports migrant and refugee settlement, and aids inclusion and full participation in Scottish society and the economy by these groups and by settled ethnic communities
- ✓ Provision which is high quality, easily accessible, cost-effective and uses best practice in the teaching and learning of languages

Background

The ESOL report estimated that there is a significant unmet demand for ESOL in Scotland. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is a growing issue in many parts of the country, both in areas where there has previously been limited need for ESOL provision and where significant demand already existed. The report also found a need to develop inter- and intra-sector cooperation. Coordination of ESOL provision across sectors and collation of data by funders and providers were identified as imperatives, along with clarification on public sector funding streams.

The changing demographics in recent years show that demand for ESOL provision, amongst New Scots at least, can change rapidly. Amongst settled ethnic communities, quantifying latent demand has proved problematic. It is clear that a number of solutions at both national and local levels are needed. These are set out below.

4.1 National solutions

The solutions offered in this strategy will complement existing wider planning structures for both FE and CLD providers. The strategy recognises that, in developing the skills of individual ESOL learners, we are also developing and supporting Scotland's communities.

National co-ordination

We will set up a National ESOL Panel to monitor the quantity and quality of ESOL provision in Scotland, and to lead the coordination of all aspects of the strategy across all sectors, regions and interests. The National Panel will seek to provide effective direction, representation and support for ESOL learners, providers and practitioners.

National Panel membership

The National ESOL Panel will be independently chaired, on a part-time basis, by a Scottish Executive appointee. The Panel's membership will include one or more representative from each of the following key stakeholder groups:

ESOL practitioners;
ESOL learners;
The main funding body;
The main qualifications body;
Employers; and
The Scottish Executive and its agencies.

The Panel will be supplemented by sub-groups or short-life working groups to take forward specific tasks and will have administrative and secretarial support.

The Panel should meet quarterly. The role and remit of the National ESOL Panel will encompass:

- **Advice and Monitoring**
- **Communication and Promotion;** and
- **Representation.**

Advice and Monitoring

The National Panel will:

- gather data and advise key stakeholders on ESOL supply and demand;
- monitor implementation of the strategy in Scotland and developments in the rest of the UK; and
- inform policy developments.

It will produce an annual report to Scottish Ministers on the supply, demand and quality of adult ESOL provision – and Ministers will respond appropriately.

Communication and Promotion

The National Panel will:

- provide strategic advice on direction to regional and representative bodies;
- communicate national initiatives and regional developments;
- coordinate existing or developing regional or sectoral strategies;
- support and disseminate good practice; and
- promote the benefits of ESOL learning.

Communication will be through a national ESOL website, a regular e-newsletter and annual ESOL conference.

Promotion of ESOL has both a national and local dimension.

The National Panel will manage the development of a national ESOL website as a medium for promoting available ESOL provision, professional development and student network events. The website should also include a teaching and learning materials databank as well as links to sources of information, advice and guidance for providers and students.

The Panel should also issue a quarterly e-newsletter to inform interested stakeholders of ESOL news and developments, national and regional.

CLD partnerships should negotiate with existing and potential partners to promote places on local ESOL courses as a way of reaching out to all potential ESOL learners. Local Jobcentre Plus offices, Community Health Partnerships, *learn direct scotland* and its branded learning centres (with ESOL provision being included on the national Learning Opportunities Database), the Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS), the Scottish Refugee Council, schools, and faith organisations are among those who could play key roles in this.

Representation

The National ESOL Panel will represent the views of ESOL practitioners, providers and learners in discussions with other stakeholders and organisations.

4.2 Local/regional solutions

Local and regional planning and partnership mechanisms already exist across the country. For example, there are 32 CLD partnerships which produce CLD strategies and action plans and 11 Scottish Funding Council (SFC) areas which produce area

supply and demand studies. There are also currently 23 Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) with strategic priorities. In addition, ESOL practitioners at a local level show commitment to building links with voluntary organisations, universities and LECs to offer more progression options for learners.

However, there are inconsistencies in planning and coordination across the country, largely because of the rapid growth in demand for ESOL in some areas and the complexities of ascertaining and meeting latent demand. Therefore, the National Panel will work with CLD partnerships to achieve a consistent and coordinated approach across Scotland.

The main tasks at regional level will be:

- **Signposting Learner Need:** To help providers ensure the best possible match between learner demand/needs and high quality provision. Subject to the availability of resources, this will reduce waiting lists;
- **Advice:** To advise the National ESOL Panel on regional ESOL provision and raise awareness of local developments which might be used as national models of good practice;
- **Collaboration and representation:** To identify and develop opportunities for local partnerships and initiatives between ESOL providers (and the EAL service in schools), businesses, local government, wider educational provision and community development;
- **Communication and promotion:** To raise awareness of staff development opportunities for ESOL practitioners and support staff both locally and nationally, and to inform them of statutory developments. This information should also be shared with staff teaching EAL in schools.

4.3 Guidance on funding

Eligibility criteria and entitlement vary across funding streams. However, the National Panel, in discussion with funders and providers, will as one of its first actions set out the basic funding principles which should generally be applicable to all ESOL funding. Guidance on these principles will then be made available via the national ESOL website.

* **Raising Quality Through Learning and Teaching**

Guiding principles

- ✓ Provision which supports migrant and refugee settlement, and aids inclusion and full participation in Scottish society and the economy by these groups and by settled ethnic communities
- ✓ Provision which recognises and values the cultures of learners and the contribution that New Scots make to society and the economy

- ✓ Provision which supports and encourages routes into further learning and/or employment
- ✓ Provision which is high quality, easily accessible, cost-effective and uses best practice in the teaching and learning of languages
- ✓ Provision which reflects wider national literacies targets and promotes attainment and personal and social achievement

Background

The ESOL report noted that the majority of ESOL learners, in all sectors, were attending general English courses for between 2 and 15 hours per week, often as a stepping stone to other ESOL courses at colleges. FE colleges deliver the bulk of ESOL provision in Scotland, at all levels from beginner to advanced, and have also developed the majority of ESOL combined with vocational subject courses. Most colleges continue to offer ESOL qualifications, with increasing numbers using the SQA's ESOL National Qualifications (NQ) units. Around 15 per cent of ESOL provision was in the form of ESOL literacies, mostly delivered in a community learning setting.

Most of the teaching staff surveyed in the ESOL report had a teaching qualification, although not always an ESOL specialist qualification. ESOL practitioners, in general, need to be better acquainted with the Scottish qualifications landscape and with wider educational priorities. Other areas of staff development in need of attention include: better staff induction programmes for ESOL staff; the development of a qualification for volunteers working with ESOL learners; and a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) award for experienced and qualified ESOL teachers.

Some professional development programmes (both accredited and informal) are available at a local level. In addition, a Professional Development Award in ESOL Literacies - for experienced ESOL teachers wishing to teach ESOL literacies - was accredited by the SQA in April 2005.

The SQA is also reviewing and augmenting its NQ ESOL portfolio. In light of recent Home Office citizenship and English language requirements for naturalisation and residency the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the SQA, and a number of Scottish ESOL providers have developed new ESOL with citizenship materials and training for ESOL staff to deliver them.

Most ESOL provision is subject to rigorous quality assurance. All FE, CLD and ALN provision is subject to review by HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and uses HMIE frameworks for the purposes of self-evaluation. ALN providers across all sectors are encouraged, through ALN partnerships, to use HMIE's *How Good is our CLD* as an evaluation tool for quality assuring provision for ESOL learners who also have literacies needs. Some FE colleges are also subject to additional review as part of their certification under various accreditation schemes. All SQA approved centres also have in place internal verification systems, which are subject to

centralised SQA moderation procedures, for ensuring quality and consistency in assessment.

5.1 Teaching, learning and assessment

Supporting and delivering a curriculum framework for ESOL in Scotland

This strategy recognises the need for an adult ESOL curriculum framework for Scotland, to be developed along similar lines to the existing adult literacies curriculum framework. A national ESOL curriculum group, overseen by the National Panel, will do this. Taking into account developments in schools EAL, the group should seek to develop a coherent framework for ESOL teaching, learning and assessment which will equip learners with the relevant language skills to enter the labour market, to access further study and participate more fully in their local communities and Scottish society. This curriculum framework should:

- be fully linked to SCQF and to SQA qualifications;
- take account of policy developments in citizenship and employability;
- reflect best practice in wider language and literacy teaching, learning and assessment;
- consider the differing needs, including literacy learning needs, of learners and reflect these in measurement of achievement;
- acknowledge the benefits of, and be sensitive to, cultural differences;
- take account of the various quality assurance systems, particularly the HMIE quality frameworks; and
- take account of the staff development and other resource needs of the roll out of a Scottish ESOL curriculum framework.

The curriculum group will also look at the issues of assessment and attainment in the context of recent SQA developments and other methodologies for measuring student progress. As well as formal assessment, there is a need to recognise the value of less measurable learner achievements (e.g. greater confidence to participate in classes and the community) particularly amongst vulnerable learners. The SQA is exploring strategies for measuring, accrediting and recording learner achievement through learning plans. The ESOL curriculum group will consider ways in which an adult ESOL curriculum framework could provide learners with the relevant language skills to enter the labour market, to access further study and participate more fully in their local communities and Scottish society. Developments in ESOL must also consider and apply best practice from language teaching, learning and assessment.

As the work of the ESOL curriculum group develops there will be a need for training and dissemination. The curriculum framework, and associated training, should focus on meeting the specific needs of learners, newly arrived or settled in the UK, while also taking account of the needs of settled ethnic communities.

Learning and teaching

Effective learning and teaching lies at the heart of a national ESOL strategy. ESOL learning and teaching should:

- Be based on current thinking and best practice for teaching adult learners, and should incorporate the principles of reflective practice;
- Incorporate best practice in language learning methodology;
- Incorporate broader best practice in provision that addresses the needs of ESOL and ESOL literacies learners;
- Use different delivery methods appropriate to learners' needs; and
- Promote the integration and mainstreaming of ESOL into wider FE and CLD provision.

The Scottish Executive is funding the development of a 'Best Practice in ESOL' framework. This should be used as a self-evaluation tool for all providers, and will provide a platform for disseminating existing good practice to all ESOL providers.

The Best Practice framework will be linked to the HMIE quality framework for further education, to the framework for Quality Assurance in CLD, *How Good is Our CLD*, and to *Literacies in the Community*. It will also take into account the FE National Training Organisation's guidance for ESOL teaching (issued in 2003).

Coherent learning and teaching, and progression, are based on a sound curricular framework; and courses must take full account of community and employer needs. Thus employers need to be engaged so that work-based ESOL can be developed and delivered in line with the Scottish Executive's Employability Framework.

Subject to the outcomes of the work yet to be done by the ESOL curriculum group some of what follows are provisional rather than final guidelines.

Assessment:

Diagnostic and formative assessment

Assessment is a valuable tool in placing learners appropriately, in planning learning and monitoring progress. Effective initial diagnostic assessment tools should be used with all ESOL learners. This diagnosis should include an assessment of whether ESOL learners have literacy needs. Specific assessment tools should be developed and used for this purpose. On-going review and feedback on formative assessment should be viewed as a learning tool, and should be linked, where appropriate, to individual learning plans. Assessment should reflect equal opportunities practice and should make provision, when needed, for additional support needs (e.g. dyslexia, study skills). In the case of the latter, the Scottish Executive's guide to public bodies on supporting students with additional needs in further education, *Partnership Matters*, should be used.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment provides evidence of attainment, promotes articulation to mainstream programmes, and improves access to employment opportunities. Wherever possible, ESOL learners should be encouraged to work towards the most appropriate high-quality accredited ESOL qualifications. Key stakeholders - in particular, employers, colleges, universities, CLD and ALN partnerships - should be made aware of ESOL accreditation which is linked to the SCQF. This will help promote progression and inclusion.

Measuring 'distance travelled'

Not all learners wish to work towards formal accreditation. Providers should therefore capture qualitative achievement for ESOL learners.

Individual learning plans are one method of capturing this, but may not be appropriate for all ESOL learners. Good practice in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), where appropriate, will be considered by the ESOL curriculum group.

5.2 Professional development

As a National Curriculum Framework for ESOL emerges, SQA and the Scottish Executive should develop related professional awards for ESOL practitioners. The development of an ESOL CPD structure should also take account of developments at a UK level. Lifelong Learning UK (the Sector Skills Council for lifelong learning) can assist in ensuring that CPD is cross-sectoral and focused on meeting learners' needs.

This strategy proposes that a structured professional development pathway needs to be mapped for ESOL staff within broader developments in CPD for lecturers and tutors within FE, for CLD and ALN staff. Briefly, these broader CPD frameworks are as follows.

Further Education

The occupational standards for FE lecturers are overseen by the Further Education Professional Development Forum (FEPDF). A range of initial teacher training units and professional development awards (PDAs), which can be delivered in the 37 FE colleges approved to do so, now exist. In addition, the FEPDF is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE), delivered in the 3 PDF-approved teacher education institutions at the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee and Stirling.

Community Learning and Development

In February 2003, the Scottish Executive outlined plans for restructuring and improving training for CLD practitioners. All CLD practitioners' training and qualifications are overseen by Community Education Validation and Endorsement (CeVe). A consortium of HE, FE and community-based providers has been

established to further develop work-based and part-time routes to CLD training and qualification.

Adult Literacies

The Adult Literacies team within Learning Connections is in the process of constructing a training strategy for Scotland. The strategic direction of this will be informed by the refresh of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, this adult ESOL strategy and key pieces of research currently being undertaken.

Achieving a professional development structure for ESOL practitioners

A short-life working group will:

- Map existing ESOL and ESOL with literacies qualifications onto a CPD pathway for ESOL practitioners;
- Place these qualifications within wider FE, CLD and ALN staff development frameworks and consider where they might be placed within the SCQF (taking cognisance of the sector skills council for lifelong learning, Lifelong Learning UK);
- Identify gaps in existing ESOL and ESOL with literacies CPD qualifications and any need for additional professional development units or PDAs; and
- Identify CPD needs of teaching, learning support, guidance and administrative support staff (see section 6.2).

This group should work closely with both CeVe and the FEPDF. In addition to ESOL and ESOL with literacies experts, the following bodies should be represented: Learning Connections (ALN and CLD interests); HMIE; Learning Link Scotland; and SQA.

A document outlining professional development routes and levels of qualifications should then be passed to the National ESOL Panel for dissemination and publication on the national ESOL website.

This strategy aspires to a fully professional workforce with recognised career structures. ESOL practitioners need to show knowledge, technical competence, and expertise at a level consistent with effective programme delivery. Each teacher should have a relevant specialist qualification in the teaching of ESOL. Centres, for their part, should also ensure that ESOL staff are included in mainstream activities and staff development programmes (including inductions).

Supporting volunteers

Volunteer tutors make a significant contribution to ESOL provision in Scotland. Some volunteers are highly trained and experienced. For those who lack formal training or are new to this field of teaching, a PDA in initial ESOL teaching should be developed. The award should support the skills of volunteers in working one to one or with small groups of ESOL learners. The award should draw on best practice in

language learning and ESOL and literacies learning. It should enable progression to the CELTA or equivalent.

Engaging practitioners in research

Small scale action research will help to promote a 'reflective practitioner' approach amongst ESOL professionals. The Scottish Executive, in partnership with key stakeholders, will seek to fund small-scale action research projects in ESOL.

5.3 Quality assurance

Relevant HMIE quality frameworks should be used by all ESOL providers in FE, CLD and ALN. The FE sector should link all aspects of ESOL practice to the HMIE quality framework. Community based providers should use *How good is our CLD* and *Literacies in the Community* as further quality assurance tools. The 'Best Practice in ESOL' framework, although ESOL specific, will be tied to the relevant quality frameworks in FE, CLD and ALN. Qualitative and quantitative data will be gathered to assess the effectiveness of the strategy, i.e. how well ESOL providers are performing in relation to these national quality assurance frameworks.

*** Supporting learning and progression**

Guiding principles

- ✓ Provision which supports migrant and refugee settlement, and aids inclusion and full participation in Scottish society and the economy by these groups and by settled ethnic communities
- ✓ Provision which supports and encourages routes into further learning and/or employment
- ✓ Provision which reflects wider national literacies targets and promotes attainment and personal and social achievement

Background

Understanding the barriers to learning that face ESOL learners, and developing support and guidance mechanisms and progression routes for ESOL students are as essential as teaching, learning and assessment, for helping learners achieve their potential and meet their aspirations. They are also fundamental to aiding greater participation by ESOL learners in their local communities, Scottish society and the economy.

A joint audit of skills and aspirations amongst asylum seekers and refugees carried out by the Scottish Executive and Scottish Refugee Council in 2004 revealed that 55 per cent and 21 per cent of respondents had attended and completed college and university level education respectively in their countries of origin. Many also had

valuable vocational and professional skills. Despite a number of local developments for refugee doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers and trades, only four FE colleges and six CLD centres - of those involved in the recent ESOL research - ran English for work courses. Research carried out for NIACE and the Department for Work and Pensions in 2002 amongst asylum seekers and refugees revealed that these groups often attended ESOL classes, 'in the hope of improving their employment prospects, but do not always find them designed to address these skills.' The ESOL report pointed out that the lack of dialogue between ESOL departments and providers of other advanced and non-advanced courses also placed barriers in the way of ESOL learners' progression. It also showed that learners may choose to remain in an ESOL class with teachers with whom they are familiar. There may also be a mismatch between perceptions of ESOL learners' language skills and the language skills required for success in the communication components on HN level courses.

In April 2005 the Minister for Communities announced funding for a number of schemes to help support asylum seekers and refugees into employment and to enable greater participation into local communities. Further funding has been allocated for 2006-07.

6.1 Barriers to learning

Discrimination

The Scottish Executive is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. This means tackling discrimination and prejudice and challenging the systems, behaviour and attitudes that cause or sustain them.

The ESOL report found no evidence that racism was a factor in learners being unable to access provision. All providers should be aware of their statutory obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. The National ESOL Panel and the regional ESOL partnerships should carry links to relevant legislation and tools (such as *Partnership Matters*) as part of their advice on guidance and support for centres.

Childcare, class times and travel

The ESOL report identified three main reasons why many of those with ESOL needs were unable to access ESOL classes:

- Childcare demands and a lack of crèche/ nursery facilities;
- Work commitments; and
- Distance from ESOL classes and difficulties with accessing or affording transport.

The Scottish Executive is supporting, as part of its Childcare Strategy, the promotion of Childcare Information Services (based within local authorities) as a local source of information and advice to parents and others looking for childcare. Information on childcare services is also included in the Scottish Executive's *Helping you meet the costs of learning*, a funding guide for learners. Links to these services should be included along with other sources of information, advice and guidance on the national ESOL website.

The combined links between local CLD and other partnerships (which often already have close links with childcare partnerships), FE colleges (many of which have excellent crèche and nursery facilities) and the National ESOL Panel should facilitate the innovatory collaboration recommended in the ESOL report by considering more effective ways of coordinating transport, crèche facilities, accommodation and class times.

6.2 Guidance & support

Institutions

ESOL providers should ensure that all learners can access the full range of accessible guidance and support services at a level appropriate to their needs. Guidance tutors should be specialists in guidance with effective counselling skills who are properly informed as to the changing legal landscape and its implications for students, and be able to communicate these to departments throughout their institution or, in the case of CLD and ALN partnerships, across provider agencies.

All ESOL providers should ensure that every individual has a learning plan. This should be agreed after an extended individual interview at the initial assessment and induction stages of learning and be regularly updated by the relevant staff, with regular and meaningful reviews of the plan with individual learners. The plan, held by the learners as well as the provider, should contain detailed information about the learner's:

- Entry level of English and achievements (whether accredited or experiential);
- Desired exit level and future plans for study and employment;
- Competences and skills to be acquired;
- Learning needs and personal circumstances pertinent to a sustained programme of study; and
- Attainment.

Providers should ensure that all ESOL learners receive appropriate and informed advice on the next stages of their learning and are adequately prepared for working in a Scottish environment and participating in Scottish society. Managers with responsibility for student support should ensure that guidance and support staff have the necessary information to be able to impart clear advice about options, funding and childcare entitlements at each stage of learning. Guidance and support staff

should also receive the necessary training and information to be able to fully assess the needs and circumstances of non-English speaking learners.

Regional

The regional ESOL structure could also be used to discuss general guidance issues (such as the provision of properly trained guidance staff, statutory requirements, immigration status (where applicable), access to housing, healthcare, education for dependents).

Regional partnerships and ESOL providers should create and sustain a register of accessible native speakers for the full range of minority ethnic languages, where feasible, and ensure that interpretation services are accessible for particular ethnic groups in centres where the demand is heaviest.

National

The Scottish Executive, SCQF, SQA and Careers Scotland, should provide clear advice to the National ESOL Panel on guidance and support issues. The professional development needs of guidance and support (teaching and learning as well as administrative) staff should be considered by the short-life group on professional development (see section 5.2).

6.3 Progression

The Scottish Executive's lifelong learning strategy, *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life*, and its strategy for the enterprise networks, *A Smart Successful Scotland*, have placed lifelong learning culture at the centre of its social and economic agenda. The benefits of releasing the potential of ESOL learners have already been referred to in this strategy. Recommendations for highlighting good practice are outlined more generally in section 4, as is the recommendation for the ESOL curriculum group to refer to existing successful work-related ESOL programmes (both in and outside Scotland), policy developments in citizenship and employability and routes to further study (see section 5).

English for vocational purposes (EVP)

As section 5 noted, there are insufficient numbers of EVP courses in Scotland. EVP is not only beneficial to learners in helping them to enter the labour market, increasing their contact with local communities and allowing them to participate more fully in Scottish society, but also because it may improve their wider English skills by giving more opportunities for their use in a practical setting. Successful models of EVP have been run in Glasgow and Edinburgh. However, if EVP and workplace ESOL classes are to be effective they need the support of employers, in terms of time and resources.

This strategy recommends that:

- The development of more EVP schemes be considered by, for example, organisations with a substantial number of actual or potential ESOL learners in their workforce in the context of policies/schemes relating to citizenship and employability; and
- Local ESOL providers work closely with employers, local authorities, voluntary bodies, LECs and Local Economic Fora (LEFs) to develop EVP programmes.

There are successful pilot projects and examples of good practice on which such schemes might be modelled. For instance: WHIGG (Working for Health in Greater Glasgow) and OTAR (Overseas Tradespeople Accreditation and Reskilling) are good current examples of partnership projects across a range of organisations; schemes run by Bernard Matthews, to integrate a largely Portuguese workforce, the Drumossie Hotel, Highview Care Home and Strathaird Fish Factory in Inverness, are current examples of good practice of employers setting up such schemes themselves. There is also useful development work being done in the FE sector, particularly at Anniesland College in Glasgow, worthy of further investigation.

Involvement of trade unions is also essential in reaching potential learners in the workplace, referring them and providing them with the means, through the STUC, the Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF) and local Union Learning representatives, to access ESOL provision. A number of union and employer sponsored workplace ESOL courses have already being successful.

English for further study

The Scottish Executive's waiving of restrictions on asylum seekers' access to part-time non-advanced and advanced (Higher National) level study in 2001 and 2003, respectively, has been one step towards allowing greater access to further study amongst one group of ESOL learners. As section 4 set out, access to further study for ESOL learners in higher education institutions might also be facilitated by collaboration between CLD partnerships and the regional wider access fora. CLD partnerships and ESOL providers should also acquaint themselves with developments in widening participation to higher education designed for asylum seekers and refugees. Progression opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees onto higher education courses are being investigated separately at present by the Open University (OU), on behalf of the SFC. Access to courses in community learning and development is based on need as opposed to the eligibility criteria used in the further education sector. Guidance on eligibility for funding for further study can be found in the Scottish Executive's *Helping you meet the costs of learning*, at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/03/29162117/21195>;

or from *learndirect Scotland* at:

<http://www.learndirectscotland.com/>.

7. Conclusion

This adult ESOL strategy for Scotland seeks to provide a blueprint for the direction and structure of ESOL provision in Scotland and support for the ESOL teaching community in its delivery of, and further professionalisation for, high quality ESOL in the 21st century.

The strategy will play a key supporting role in achieving the Scottish Executive's vision for a prosperous, inclusive, diverse and pluralistic Scotland.

The strategy will promote ESOL provision of consistently high quality across all publicly funded sectors, so that all ESOL learners may have the opportunity to gain the language skills they need to play as full a part as possible in the economy and society of Scotland.

The new National ESOL Panel will monitor, and will report annually to Scottish Ministers on, the performance of ESOL provision in meeting the objectives of the strategy.

Consultation on the proposed adult ESOL strategy for Scotland: key findings

Public consultation on the proposed adult ESOL strategy for Scotland, between 25 July and 31 October 2005, received 55 responses. Respondents included FE colleges, CLD Partnerships, Community Planning Partnerships, ALN Partnerships, local authorities, universities, local organisations and individuals. There were also collective responses from bodies such as the Association of Scottish Colleges (ASC), Learning Link Scotland, and the STUC. A series of consultation events was also held around Scotland.

The key findings drawn from the consultation are summarised under the general headings in the consultation paper to which they relate. The adult ESOL strategy for Scotland has been revised, with the expert advice of key ESOL stakeholders, to take account of these conclusions, which will also inform the work to be taken forward following the launch of the strategy.

Vision and Principles

- Endorsed. This part of the document was particularly complimented for its holistic, inclusive, flexible and learner-centred approach.

However, there was a strong underlying concern about the need for clear and adequate funding streams, both to support the strategy and to meet current demand.

Collaboration and Co-ordination

Regional fora

- Did not receive decisive support.

Concern was expressed that new fora would duplicate the work of existing regional and other representative bodies, adding an unnecessary and unwelcome layer of bureaucracy to ESOL provision. The predominant preference was that existing Community Planning structures (principally, the CLD partnerships in each local authority area) should be used.

National ESOL Panel

- Proposal endorsed. The Panel has an important role, to lead the coordination of all aspects of the strategy across all sectors, regions and interests.

The remit of the Panel, though, must avoid introducing additional, unnecessary bureaucracy. The National Panel should be orientated towards providing effective direction, representation and support for ESOL learners, providers and practitioners, while making the minimum possible additional demands on any of these groups.

The National ESOL Panel must have clear lines of communication, representation and accountability with existing regional structures, to monitor their effectiveness in supporting the objectives of the strategy.

National ESOL website

- Proposal broadly welcomed, particularly as a medium for disseminating information and guidance for ESOL providers and practitioners.

However, the website's usefulness as a source of information to learners was not decisively endorsed.

Raising Quality through Learning and Teaching

Professional Development

- Agreement that a clear Continuing Professional Development (CPD) pathway is needed.

It should be clearly linked to existing qualification structures (e.g. the SCQF). Delivery should be sufficiently flexible to ensure that all practitioners can benefit and that central (financial) support should be considered to encourage take-up of opportunities.

Respondents identified a range of CPD needs of guidance and support staff. These include: language and cultural awareness; knowledge of funding streams; and familiarity with Home Office policies.

ESOL Curriculum Framework

- Proposal supported, although more by community providers than by colleges.

However, all agreed it should be based on practice and designed to complement, rather than supplant, existing frameworks.

Supporting Learning and Progression

- Closer links needed with learning providers and, particularly, employers.

Existing links and partnerships should be built on. Suggestions for strengthening links included: working more closely with Careers Scotland and Jobcentre Plus; making more funding available; and providing support to employers.

- Improved referral, guidance and support needed.

Recommendations included: strengthening links to relevant agencies and providers; creating clear and comprehensive guidelines for staff; and providing better information centrally regarding practical/financial support for learners.

ETLLD: Further and Adult Education Division, March 2007