

Introduction

What is the context for ESOL in Scotland?

Scotland has always welcomed migrants and the Scottish Government recognises the contribution that new migrants and settled minority ethnic communities make to our society, culture and economy. Since the European Union enlargement in 2004, we have experienced unprecedented levels of migration from Eastern European countries. People from beyond the European Union also come to work and study in Scotland, and thousands of asylum seekers and refugees have sought refuge in Scotland.

We recognise the need to provide good quality English language provision for New Scots and settled minority ethnic communities. In March 2007, the Scottish Government launched the Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Strategy for Scotland¹ with the **vision** that:

“... all Scottish residents 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.”

The strategy aspires to five guiding principles for ESOL provision for Scotland’s adults and commits to recognising and sharing good practice. These guiding principles are: **inclusion, diversity, quality, achievement** and **progression**².

What are these case studies?

These eighteen case studies have been chosen as examples of effective practice in the provision and delivery of ESOL in Scotland. Whilst they do not offer a comprehensive picture of ESOL in Scotland, they demonstrate provision and delivery across three main sectors - colleges, the voluntary sector and local authorities - and in three important contexts:

- learning for and in the workplace
- learning for the whole family, and
- learning for settled ethnic minorities and asylum seekers.

How were the case studies produced?

The Learning Connections Division of the Scottish Government³ contracted a project team to produce a range of case study material that would demonstrate effective practice in delivering ESOL in a range of settings across Scotland. The project team contacted ESOL providers, including the 43 further education colleges, several voluntary organisations, and

¹ <http://www.esolscotland.com/documents/ESOLstrategy.pdf>

² <http://www.esolscotland.com/adultesolstrategy.html>

³ On 1st April 2010, the functions of Learning Connections were transferred into Learning and Teaching Scotland (www.ltscotland.org.uk)

the 32 community learning and development partnerships, to request proposals of ESOL programmes they considered effective in:

- supporting adults and families to develop their English language skills
- supporting individuals' and families' integration into local communities, and
- building individuals' skills to prepare for and progress into further learning and work opportunities.

From the responses, the project team identified ESOL programmes to research further. They visited each programme, interviewed providers, tutors and learners and, where possible, observed teaching and learning sessions. They also examined teaching and learning materials and reports from HM Inspectorate of Education.

Who are the case studies for?

The case studies are for:

- ESOL practitioners working in a range of organisations and contexts, to inspire them to explore new learning and teaching approaches and resources
- managers and development workers who are involved in developing and co-ordinating ESOL provision, to provide them with ideas for partnership working and sourcing funding, and
- policy-makers who want to understand the impact of, and issues involved in, ESOL delivery and provision.

How are the case studies structured?

Each case study describes how a successful ESOL programme has been planned and delivered and the impact it has had on learners' lives. It does this by exploring:

- the need for the ESOL provision (why the programme was established)
- who was involved (including roles within a partnership approach)
- how the provision was funded
- the content and structure of the programme
- the benefits for the learners, the community, and, where appropriate, the employer and
- any lessons learned.

What can we learn from the case studies?

The case studies suggested that several factors contributed to the effectiveness of ESOL provision. These included:

Partnership working

- pro-active cross-partnership work was vital for ESOL provision to be as effective as possible. The quality of the relationship between partners was a significant factor in many programme's success. Multi-agency collaboration offered greater learning opportunities
- learner progression worked best when there were links between providers to enable progression to further learning, training and employment opportunities.

- access to information, advice and guidance opened up a wider world of study and work to many learners.
- volunteering, work-shadowing and work-placement opportunities were invaluable to ESOL learners, prospective employees and voluntary groups.

Recognising achievement

- qualifications and in-house certificates were a marker of achievement and boosted learner confidence.
- providers recognised that not all learners needed or wanted formal qualifications and offered courses which focused on or included other outcomes, such as increasing learners' confidence and ability to cope with everyday situations whether at work, at their children's school or with local services.

Nature of provision

- for effective learning experiences, providers recognised that learners needed different lengths of time to achieve qualifications, depending on their educational background as well as the number of hours of classes they attended each week.
- learners progressed more quickly when ESOL provision was delivered more frequently. In some community learning settings weekly two-hour classes meant that learner progress was slower than might be if more ESOL was provided more regularly.
- the lack of substantial funding directly affected the pattern and amount of ESOL provision in many areas across Scotland. For people in the early stages of a learning journey in English, limited access to ESOL classes meant that making progress could take considerable time. Also, fractured or unstable provision due to temporary funding could mean the skills and experience of ESOL staff could be lost.
- providers often found they needed to consider how to make programmes more self-sustaining in the long-term.

Overcoming barriers

- there were many factors that prevented adults engaging in ESOL provision; these included work patterns, childcare requirements, travel and rurality. ESOL providers found they needed to offer more flexible and alternative ways of delivering ESOL, for example holding day-long or weekend courses, making use of the internet, and incorporating English learning within social enterprises, such as community cafes.
- learners from settled minority ethnic communities sometimes needed extra support to progress from community-based to college provision, where registration and enrolment procedures could be intimidating for some learners.
- providing access to childcare was crucial in engaging with parents who otherwise might not attend ESOL provision. Crèches could also stimulate English language learning across generations as well as building confidence in social settings.

Learning, teaching and resources

- using everyday contexts when teaching ESOL helped learners to develop not only linguistically, but also socially.
- primary age children who attended 'Family English Groups' in addition to school classes developed their English language skills more quickly.
- the use of an ESOL tutor whose first language was not English demonstrated a commitment to inclusion and their experience of being a learner of English meant that they could empathise with learners.
- the use of mother tongue, where this resource was available, also facilitated swifter acquisition of English language skills.