



**ESOL Discussion Papers:
Curriculum Framework Working Party
Professional Development Working Party
ESOL Funding Principles Working Party**

**Consultation response from
Learning Link Scotland
31st August 2009**

Introduction

Learning Link Scotland is the intermediary body for Voluntary Sector organisations engaged in adult education in Scotland. We currently support, develop, promote and represent a membership of around 100 Voluntary Sector adult learning groups and organisations based in 28 local authority areas. Together member organisations provide a wide range of learning opportunities to over 237,000 adults per annum, many of whom are socially excluded. Learners from ethnic minority backgrounds, single parents, unemployed people, people with disabilities, carers and rurally isolated people are amongst the many beneficiaries provided for by our membership. Our member organisations provide a wide range of learning opportunities to over 35,000 volunteers per annum and employ over 4,000 full and part time staff.

Learning Link Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

In the first instance Learning Link Scotland wrote a briefing paper on the three discussion papers for the Learning Link Scotland membership, inviting the members to respond individually. As a second step Learning Link Scotland drafted a response on which we have consulted our membership and incorporated opinions and remarks into it.

We thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation, and trust that the National ESOL Panel will value our contribution. We give consent to publish our response.

Curriculum Framework Working Party

Learning Link Scotland recognises the challenges and thanks the working party for reflecting them in their response.

Recommendations:

Learning Link Scotland welcomes in particular the application of the social practice model for the Curriculum Framework. We believe it will enable a broad range of practitioners and learners to access it for their work.

With the learner at the centre and a holistic view on learning and teaching, the paper reflects community based learning which is delivered by many voluntary organisations.

Learning Link Scotland believes that the framework and associated tools should be developed electronically as this will allow for a broad dissemination to practitioners and learners and lead to best use of the resources.

A comprehensive range of tools and resources, embedded contextually behind the framework, will make it a usable resource. This should ideally be a web-based facility, allowing for growth and development over time.

Regarding the two ways of dissemination suggested by the working group, Learning Link Scotland is of the opinion that the focus should be on the electronic dissemination i.e. via existing internet portals, newsletters, etc. We believe that advertisement in relevant publications and magazines, and awareness raising at conferences and events, as well as directly to practitioners and learners will make best use of resources. Learning Link Scotland's member services provide an opportunity for dissemination to the voluntary and community adult education sector.

Professional Development Working Party

Learning Link Scotland recognises the challenges and thanks the working party for reflecting them in their response.

Recommendations:

Learning Link Scotland agrees with the recommendations made by the working party. We would like to suggest that this is to be a framework for all ESOL practitioners which is to be adopted by practitioners working across the field rather than specifically by Local Authorities and Colleges. We particularly ask to consider access to CPD for paid and volunteer practitioners in the voluntary sector especially with regard to funding resources in order to undertake professional development.

We believe that the framework should be linked to the appropriate professional standards and to the national occupational standards set by the relevant sector skills council, i.e. Lifelong Learning UK.

We would like to suggest that creating incentives for both providers and practitioners is important in order to ensure sufficient training opportunities are provided and taken up across Scotland. This could include making resources available for practitioners to access training, and ensuring training is delivered locally throughout Scotland.

ESOL Funding Principles Working Party

Learning Link Scotland recognises the challenges and thanks the working party for reflecting them in their response.

Recommendations:

Prioritising publicly funded ESOL provision is complex and could be a challenge to providers and learners. Learning Link Scotland believes that the discussion paper was written on the assumption of contributions being solely financial. We would like the Panel to consider other possible contributions and commitments by the learner and/or the employer which could be negotiated in individual learning plans i.e. volunteer support to new learners, etc.

Financial contributions could be developed on the basis of Individual Learning Accounts giving a clear indication of the level of contribution by the Government. Should further contributions be required these should come from the learner and/or employer. The precedent of Individual Learning Accounts is linked to the level of income, alternatively the learner and/or employer could be asked to contribute non-financially, for the benefit of the learning.

Learning Link Scotland consider it important that publicly supported ESOL provision should be prioritised on learner centred assessments of need, including an income assessment. This could be negotiated on the development of personal learning plans which clearly demonstrate outcomes. Levels of achievement would vary depending on the learner's starting point.

Parameters could be developed for the level of investment on the basis of hours of input and/or budget entitlement. The model of Individual Learning Accounts could be considered.