

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Support for Speakers of Other Languages

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Summary

This report summarises the work undertaken by the Adult Basic Education Team and the Community Language Assistants Team to support inward migrants to Highland whose first language is not English to meet the programme for Administration commitment that **“We will welcome migrants and their families settling in our communities and will increase English language tuition to assist their integration.”**

1. Background

- 1.1 Provision of English learning opportunities for speakers of other languages has increased greatly over the past 4 years through partnership working between Highland Adult Literacies partners. With increased numbers of migrant workers and their families moving to work in this area the Partnership has had rapidly to build capacity by developing training opportunities for new tutors, on going training for current tutors and flexible class provision allow as many as possible to access English learning provision. In addition to the formal accredited classes run by Inverness and North Highland Colleges, community classes have increased in both number and range. Over the past year the community classes have been funded through the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership, which is managed by Highland Council, and the Partnership has been able to attract additional funding from the European Social Fund, HIE and the Scottish Government to allow partner organisations to increase activity.
- 1.2 In addition to managing HALP, The Highland Council makes direct ESOL provision through its Adult Basic Education and Community Language Assistant Teams.
- 1.3 Since 1986 Adult Basic Education (ABE) has offered support to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners in Highland. In recent years the number of ESOL learners coming forward in all areas of Highland has increased dramatically. In 2007 ABE worked with **977** learners, **570** of whom were ESOL learners. Some learners are settled here and have, in some cases, been resident for many years, but increasingly it is newly arrived migrant workers who are seeking ESOL classes. Funding for this work in 2007 came from the Highland Council, the European Social Fund (ESF) – through the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership (HALP) - and Equal (EU), and has been directed to providing additional language classes and to establishing community language assistants.
- 1.4 The remit of the Community Language Assistants is to assist the settling-in process of new inward migrants – particularly families – who are at the early stages of learning the English language and may be unaware of how to access local services. This team is jointly funded by the Highland Council and the European Social Fund (ESF). There are six part-time staff employed who speak twelve European and Asian languages. ABE works closely with the Community Language Assistants to

promote learning opportunities and encourage migrants to settle in Highland. ABE staff line-manage and oversee this team. During the first year of operation (2007) the Community Language Assistants worked with 324 clients. This is a Highland-wide service, effectively delivered by the Community Language Assistants, working in the areas where there are the largest concentrations of inward migrants. The team provides additionality to the support given to inward migrants by other services of the Council.

1.5 The work undertaken by ABE and the Community Language Assistants meets the objectives of the Programme for Administration, specifically to *“welcome migrants and their families settling in our communities and will increase English Language tuition to assist their integration.”* It also addresses other local, national and European priorities identified in strategies such as *“Highlands and Islands Inward Migration Support Strategy”*, *“The Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland”*, *“Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities”* and *“European Social Fund Objectives”*. This work also forms part of the Highland Single Outcome Agreement and the following targets have been set over the life of the current Council Administration:

- Increase the number of new learners supported with English language tuition by 43% from a 2006/7 baseline of 758.
- Increase the number of inward migrants and their families, who have limited English language, to settle in to the Highlands to 285 from a zero base in 2006/7.

2. Key Areas of Work

2.1 As discussed in the previous report, ABE offers ESOL learners the opportunity to improve their functional literacy in English. This applies to all aspects of literacy – reading, writing, listening, speaking, and numeracy. The emphasis is on equipping the individual learner with the skills to be able to function, integrate and participate in their community and being able to communicate, in verbal and written forms. Most tuition takes place in a small group setting, although some learners need one-to-one tuition before they can participate in groups because they lack any English language skills. When they have mastered Basic English, ABE will signpost learners on to partner organisations if they wish to further develop their skills.

2.2 ABE is one of a partnership of organisations which offer ESOL provision across Highland. This Partnership includes the Workers Education Association (WEA), Inverness College and North Highland College. In 2006 and 2007 ABE, together with Inverness College and Highland Adult Literacies, participated in a Hi Hopes (EU Equal funded) project led by WEA. This allowed ABE to increase its provision and develop resources for learners which relate specifically to living in Highland. This included the development of an ESOL Survival Course, and a DVD filmed in Nairn. Staff from Eden Court Theatre played a pivotal role in the latter. Requests for these resources have been received from practitioners across Scotland.

2.3 The Community Language Assistants’ work includes signposting inward migrants to opportunities which encourage and promote integration within the community, such as volunteering, sporting and leisure activities, cultural activities and learning

opportunities. Other examples of their activities include helping parents enrol their children in schools, signposting individuals to ESOL classes, helping families register with a doctor, and helping individuals to fill in forms.

- 2.4 ABE and the Community Language Assistants have links with schools throughout Highland. Although neither can provide direct classroom support for children with English as a second language (this is the remit of the English as an Additional Language staff), both Services can help families through the work previously described, as well as activities such as Cultural Bridges Projects agreed jointly with schools.

3. Future Planning

- 3.1 The Adult Basic Education Team will continue to offer ESOL at an introductory level and work with partners to ensure there are progression routes for learners. The team will also explore innovative ways of integrating ESOL learning with other activities, such as happened in the recent Digital Arts project in Lochaber. It will also participate in the ESOL Providers Network led by WEA, and funded by HALP and HIE, which is proving an effective way for partners to be kept informed of each other's activities and joint training opportunities.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 At present the additional funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) for the Community Language Assistants is only secure until January 2009. A process to record and monitor activity and evaluate the outcomes and impact of the service has been put in place. The targets set through the current ESF funding are on track to be achieved. The information collected will indicate the direction of the service. As ESF funding regulations have changed any future application to support this service is to be made through a programme submitted from the Community Planning Partnership in Highland. At the time of writing the guidance for this process is awaited, but as English language tuition is one of the proposed indicators in the draft Single Outcome Agreement with the Government, community planning partners will support in principle any future bid made.

5. Recommendation

Members are invited to:

- Comment on the ESOL related work of the Adult Basic Education Team and the Community Language Assistants
- Approve that the Council pursues an application for future European funding, through the community planning partnership, to continue the service provided by the Community-based Language Assistants from 2009, and support the ESOL provision managed through Highland Adult Literacies Partnership.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: April 2008

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Ref:

Background Papers