

**Scottish Executive
Enterprise Transport Lifelong Learning Department
Summary of Evidence Report for the 'Refresh' of the Adult
Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) report**

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) strategy, launched in 2001, contained 21 recommendations which aim to enhance the quality and quantity of literacies provision in response to individual learner needs. The long term importance of the literacies strategy in achieving social justice and economic growth is well rehearsed.
- 1.2 A study was commissioned to refresh the ALNIS strategy, based on two key objectives:
- Analyse stakeholder perceptions with regard to ALNIS, including perceptions of progress since 2001, challenges encountered and gaps in achieving the strategy's recommendations;
 - Review the current strategy, proposing revised goals to increase literacy and numeracy skills in Scotland, and associated recommendations to achieving this.
- 1.3 This summary evidence report details the evidence base which will be used to support the development of the ALNIS 'Refresh'.

Evidence Sources for the Evidence Report

- 1.4 Four key data sources were used in generating the evidence report:
- **A literature review** –produced by the Scottish Executive and based on an overview of ALNIS-related activity and policy since 2001;
 - **ALNIS stakeholder events** – four events took place in May and early June 2006 offering stakeholders the opportunity to express views on progress and consider key priorities for the ALNIS Refresh Strategy. Each event covered eight themes. These themes were derived from an earlier postal exercise, whereby stakeholders were asked to identify three key priorities for the ALNIS agenda. The eight main themes which emerged were:
 - partnership roles;
 - quality of provision;
 - workforce / staffing;
 - partnership distribution of resources;

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- measuring progress;
- engaging learners;
- literacies in other contexts;
- different environments.

The events also addressed the topics of ALNIS funding and future priorities:

- ALNIS-related funding issues: stakeholders' views on how funding processes have operated;
 - future priorities: stakeholders' views of priority issues for the future of ALNIS. This information was derived from 'future forms' which were completed by event attendees towards the end of each event;
- **Learner consultation** – an event in September 2006 ('Come All Ye') held an ALN workshop for learners who offered their opinions, shared experiences and expressed their views on progress and future issues;
 - **Sub-group feedback** – two sub-groups (Workplace Literacies and Training and Development) provided evidence in these ALNIS sub-themes.

Methodology

- 1.5 An Overarching Framework (OF) was applied to summarise the data collected across the evidence sources. The OF contained key prompt questions which the ALNIS Refresh should consider.
- 1.6 This summary report provides a comprehensive overview of the main themes which emerged from the OF. Many of these themes arose across each of the evidence sources. However, some themes were particular to evidence sources. The summary report does not detail minority issues. It should be noted that the issues which arose from the stakeholders' events were based on stakeholders' perceptions and this does not guarantee factual accuracy, but reflects views – often strongly held – by the stakeholders consulted.

2 EVIDENCE REPORT – KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The findings below have been presented under the headings of each of the four data sources (literature review, stakeholder events, learner consultation and sub-group feedback). Under each of these four data sources, both 'progress' and 'way forward' issues have been detailed.

Literature Review

Progress

2.2 Key progress issues noted in the literature review were:

- **Learning Connections has made a strong start** and the Adult Literacies Team has demonstrated robust foundations;
- **Over 137,000 new literacies learners** have engaged in provision from 2001 to 2006;
- The local Adult Literacy and Numeracy (**ALN**) **partnerships model has strengthened Scotland's approach** to ALN service delivery;
- The **Social Practice model has enabled a strong commitment to learner-led approaches** to ALN learning;
- **Learners have reported clear gains** from literacies learning, including impacts on self-esteem and health;
- There is widespread acknowledgement that **achieving change takes time**;
- **Innovative approaches to ICT and literacies learning** have been evident through, for example, the Innovations in ICT and Literacies project, as well as the Adult Literacies Online platform;
- **The dissemination of effective practice is developing** through research and practitioner networks and forums;

- **The infrastructure of literacies teaching and learning has been greatly supported** by:
 - the Literacies in the Community (LiC) quality framework;
 - the ALN Curriculum Framework;
 - the various Big Plus awareness-raising campaigns;
 - the learning from the Pathfinder projects;
 - professional training and new ALN workforce qualifications;
- **Challenges remain in measuring progress** while retaining a learner-led approach and ethos in order to ensure that measures of ‘distance travelled’ can be evidenced. Further research is required in this area;
- **Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) were either not widely in place for learners or not sufficiently owned by learners.** Consideration should be given to how ILPs might be aligned to facilitate national data collation.

Way Forward

2.3 Issues requiring further development which were highlighted by the literature review were:

- **ALN staff development** – ensuring a continued emphasis on professional support and development for tutors, part-time and volunteer staff;
- **Partnership working** – retaining the focus on this as a key mechanism for ALN delivery and addressing the challenges inherent in delivery through this mechanism;
- **Measuring progress** – particularly through longitudinal tracking and consideration of the role which ILPs might play in supporting this;
- Increasing employer engagement, commitment to the numeracy agenda and efforts to attract learners who are harder-to-reach;
- **Further development work** is required in:
 - identifying ESOL literacies learners eligible for ALN funding

- reviewing implications arising from the Leitch Review;
- encouraging public sector organisations to take the lead in addressing the ALN needs of employees.

Stakeholder Events

Progress

2.4 The following views were expressed on progress and issues at the stakeholder events:

- **ALN partnerships are growing in strength**, with a clear sense of ‘community’;
- **Community Learning and Development (CLD) partnerships and Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) were felt to offer the route to achieving a robust ALN infrastructure;**
- **The goal of providing free ALN services has been achieved;**
- **The Curriculum Framework was noted as a significant development;**
- **New qualifications (TQAL and ITALL) have been achieved;**
- **Stronger national guidance for ALN partnerships** was felt necessary, to assist with local, strategic ALN planning;
- **Clarity of national priorities** was requested, underpinned by the Social Practice model. Communication was felt to require improvement in all directions across the ALN arena;
- **The respective roles of Learning Connections and ETLLED** was felt to require further clarification for the field;
- **Learning Connections was felt to have a particular role** to play in the areas of: supporting ALN partnership development; acting as a broker to bring together the literacies agenda with new and emerging partners and contexts;
- There was a request for **stronger promotion of the part that other non-ALN services can play** in the ALN agenda, through their contact with target learners;

- The **short-term nature of ALN funding has been felt to have produced project deficits** and barriers to sustainable planning and delivery of ALN services;
- **Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are felt to require further review**, in order to retain compatibility with the Social Practice model and so promote a learner-led focus;
- **Workforce capacity constraints** were noted, due to recruitment challenges and funding constraints. The forthcoming training and development strategy was recognised as a key mechanism to addressing workforce capacity constraints;
- **The Big Plus campaign was well-regarded** but was felt to require further alignment between local and national marketing activity;
- Further development work was felt necessary in **making clear how LiC and HGIOCLD (How Good Is Our Community Learning and Development) apply to all practitioners**;
- **More open dialogue with learners** was requested.

Way Forward

2.5 Building on the progress issues outlined above, stakeholders felt that the following areas should be priorities for the ALNIS 'Refresh':

- The **'Refresh' strategy should be underpinned by:**
 - a long-term vision and focus based on a re-commitment to the Social Practice model;
 - a cross-cutting emphasis which outlines the linkages between ALN and a wide range of national policy objectives;
 - strong national and local leadership, with clear championing of the ALN agenda;
- The strategy should **acknowledge the significant contribution which the partnership approach makes** to the ALN agenda;
- **Learning Connections' role** should include the following:

- articulating the ALN policy landscape (nationally and in other countries);
- balancing local visibility with the national co-ordination role; consolidating national linkages between ALN partnerships and CP partnerships;
- further facilitating how ALN partnerships share effective practice;
- **Strong request for ring-fenced funding**, supported by national and local level strategic responses, to protect ALN service planning and delivery.
- Request to **consider proportionate top-slicing** for national projects
- Request for **ALN partnerships to continue to retain any underspend**;
- **Monitoring and evaluation based on the social practice ethos**, with a focus on valuing what is measured and measuring what is valued;
- Forthcoming **training and development strategy very much welcomed**, with aim of workforce professionalism but not compulsory accreditation. Clear request for flexible system which allows staff to work and learn;
- **Greater emphasis required on numeracy and literacies in the workplace**
- **Clarification needed on the ESOL elements** within literacies learning

Learner Consultation

Progress

2.6 The workshop from the learner event identified the following issues:

- **Main benefit** of ALN learning noted by learners was **heightened confidence** which encourages them to take on new life experiences and further learning;
- Learners perceive that **resource constraints** (such as ICT and ALN staffing) **impact upon the quality** of the learning experience and can restrict learner choices;

- **Marketing and promotions** are deemed to be **most effective when based locally** and recommended by friends and family. Locally based marketing is also felt to be effective in getting those with low self-esteem to become involved in literacies learning.

Way Forward

2.7 Learners noted the following issues for future consideration:

- **Securing ALN resources to enhance quality** of the ALN learning experience and offering tailored packages of learning support;
- A **continued emphasis on local marketing**, particularly to engage those with low self-esteem.

Sub-Group Feedback

Progress

2.8 Feedback from the training strategy advisory and workplace literacies sub-groups indicated the following key progress issues:

Training Strategy Advisory Group

- The main overall message was that **significant progress has been made in developing the first national qualifications**. These were valued and make a positive contribution to staff development and professionalisation in the sector.

Workplace Literacies Sub-Group

- The main message was that the delivery of **workplace literacies learning requires a distinct approach** to fit within that context.
- **Many employers still give literacies a fairly low priority** and have not been convinced of the benefits of workplace literacies.

Way Forward

2.9 The two sub-groups noted the following issues for consideration in the Refresh Strategy:

Training Strategy Advisory Group

- A **more strategic and coherent approach to professional development** is required, reflecting differing needs and roles including sectoral needs;
- The **training and development strategy should be led by Learning Connections** with input from the Scottish Adult Literacies Training Strategy Advisory Group;
- **Specific areas to be addressed** are:
 - developing a systemic infrastructure for planning, communication, development and roll-out;
 - occupational standards for staff and volunteers;
 - understanding and addressing the barriers to ALN staff participation in training and development / continuing professional development;
 - developing flexible models of delivery, accreditation and recognition of prior learning;
 - offering accredited training and professional development at certificate, degree and postgraduate level and developing CPD modules with optional accreditation mapped to SCQF Framework
 - further addressing articulation with and progression routes between related qualifications;

Workplace Literacies Sub-Group

- Positioning of **workplace literacies as delivery in the workplace** as distinct from delivery in the community. A potential change in terminology to 'Literacies in the Workplace' could support this;
- Development of **workplace literacies practitioner networks** to share experiences, practice and materials;
- Learning Connections to develop a **workplace literacies toolkit**, with support from front-line services;

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- **Building workforce capacity** to address learner shift patterns and hours of learning outside of the norm; recruitment campaigns to attract from staff into the workplace literacies field;
- Develop a stronger rationale and evidence base to encourage employer engagement.