



# Audit of adult literacy and numeracy provision in Scotland: summary



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# contents

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Tuition</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Staffing</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Numeracy tuition</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Policy context</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Number of Learners</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Location of tuition</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Study approach</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Learner hours</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Multi-agency working</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Models of provision</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Profile of learners</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>11</b>

## Introduction

This paper, prepared by the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department's Research Branch, summarises the main findings of a postal survey of adult literacy and numeracy providers conducted by NFO System Three Social Research.

## Background

The remit of the Literacy 2000 Team, established by the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, included preparation of an audit of literacy and numeracy provision in Scotland.

The main aims of the audit were to:

- Explore models of provision in terms of tuition and support;
- Quantify the numbers of places available for adult literacy and numeracy tuition and support in a range of institutions;
- Explore the capacity of provision in terms of learner hours;
- Describe the characteristics of participants;
- Provide a profile of staff involved in delivering such tuition and support, whether employed or working voluntarily; and
- Identify sources of funding.

An important issue for the audit was to examine the nature and extent of adult literacy and numeracy provision across a number of different sectors. The main

types of provider are local authorities, Further Education Colleges (FECs), and non-public sector providers (including voluntary sector training providers, adult education providers and other voluntary sector organisations, and private training providers).

## Policy context

Over the past 25 years literacy and numeracy has progressively been subsumed into the wider adult basic education agenda. As a consequence it has not been identified as an issue in its own right requiring central government funding, development and trained staff. 1975 was the last time that funding was specifically provided for adult literacy and numeracy, in support of the BBC Campaign on the Move. In that year the Scottish Office established the Scottish Adult Literacy Agency (SCALA) and provided £100,000 across local authorities to establish schemes of provision. By 1979 SCALA and its literacy and numeracy remit had come to an end and the national focus had broadened to encompass adult basic education, of which literacy and numeracy were only elements.

Subsequent policy guidance to local authorities (SOED 1992) concluded that literacy and numeracy were an important but minor concern and that there was therefore no need to employ trained

literacy specialists. Policy guidance to colleges' limited support to adults with disabilities who, in the event of colleges not being able to give them sufficient support, might be referred to an adult basic education group (SOED 1993). Following local government re-organisation in 1996, the number of learning places fell by 40% to 6,500. SOEID Circular 6/95 advised local authorities on their responsibilities in relation to the provision of community education.

Literacy was included as one of the issues to be addressed but was not given priority status. Despite the lack of priority and funding, local authorities in particular and other providers have continued to provide a service to learners. More recently in 1999 the Scottish Executive issued Circular 4/99 which advised local authorities of their responsibilities in relation to the formulation and co-ordination of Community Learning Strategies and Plans, in collaboration with other providers of community learning. Literacy and numeracy were identified as priorities to be addressed.

The Scottish response to Adult Literacy in Britain was to establish a National Development Project, Adult Literacies in Scotland, which conducted the first survey for 18 years of adult literacy and numeracy provision in Scotland and published a Good Practice Framework for providers and practitioners. In April 2000, the Scottish Executive allocated the first funding to providers since 1982 funding colleges *“to tackle the learning deficit illustrated by people disadvantaged by problems with literacy and numeracy”* (SFEFC October/November 2000).

## Study approach

The study involved a postal survey of providers using a questionnaire developed in consultation with members of the Literacy 2000 team. The questionnaire was dispatched to 360 organisations including 32 local authorities, 46 Further Education Colleges and 282 other organisations (including voluntary and private sector education and training providers and agencies involved in advice and support services).

Overall, a good response was achieved, with returns from 40 of the 46 FECs, 34 responses from organisations identifying themselves as local authority providers, and over 100 other organisations - 192 returns in total.

## Models of provision

Current adult literacy and numeracy provision tends to vary widely in format across sectors. It was important for the purposes of the audit that uniform definitions were adopted in order to achieve a Scotland-wide picture of provision. To this end provision was separated into two main categories: *tuition and support*.

*Tuition* was defined as focused work on adult literacy and numeracy based on an assessment of needs, negotiated goals and a learning plan. Two types of tuition were identified. These were:

- *Dedicated tuition* where literacy or numeracy skills are the primary learning outcome of a discrete course or programme; and
- *Integrated tuition* where the literacy or numeracy tuition runs as a component of a broader course or project, but where adult literacy and numeracy are not the primary purpose of the course or project.

*Support* was defined as one-off or on-demand assistance designed to enable a person to deal with specific and immediate tasks. Two types of support were identified. These were:

- *Learner support* describing one-off or on-demand assistance with learning-related tasks arising from a specific course that the learner is undertaking; and
- *Personal support* describing one-off or on-demand assistance with general everyday literacy or numeracy tasks that are not related to a course.

79% of survey respondents offered some kind of tuition or support. Of these: 33% offered dedicated tuition, 41% offered integrated tuition, 57% offered learner support and 44% offered personal support. Some 21% of those returning questionnaires indicated they offered no provision as defined above.

It should be noted that feedback from providers suggested the need for a more uniform and commonly accepted set of definitions of literacy and numeracy provision. There were indications that

some respondents had difficulties in describing their provision in the terms required in the questionnaire, in particular, it appears that some organisations were unable to provide separate learner numbers for integrated tuition or any numbers for personal support. This has implications for the reliability of the data obtained in the audit.

*It is recommended that the creation of a widely accepted and understood framework within which to record literacy and numeracy provision should be undertaken as a matter of urgency.*

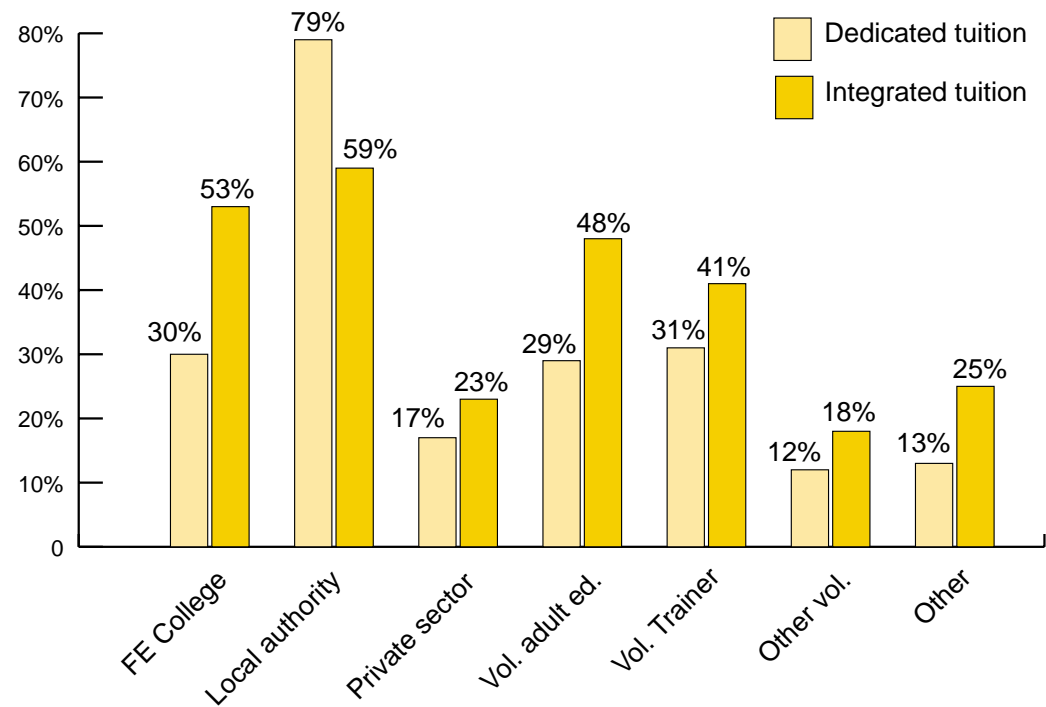
## Tuition

### Providers

Literacy and numeracy tuition is provided across all sectors. Overall, 64 organisations were identified which offered dedicated tuition, and 78 which offered integrated tuition. Figure 1 below shows the

percentage of providers in each sector providing dedicated and integrated tuition. Among local authorities a greater proportion offer dedicated tuition than integrated tuition. In other sectors a larger proportion offered integrated tuition than dedicated tuition.

**Figure 1: Provision of tuition by sector**



Tuition can be provided in a number of ways. Table 1 below shows the definitions of the various possible delivery mechanisms adopted for the audit.

**Table 1: Delivery mechanisms for tuition**

Types of tuition	Description
One-to-one tuition in isolation	Tutor works with an individual at a separate time or place from any other people/learners.
One-to-one tuition alongside others	Tutor works with an individual within a group or workshop setting alongside other people/learners.
Learning groups or courses	Learners learning together at a specific time and place with a group or course tutor. Learners may be working at one or several levels and with the same or different purposes.
Centre-based supported study	Learners learning individually using a mix of direct tuition from a supported study tutor and planned self-study according to their learning needs and goals. Centre-based supported study may be offered on a drop-in or booked session basis.
Distance supported study	Learners learning individually at home or at work using a mix of online tuition and self-study materials according to their learning needs and goals. Distance supported study may or may not involve mentors.

In terms of dedicated tuition, over 50 of the 64 respondents delivered tuition via learning groups. 42 organisations provided one-to-one tuition in isolation, 39 provided one-to-one tuition alongside others. 33 provided centre-based supported study and 12 offered distance supported study.

Providers of integrated tuition were asked whether tuition was offered to all learners as part of their course of study or to some learners as an optional element separate from the main course. 64 of the 78 providers of integrated tuition said it is provided as part of an existing course while 49 offer it as a separate option for some learners.

Table 2 shows the types of courses in which integrated tuition may play a role.

**Table 2: Types of courses involving integrated tuition**

Course type	Description
Pre-access/Access	Courses or programmes designed to prepare learners for formal education and training courses leading to an award.
Non-formal issue-based adult education	Courses or projects such as women's studies, community training, health issues, youth work, entrepreneurship. N.B. The primary purpose of such courses is not the achievement of nationally-recognised awards, although these may be available to all or some learners.
Employment-related courses	Courses designed to enhance employability including: New Deal full-time education and training option, Training for Work; Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships; Professional Awards.
Award-bearing non-advanced courses/programmes	Courses leading directly to a non-advanced award including : NC or GSVQ; SVQ1 and 2; Higher Still courses (SGAs, Highers, Advanced Highers).
Award bearing advanced courses/programmes and degree type courses	Courses leading directly to an advanced award including: HNC/HND; SVQ 3/4/5; university level degrees and diplomas.

Adult literacy and numeracy tuition is most commonly integrated with employment-related, access or pre-access and award-bearing, non-advanced courses or programmes. 46 of the 78 organisations providing integrated tuition provide tuition as a part of employment related courses; 44 as part of access or pre-access courses and 40 as part of award-bearing, non-advanced courses or programmes.

However, this varies by sector. Whilst the above holds true for FECs, local authorities are more likely to integrate adult literacy and numeracy tuition into non-formal, issue-based adult education (13 of 20 local authorities providing integrated tuition) as well as employment-related courses (10 of 20). The private and voluntary sectors are most likely to be providing integrated tuition as part of employment-related courses.

## Funding

Overall, the most frequently mentioned sources of funding for both dedicated and integrated tuition were local authorities, European Social Fund (ESF) and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs), although there were some differences between categories of providers. Provision in Further Education Colleges, for example, was frequently funded by SFEFC. Other significant sources of funds were Social Inclusion Partnerships and New Deal.

Across all sectors, most sources of funding were annual renewable. However, of those organisations relying on fixed-term funding, most were in the voluntary sector.

Only 20 of the 78 providers offering integrated tuition said they received funding for this tuition separately from the funding of the course or project of which it was a part.

## Number of Learners

The total number of learners receiving dedicated tuition in the year August 1999 to July 2000 was estimated to be 9,361. Of the total number of learners, the largest numbers were in local authority provision (4,827) followed by FEC provision (2,188). The voluntary sector provided for 1,779 learners, mainly through voluntary sector training providers. Private training providers had an estimated 375 learners. 'Other' organisations had a total of 192 learners.

The total number of learners receiving integrated tuition was estimated to be 9,473. Of the total number of learners, the largest numbers were in FEC provision (3,923) followed by local authority provision (1,825). The voluntary sector provided for 3,246 learners, mainly through voluntary sector training providers (1,325) and adult education providers (1,230). Private training providers had an estimated 226 learners. 'Other' organisations had a total of 253 learners.

Because of difficulties for some providers, especially of integrated provision, in separating adult literacy and numeracy provision from more general core skills modules, it is likely that the above estimates of numbers of learners are over-estimates of the actual level of provision. To illustrate the scale that over estimation may take, a previous study<sup>1</sup> conducted in 1999 found that 22 FECs offered a total of 790 tuition places - this compares with an estimated 6,111 learners in 40 FECs in this audit. This represents an average per college of over 4 times as many as the previous study indicated.

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<sup>1</sup> *A Survey of Programmes in Local Authorities and Further Education Colleges, Adult Literacies in Scotland*, City of Edinburgh Council, January 2000

## Learner hours

Similar problems apply in the estimation of the hours of tuition available within current provision.

## Dedicated tuition

Overall, it is estimated that each of the 9,361 learners receiving dedicated tuition received an average of 250 hours of tuition during the 12-month period ending in July 2000. This represents 5 hours per week for 50 weeks (or around 6 hours per week over 40 weeks).

There appeared to be wide variation in the mean number of contact hours per learner across categories of provider, ranging from an average of 3 hours a week in voluntary adult education providers to an average of 19 hours in private-training providers.

It should be noted that the questionnaire asked respondents to estimate learner hours and that these estimates appear to be particularly high.

## Integrated tuition

It proved very difficult to produce measures of the capacity for provision of integrated tuition because of definitional problems, and difficulties in separating literacy and numeracy elements within 'communications' or 'core skills' modules within course programmes.

## Profile of Learners

The questionnaire asked adult literacy and numeracy providers to provide information on the characteristics of learners. In summary:

- A higher proportion of learners in both dedicated and integrated tuition are women than men (a difference of around 10% in both cases);
- There is a strong relationship between age and participation in different types of tuition. In integrated tuition it is estimated that 56% of learners were aged 16–18, compared with only 5% of learners in dedicated tuition. Over half of learners in dedicated tuition were aged 25–45, with around 1 in 5 aged between 45 and 65;
- The majority of participants in integrated tuition were described as having learning difficulties or disabilities, compared with only around 18% of those in dedicated tuition; and
- Learners in dedicated tuition were more likely to have English as a second language or English as an alternative language (11%), compared with those in integrated tuition (5%).

## Staffing

The questionnaire also collected information about staff and volunteers involved in adult literacy and numeracy provision. There were considerable variations in the staffing associated with each type of provision.

There were 588 paid staff members involved in provision of dedicated tuition supported by 1,561 volunteers. In contrast, integrated tuition involved 813 paid staff members and only 67 volunteers.

The ratio of paid tutors to volunteers and specialist to generalist staff also varies widely between categories of providers. Local authority providers were more likely to have specialist staff, and made significant use of volunteers (1,516 of the 1,561 volunteers involved in dedicated tuition are working in local authorities). FECs and other providers were more likely to use generalist staff and typically made much less use of volunteers.

## Numeracy tuition

Providers of adult literacy and numeracy tuition were asked about numeracy provision separately. Overall, 62 of the 64 organisations offering dedicated tuition said they deliver adult literacy **and** numeracy tuition, while 2 delivered only literacy provision. The picture is similar for integrated tuition, with 72 of the 78 providers offering both literacy and numeracy and 6 offering only literacy tuition. This pattern is very similar across different sectors.

Numeracy tuition is provided alongside literacy provision by around half of providers.

## Location of tuition

Providers were asked to list all locations where tuition was offered. The main delivery locations are trainer provider premises, college campuses and community or voluntary project premises. The use of community-based provision is most common for dedicated tuition, with 61% of providers offering tuition in community or voluntary project premises, and 40% using schools. Of those offering integrated tuition, 42% did so in community or voluntary project premises and 35% did so in college campuses.

## Multi-agency working

Particularly in the provision of integrated tuition, there was evidence of significant joint working between agencies. Over one-third of those agencies offering integrated tuition said that another organisation was involved with at least some of that provision. Local authorities were the most likely to report joint working in the delivery of integrated tuition.

## Support

In addition to literacy and numeracy *tuition* people may receive *support* in dealing with literacy and numeracy difficulties arising in the course of other learning – *learning support* – or in relation to everyday life – *personal support*.

Attempts were made to collect data similar to that reported above for tuition for adult literacy and numeracy support. However, feedback from a number of organisations pointed out that their current funding arrangements enabled them to provide such support but did not require them to record or report the adult literacy or numeracy support they did provide. For others, the provision they made was adhoc and often bound up with other kinds of personal support making it impossible for them to provide reliable data.

Nevertheless, 109 (57%) of the organisations who completed the audit form offered learning support and 84 (44%) offered personal support with literacy or numeracy needs. It is estimated that these organisations offered support to upwards of 15,000 people a year. Of these the largest proportion (around 70%) were those receiving learning support, often in FECs. Almost half of those receiving literacy and numeracy support were aged between 25–45. It was estimated that slightly more women than men were receiving support.

Funding for support provision was from a similar range of sources to that for the provision of tuition. The most frequently identified sources of funding were LECs, ESF and local authorities. Within FE provision, the bulk of funding was from SFEFC, and particularly ELS/Group 18 funding.