"It always blows me away how much more you get out of tutoring than you put in."

Volunteer literacy tutor, Dublin
How do I become a literacy tutor?

Figures from 2007 indicate that just over 5,000 volunteer tutors and 1,000 paid tutors offer literacy tuition through the VEC Adult Literacy Service.

Over two-thirds of all tutors have a higher education qualification. Nearly a third are currently studying for some type of additional qualification to their higher education qualification or to their leaving certificate.

Although the VEC Adult Literacy Service has received more funding from the Department of Education and Science in recent years, it still relies on volunteer tutors as the only feasible means by which to provide one-to-one tuition.

“It always blows me away how much more you get out of tutoring than you put in.” Volunteer literacy tutor, Dublin

What does being a tutor entail?

An adult literacy tutor is a person who wants to work with adults who have literacy difficulties. It is not necessary that you are a teacher, or have a degree, or even have finished second level school. In addition you do not need any particular experience, as you will be given full training. However it is important that you have good literacy or numeracy skills.

How is adult literacy tuition carried out?

Adult literacy tuition is carried out in small groups or on a one-to-one basis by tutors trained specially for the work. Most services offer a minimum of two hours tuition per week, though an increasing number of programmes are able to offer more intensive provision. Over the years, as funding has increased so too has the number of paid tutors who work with small groups.

What do I need to be a literacy tutor?

If you can read, are a good communicator and confident in your ability to empathise with and understand adults with literacy difficulties then you can
help. Through training you can support others in improving their reading and writing skills. In short you can be a literacy tutor.

How do I get started?

If you would like to become a volunteer adult literacy tutor, contact the Adult Literacy Organiser (ALO) at your local VEC Adult Literacy Service.

The ALO will usually arrange to meet you for an informal chat and will tell you about the service and ask you about your background, experience and ideas on tutoring. Together you will decide if tutoring is a suitable option for you.

What training will I require?

If you want to go ahead, you will then do a minimum of 20 hours initial tutor training, usually two hours a week for 10 weeks. When you finish this, the Adult Literacy Organiser will try to match you with an adult learner, although there is no guarantee that a learner will be found for you.

When you start tutoring, you normally give a two-year commitment to the centre in which you did your initial tutor training. Here, you work together with an adult literacy learner on an equal and adult basis in an informal setting. When starting off, you normally work one-to-one with the adult learner for about two hours a week for an academic year or school year. You also need to put in extra time to prepare for your sessions.

After two years, there may be an option of paid group tutoring for you. This will depend on your interest availability and suitability for group tutoring work. To become a paid tutor, the centre would require you to do further accredited training.

For more information on becoming a tutor and for contact details of your local adult literacy service please freephone 1800 20 20 65
Information Documents available in this series

General
- What is NALA?
- History of NALA
- Strategic Plan overview
- Our corporate sponsors
- Frequently asked questions
- Current facts on literacy in Ireland

Areas of work
Information sheets are available on each of NALA’s areas of work, explaining our policy position, what we are doing, the context and background of the area and detailing any relevant research.

Join us . . .
- Membership benefits (includes membership form)
- Importance of students to our work
- How to become a tutor

Promotional activity
- Our TV programmes
- Our campaign work
- Our websites

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