

Edinburgh College need volunteers to end isolation among immigrants

Edinburgh College are recruiting a small army of volunteers to help home-teach immigrants English who are unable to attend classes. The Edinburgh College Home Learning Scheme, which is predominantly used by immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, supports those who would like to have a better grasp of the English language and UK culture. Their clientele



Edinburgh College Home Learning Scheme tutor Rose McKendry with student Bina McCracken with her son.

includes mothers with young children or members of the community who are unable to attend college for other reasons, such as ill health or unsociable working hours.

With almost one million immigrants living in the UK who do not speak a basic level of English, the Learning Scheme can provide vital language skills to allow people to have a better quality of life.

Before taking on the role as an English tutor, volunteers receive hands-on training from specialist English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) staff at Edinburgh College. This includes practical teaching tips, intercultural communication and awareness of cultural sensitivities. Throughout the course, volunteers are supported by a lecturer and attend regular training days.

Rose McKendry, a volunteer at the Edinburgh College Home Learning Scheme, said: "Teaching students from other countries and nationalities has given me an insight into how different life is and how strange it must be for people when they first

come here. I now have a deeper sympathy and understanding for people who do not speak the language or understand our customs.”



Tutor Rose McKendry with
student Bina McCracken

Jean Howat, ESOL lecturer at Edinburgh College, said: “We are very excited to be recruiting our next round of dedicated volunteers. We are looking for volunteers from all walks of life who would like to use their communication skills to help those who are most in need of tuition. Previous volunteers have included students from university and college, retired teachers and those who simply want to give back to the community and meet new and interesting people.

“Teaching immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers can have many benefits. Volunteers can open themselves up to a new culture and way of life, and learn what it’s like to integrate into Scottish society. For many of our students, learning English can help them to go about their daily lives, such as learning how to fill out doctor’s forms and filling out application forms for a job. It can also help people to integrate within their local community and put an end to feelings of isolation.”