



# A New Approach to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

May 2009

# Ministerial Foreword



The ability to speak English is critical for everyone living and working in the UK. It underpins employability and gives people the ability to support themselves and their families, engage more fully with the wider community and access necessary services.

As was made clear in the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's report, *Our Shared Future*, the ability to speak a common language is a key factor in securing understanding and integration between communities. It is also a critical step on the path for those seeking citizenship.

More than any other factor, learning and using English demonstrates to the wider community an individual's commitment to adapting to life in the UK and enables them to make a productive contribution to the nation's economy. People settled here have a responsibility to ensure they are able to play a full part in society – learning and using English is an important way of showing that commitment.

Because it is so important, we are spending around £300m a year investing in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. The approach set out here builds on the changes we have introduced over the last two years to ensure that those able to pay for training do so and that government funding is focussed on the groups most in need of help.

ESOL spending must be a real investment in our future and must secure long term benefits for our communities. To achieve this, we must focus our investment and provision on those people who have made a long term commitment to living in this country, but whose poor English language skills hinder their prospects of getting a job and make it harder for them to become part of the wider community.



In last year's consultation, we asked for your views on how to shift the focus of ESOL so that it plays a more effective role in supporting community cohesion by enabling the most excluded people to play a full part in British society. To do this, we asked how we should identify and plan to meet local needs and priorities, who should be involved in this planning process and about the role of the voluntary and community sector in this process.

We are very grateful for the considered and thoughtful responses we received to the consultation. We agree with respondents that there is a clear link between community cohesion and employability and that there is a significant role for local authorities and their partners in ensuring ESOL provision supports integration and thereby strengthens community cohesion.

Respondents made clear that local areas must have maximum flexibility in defining priorities for ESOL provision to reflect differing circumstances in each area. We agree with this conclusion. That is why we will be asking local authorities – many of whom have already prioritised skills and integration in Local and Multi Area Agreements – to work with a broad mix of partners to identify their priority groups for targeting ESOL provision.

We are committed to ensuring that ESOL provision and funding are focused on those who are currently least equipped to integrate and play their full part in society. This document sets out our response to the consultation and how we intend to work with the local authorities, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and others to implement the new approach.

**John Denham**

Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills



## Introduction

This document outlines the work that we have been engaged in since the ESOL consultation in 2008 and the steps that we are taking to move forward on policy implementation. It should be read in conjunction with *Skills for Life: Changing Lives* which sets out our overall approach to the next phase of improving adult literacy, language and numeracy skills.

**It is divided into the following sections**

- 1: The wider policy environment**
- 2: What we want to achieve**
- 3: Key developments since the consultation**
- 4: Next steps**
- 5: Roles of the partners**
- 6: Conclusion**



## 1.The Wider Policy Environment

### ESOL and Skills for Life

1.1 Since 2001, ESOL has been, and will continue to be, delivered as part of the Skills for Life Strategy. This strategy has been a great success, with over 2 million people engaging in ESOL provision and improving their skills. Demand for ESOL has increased significantly and we have responded to this by supporting a three-fold increase in funding since 2001, to around £300m in 2008/09.

1.2 The quality of ESOL provision has also improved significantly over the last few years. OFSTED's thematic review of ESOL was published in October 2008 and recognised the steady improvement in the quality of ESOL provision as well as making positive comments around progression, citizenship learning and planning of teaching and learning. The success rate for ESOL qualifications has improved and was reported as satisfactory for 2006–07 at 64%. There is further to go to continue to raise quality and we are looking carefully at OFSTED's recommendations. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will continue to apply its Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP) policy in respect of ESOL provision.

1.3 We continue to be committed to a fully qualified teaching workforce by 2010 for those in a Full Teacher role. Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status was introduced as a requirement from September 2007. Those who are experienced but presently unqualified should apply for this through the Professional Recognition Scheme; more details can be found at [www.standardsverificationuk.org/gprls-skills-for-life.htm](http://www.standardsverificationuk.org/gprls-skills-for-life.htm). Wider information about lifelong learning standards and qualifications can be found on Lifelong Learning UK's website at [www.lluk.org](http://www.lluk.org).

1.4 The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) will continue to deliver the Skills for Life Improvement Programme and we will ensure it reflects the focus we want to see on supporting learners committed to building a life in this country. This includes Continuous Professional Development for practitioners to support partnership teaching between vocational and Skills for Life teachers. Further help is available online e.g. the ESOL curriculum is now available through the Excellence Gateway via an interactive tool at [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum).

1.5 From August 2007, Ministers introduced a series of measures to refocus use of ESOL funding on priority learners. This included the removal of automatic fee remission to focus public funds on those least able to pay and to ensure that those who benefit from migration (employers and/or better paid workers) meet their share of the costs. New ESOL for Work qualifications were intended to meet ESOL need in the workplace and £4.6 million of support for vulnerable learners, including spouses and low-paid workers, was made

available in 2007/08 through the LSC's discretionary Support Fund, and resulted in 36,168 awards. We have continued this support in 2008/09 and have recently confirmed further funding until at least March 2010.



1.6 ESOL qualifications at level 1 continue to count towards the adult literacy PSA target of having 597,000 people of working age achieve a first level 1 or above qualification in literacy between 2008 and 2011. *Skills for Life: Changing Lives* was published in March 2009 and sets out our ambition for the next phase of activity to improve adult literacy, language and numeracy skills. We will continue to drive up progress against the targets by ensuring capacity to deliver, raising standards and increasing learner achievement. To maintain quality levels and encourage progression, it is vital that ESOL continues to be delivered within this framework. This includes providing the building blocks at entry level that enable people to achieve level 1 qualifications.

1.7 The LSC is clear that it expects every provider to undertake appropriate initial assessment of each learner and ensure that their programme is of a suitable length and we would not penalise providers offering longer programmes where necessary. The Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP) threshold for Skills for Life was set at 60% and applied to 2007/08 performance in the last round – the national average success rate for Skills for Life at Level 1 (all ages) in 2007/08 was 71.5%.

1.8 We also recognise the importance of activities and provision that helps people who are not literate in their mother tongue to prepare for entry level learning, and the engagement activities that enable people gain the confidence to learn. The third sector has an important contribution here. Some adults with ESOL needs may build their confidence through informal learning. The Government's vision for informal learning in the 21st century is set out in the recent *The Learning Revolution* White Paper.

1.9 Focusing Skills for Life on improving employability is identified as a key priority in *Skills for Life: Changing Lives*. With the economic downturn, it is more crucial than ever that we ensure that those who have chosen to settle here have access to the provision they need to improve their skills and overcome language barriers to work. If the new approach to ESOL is to be successful and help people progress in work and contribute to the economy, as well as to enrich their lives and enable them to play a full part in the community, it needs to be seen in the context of wider developments with regard to employment and skills. The development of an integrated employment and skills service, for example, is intended to ensure that employment and skills services are delivered jointly by the LSC and Jobcentre Plus so that people have access to high quality learning which leads to qualifications and sustainable employment. In addition, the Foundation Learning Tier provides a qualifications framework for learners to progress to the Level 2 qualifications which are so important for sustained employment.



## ESOL and Wider Government Objectives

1.10 It is clear that the ability to speak English plays a wide role in supporting the achievement of Government's aims and objectives across a number of areas and that ESOL makes a significant contribution to helping people gain citizenship and integrate into communities.

1.11 The ability to speak and understand English is fundamental to life in the UK and for those coming to the country, willingness to improve English skills is at the heart of applications for settlement and citizenship. The Home Office is reforming the path to citizenship to ensure that the responsibilities of migrants are more closely matched with migrants' rights. In future migrants will have to earn the right to progress in a number of ways, including speaking English. The Home Office will require migrants to demonstrate English language skills and knowledge of life in the UK before they can become a probationary citizen. The Home Office has also set a medium term goal of introducing a pre-entry English test for marriage visa applicants.



1.12 For all those who come to build a life here, access to ESOL is an important factor in ensuring a smooth transition from new arrival to full citizenship. And for those who are already settled in the UK, learning English continues to be important. English is critical for those supporting families, for accessing services, for employability and for communicating with the wider community.

1.13 Communities and Local Government has recently published an update to the 2008 Migration Impact Plan and is available at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/migrationimpactupdate](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/migrationimpactupdate). This announced a new Migration Impacts Fund paid for by increases to migrant fees. The Fund will provide extra financial help to communities experiencing transitional change, helping public services promote innovative ways of managing migration pressures and support their local communities. Proposals will be submitted by local areas through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in collaboration with Government Offices. The fund could be used for ESOL provision targeted at migrants and complementary to existing ESOL provision.



## 2.What We Want to Achieve

2.1 We are committed to implementing a new approach to planning and delivering provision for people with ESOL needs so that they can get the necessary English language skills to support their integration into the community and achieve wider progression within society and the workplace. This new approach is intended to embrace all the work that we have outlined above.

2.2 Although we know that ESOL is just one factor in improving community cohesion, it is a vital element in tackling isolation, facilitating integration and increasing understanding between different communities. In particular, we want to ensure that we reach those who have never engaged in learning English, or who have not progressed in their learning, building on the policy changes introduced in 2007/08.

2.3 We are still not convinced that enough of the hardest to reach are being attracted into ESOL provision. We believe local authorities and their partners are best placed to identify the people in their areas who struggle most to integrate and to find ways of reaching them. We want to ensure that those who have made a long term commitment to the UK but suffer social exclusion and poverty should be prioritised.

2.4 To foster integration and community cohesion, a new partnership approach is needed which targets English language provision at local need. Local authorities are well placed to lead these partnerships to ensure ESOL is focused on priority groups. The new approach will involve ESOL needs being considered as part of wider local planning arrangements such as Local Area



Agreements and city strategies. This will involve a range of partners – Local Authorities, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Jobcentre Plus, colleges and other key planning and delivery partners, including the voluntary sector, working together to identify:

- key priority groups in a local area;
- issues that are preventing the priority groups engaging or progressing in their learning; and
- actions (individual and collective) that partners need to take to address the issues.



Drawing on available evidence of low integration and community cohesion, local authorities and their partners will determine priority groups for ESOL provision, ensuring alignment with local and community need alongside national priorities and also looking for any opportunities to pool funding and resources. We recognise that LAs have differing levels of experience in matters relating to ESOL and will take their views on types of support, including peer support, which may be needed.

2.5 The LSC, and then the Skills Funding Agency, will remain accountable for the funding of ESOL, and will look to support locally identified priority learners in line with plans and priorities determined by local partners. We expect that one of the key outcomes of this new approach will be that an increased number of people from the locally identified priority groups will engage in ESOL provision. Ensuring that help goes to these learners is important but this will need to happen within the existing budgets for ESOL.

2.6 Although they will be able to innovate and explore new approaches, Local Authorities and their partners will have to work within existing funding levels and fee remission rules. Although we are not increasing the amount of funding available, by shifting the focus of ESOL funding towards the most important priorities and ensuring a more co-ordinated approach towards planning and priority setting between local authorities, the LSC, providers and others, we should be able to ensure that funding from the LSC is used effectively alongside other funding streams such as the Migration Impacts Fund, funding for community cohesion and working neighbourhoods and also to complement funding from voluntary and other sources.

2.7 We want to see real partnership working to inform the use of mainstream funds. We want this to have real impact and will work with LAs to capture qualitative evidence that the new approach is having an impact as well as with the LSC and others to ensure that quantitative data coverage improves.

## **Who are the priority groups?**

2.8 A strong theme in the consultation responses was that priority groups will vary in each locality, and that local authorities, and their partners, are best placed to know who the priority groups are. We agree that a national list of priority groups would not be helpful. However, to ensure that we achieve our aim of strengthening the role of ESOL in supporting community cohesion, the key characteristics of priority individuals should be that they:

- have poor or no English language skills;
- are isolated/excluded from, and not connecting with communities outside of their own;
- are currently not accessing or are under-represented in learning provision, or are not progressing in their learning;
- are those on the path to British citizenship who are seeking to meet the English language and knowledge requirements for settlement/permanent residence, probationary citizenship (when it is introduced), and British Citizenship;
- are genuine refugees given protection by the UK Government.

This means that priority groups and individuals may be in work or not in work. Current fee remission rules will continue to apply and, where local areas identify priority groups that are employed, we will continue to expect employers and/or individuals to contribute to the cost of their learning.

## **3. Key Developments since the Consultation**

3.1 Since autumn 2008, we have been working with partners in four local areas to test out how we can achieve the changes we are looking for. This test phase has involved:

- identifying priority groups and the key issues preventing them from accessing ESOL and progressing in their learning, and the actions needed to address the issues; and
- starting to identify the roles and responsibilities of key partners in the identification, 'troubleshooting' and implementation stages of the process.

3.2 Brief details of the priority groups identified in each of the test areas and a flavour of the work taking place to tackle the issues that are preventing these groups from accessing provision and progressing are outlined below.

### **Manchester**

Manchester City Council's (MCC) Skills Policy section with local partners identified as their priority group young men who have just been granted refugee status whose immediate priorities are housing and work. These young men need to have early assessment of their language needs as part of the wider Refugee Employment and Information Service (REIS), as well as better access to work-focused ESOL. MCC is funding an advice worker located in Refugee Action and a mentoring and language project for people whose English is not good enough for the workplace.

MCC has also commissioned 'pre-ESOL' engagement activities for another priority group – Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Taiwanese and Vietnamese women.

The LSC has worked with MCC in drawing up specifications for this work. MCC is in discussions with the FE College and other large providers to reduce the incidence of people being assessed more than once for their ESOL needs.

### **Salford**

A cross agency group led by Salford City Council (SCC) Skills for Life section has met 3 times and is working to develop engagement activities that can meet the needs of Yemeni women. This priority group is largely focused on goals to do with family life but they are not connecting with wider communities.

SCC is working in close partnership with Eccles College to identify how provision can be reshaped to meet the needs of Yemeni women more effectively. Childcare and the need for lower levels of ESOL provision that can be delivered in community settings are key requirements that SCC and Eccles College are specifically focusing on so that an effective pathway into provision that supports progression can be established.

### **Peterborough**

Peterborough City Council and its partners identified two initial priority groups – women with young children who are isolated from communities outside of their own, and migrant workers who are now settled in the area but who are in and out of exploitative employment. Specific issues for each group vary, but key points include a lack of ESOL available in the evening/weekends, in the workplace and in community settings and a lack of accessible information/guidance and engagement activity.

The ESOL Operations Group, a cross agency group reporting to the Local Strategic Partnership's Cohesion Board is leading the work. Actions include identifying and maximising LSC and other resources to deliver 'first steps' ESOL that leads to further progression for women in settled communities, and how more effective provision for vulnerable settled migrant workers can be established through LSC and other funding, for example, the Migrant Impact Fund, Train to Gain, East of England Development Agency etc.

Funding for teacher training to boost the number of ESOL teachers is also being applied for. Other actions include assessing college waiting lists to improve information about the needs of individuals wanting to access ESOL and exploring a 'gateway' mechanism that can remove duplication on waiting lists and streamline assessment and referral processes.

The work is now to be routed through the Council's Adult Learning and Skills Strategy Group to ensure that impact can be maximised by dovetailing the activity with wider learning and skills developments.

## Ealing

The London Borough of Ealing (LBE) together with local partners identified two different groups of Somali women as their priority groups – in one group individuals have little or no English language and are not engaging in learning and in the other, women have taken part in some ESOL but are not progressing.

A key issue identified for both groups is the need for much more flexible delivery of provision – at locations, patterns and times that are more accessible for these individuals.

LBE has now established a dialogue with key personnel at the local college to explore how provision can be tailored to meet the needs of these groups more effectively. The LSC is also examining how it can support the reshaping of provision within the college.

3.3. Experience in the test areas so far demonstrates that there are a number of reasons why people in the priority groups are not currently accessing and/or progressing within ESOL provision. This can mean a need for more effective engagement, Information, Advice & Guidance, mentoring and/or support services or childcare as well as changes in ESOL provision itself.

## 4. Next steps

### Partnership Working

4.1 The test phase has identified a number of issues which have informed our thinking on next steps. These are as follows:

- priority groups with ESOL needs require a range of services as well as tailored ESOL provision if they are to successfully engage and progress in their learning – different groups are likely to have different needs;
- partners have been able to identify how different funding streams can support the range of services and provision that different priority groups need;
- although some additional work to identify key information and data has been required, the new approach has enhanced existing partnership working, including with the Local Strategic Partnerships, rather than just adding a layer of bureaucracy;
- having the right datasets is essential if we are to measure impact and change; and
- reviewing funding and contractual levers to ensure the new approach works effectively.





4.2 Drawing on this experience, we are moving forward by:

- asking the LSC to oversee the implementation of this new approach and facilitate local partnerships and discussions. The LSC will also review its funding levers;
- continuing with the original 4 test areas as lead pathfinders as part of the implementation process;
- inviting additional pathfinder areas to work closely with us and the LSC to fast track the new approach, further inform development and provide exemplars for other LA areas;
- informing all local authorities of the new approach and the work of the pathfinders and inviting them to begin work with the LSC and other local partners to identify priorities and develop initial strategies;
- writing to ESOL providers setting out the new approach and asking them to work with local partners and the LSC to shape their provision in response to local priority discussions; and
- setting up a website to provide ongoing information about the implementation, tools, case studies and a pathfinder section for those areas involved in the fast track work. This will be available at [www.dius.gov.uk/esol](http://www.dius.gov.uk/esol).

4.3 Pathfinder areas will fast-track implementation of the new planning approach, enabling us to identify best practice and case studies to support national roll out. The pathfinders will also allow us to consider how ESOL fits with other initiatives and activities in both the public and the private sectors – for example, Integrated Employment and Skills, Skills Accounts and the Refugee Integration and Employment Service.



4.4 Specifically, the pathfinder areas are being asked to:

- work together to identify the priority groups, the key issues that affect their participation in learning and the actions required to address the issues;
- move forward on the actions identified; and
- provide propositions for any changes to processes and identify barriers to successfully implementing the new approach.

4.5 Pathfinders have a very important role to play in fast tracking the new approach. Support provided to the pathfinders includes:

- initial workshop to provide a more in depth briefing about the new approach, identifying priority groups and identifying actions which need to be taken and establish mutual support networks with other pathfinder areas; and
- ongoing light touch support from LSC as required as they move through the process.



4.6 The LSC is asked to ensure that the new approach is implemented across the country and that ESOL provision is delivered in such a way that better supports integration and community cohesion objectives. They will help broker discussions between providers and local authorities focusing on how use of LSC ESOL funding can be sharpened to better meet the needs of those identified as priority learners for community cohesion purposes. We expect the LSC to ensure that where possible, provision for 2009/10 is responsive to local authorities' initial strategies, although in some cases, identification of needs and alignment of provision will take longer. The LSC is expected to build this approach and ensure it can be sustained when responsibility passes to the Skills Funding Agency, with full implementation in 2010/11.

4.7 Local authorities are invited to develop strategies for identifying priority ESOL needs and to begin work with the LSC and providers to develop provision in response. We expect these discussions to begin by focusing on what can be achieved in 2009/10, but the commitment is long term. We expect providers to adapt to the new approach – where they are reluctant to re-align with integration and community cohesion priorities, other providers may have to be brought into the mix.



## Improving Quality and Responsiveness to Priorities

4.7 Alongside the work on planning and prioritisation, there are other factors which will help reshape and maximise the impact of ESOL. These include the role of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) which:

- provides a range of quality improvement programmes and services for the Further Education sector to help providers become more effective in responding to the needs of learners, employers and the community;
- helps providers develop and maintain successful sustainable performance through programmes such as World Class Skills (WCS), focusing on help for providers to work successfully with employers to deliver flexible, responsive, high quality training; and
- manages the Excellence Gateway portal, the national web channel which hosts the adult core curriculum in literacy, numeracy, ESOL and the pre-entry curriculum framework, and provides resources together with examples of best practice in ESOL teaching and learning.

4.8 We will work with the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to ensure their support for ESOL delivery, including ESOL embedded as part of workplace qualifications, helps us to meet our policy objectives.

4.9 The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has also been carrying out work on successful and sustainable outreach approaches which will help to inform the development of the new approach to ESOL. NIACE undertook an investigative study *Dare to Dream* (2008, NIACE) which looked at Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali women's learning journeys and the difficulty many of these women face when looking to fulfil learning needs. *Dare to Dream* presented a new Planning and Outreach framework which identified individual's learning needs and aspirations, and the barriers to learning which exist.

4.10 In 2008-2009, DIUS funded NIACE to work across three London boroughs; Tower Hamlets, Newham and Islington, all of whom have significant populations of these groups, with the aim of bringing women in these communities together, identifying their learning needs and helping them access all types of adult learning. NIACE developed approaches to engage women with the wider community and build on their skills, which it is hoped will lead to active citizenship. 15 barefoot workers and 3 coordinators worked with the women and support them into a range of activities, groups and adult learning.

4.11 This work will continue in 2009-10. 'A Woman's Place' will target specific groups of women from settled ethnic minority communities in the UK, with language needs who are at risk of social exclusion:

- recruit women as learners;
- engage them in a wide range of meaningful and relevant learning activities;
- encourage them and their families to engage more actively with schools, health services and in community activities; and
- refer them to further learning opportunities.

## Qualification Reform

4.12 Qualifications are important to people who want to learn English and we are committed to ensuring that they are fit for purpose. As part of our overall reform of qualifications, we are looking at ESOL qualifications.

4.13 The Skills for Life ESOL qualifications were introduced in 2004 and have helped to improve quality and successfully supported learner achievement. Alongside the literacy and numeracy Skills for Life qualifications, the ESOL qualifications are being reviewed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and will continue to be available until 2012. Providers should, therefore, continue to use and plan with the current Skills for Life ESOL qualifications.

4.14 QCA is piloting Functional Skills qualifications. A decision on whether Functional Skills qualifications will replace the current Skills for Life literacy and numeracy qualifications will be taken based on the outcomes of the pilot which will be completed in 2010. Adults with ESOL needs are to be included in the pilot because we want to see whether, in principle, Functional Skills qualifications are suitable for their needs.



## **Improving Employability through ESOL**

4.15 Against the background of the economic downturn, which makes the workplace a more competitive environment, ESOL is also needed to support those looking for jobs and those in work.

4.16 Having sufficient English language skills to communicate in the workplace is vitally important and a key contributor to promoting cohesion and integration. Those who work here and who have English language skills needs should be able to develop the skills that enable them to be successful at work and communicate with their colleagues. As well as helping individuals and businesses, this also supports community cohesion.

4.17 Recent flexibilities introduced through Train to Gain have secured a better ESOL offer but more needs to be done to promote the benefits of ESOL within the workplace and drive up demand. We will ensure that the benefits of being able to communicate in English are understood by employers and employees. This will mean ensuring that the ESOL offer is straightforward and can be explained clearly to employers.

4.18 Employers have a role in contributing to the cost of ESOL provision, particularly where they recruit directly from overseas, but this investment has to be matched with a high quality offer of provision. The ESOL for Work qualifications, designed to meet the particular requirements of those with English needs in the workplace, will help in that regard and DIUS is working with the QCA to make them more attractive, relevant and flexible for employers and their employees.

4.19 Those whose poor language skills are a barrier to employment, both in terms of identifying skills levels and in meeting needs, remain a particular priority. Under the Integrated Employment and Skills Service, Jobcentre Plus advisers will be systematically screening customers for potential skills needs, including ESOL needs, and signposting and referring to careers support and provision through the customers' claims. Access to provision can be either through mainstream FE programmes or through the Employability Skills Programme – a programme specifically designed to give people the skills they need for work.



4.20 The Employability Skills Programme was developed jointly by DIUS, DWP, LSC and Jobcentre Plus to deliver basic employability skills to those customers who are furthest from the labour market. It offers jobseekers a full or part time programme of personalised literacy, language and numeracy learning, leading to nationally approved basic skills and employability qualifications. In addition it provides support in looking for a job and opportunities to take part in work-trials or work experience for up to three weeks. The programme is geared to helping participants achieve a nationally recognised qualification and find suitable employment.

4.21 In 2008, the TUC was commissioned to carry out a project to look at ways of engaging more employers in supporting employees with ESOL needs. This project will report in March 2010 with interim findings available in Autumn 2009. The project aims to develop practices for overcoming barriers to ESOL training in the workplace, and will work with employers to increase their take up, including through the work of Union Learning Representatives.

## 5. Roles of the Partners

We know that for this new approach to be successful, each of the key partners will need to play their full part, taking a strong lead appropriate to the remit and role of their organisation. Outlined below are the key roles to be played by the major partners.

### DIUS will:

- oversee the policy for the new approach and chair the ESOL Policy Board, which brings together key partners and has responsibility for all aspects of ESOL policy;
- invite local authorities to work with the LSC and other partners;
- commission the LSC to implement the new approach including taking appropriate actions to address the needs of locally identified priorities;
- work with the LSC to review funding and allocation mechanisms, targets and data issues that are critical to successful implementation;
- continue to work with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus to provide a seamless service for individuals, including those with ESOL needs;

- work with the Data Service to support the pathfinders and other local areas by providing key information on funding and provision; and
- ensure that the new approach can align with the emerging SFA model, and that the emerging SFA model can be informed by significant findings from the implementation of the new approach. This includes ensuring that both are light-touch, non-bureaucratic but capable of responding flexibly to local need.

**The Learning and Skills Council/Skills Funding Agency will:**

- implement the new approach to ESOL, including setting up and chairing an Implementation Group which will report to the DIUS ESOL Policy Board;
- continue to be accountable for and allocate FE spending for ESOL;
- work with local authorities to communicate a clear message to all providers about the aims for ESOL in supporting both skills and community cohesion outcomes, including the continued importance of entry level provision to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable learners;
- influence provision through allocations and planning discussions with colleges and providers for 2010/11;
- ensure that the new approach can align with this and that this can be informed by significant findings from the implementation of the new approach. This includes ensuring that both are light-touch, non-bureaucratic but capable of responding flexibly to local need;
- consider different funding options, including reviewing the 1.4 programme weighting attributed to all Skills for Life ESOL provision regardless of learner characteristics; and review possible contractual levers that could be applied to providers who do not respond positively to meeting locally identified needs;
- take steps to ensure that the means of measuring the impact of the new approach can be put in place;





- facilitate the integration of the new approach for people with ESOL needs with other initiatives and developments e.g. Integrated Employment and Skills, Skills Accounts; and
- ensure that any plans for ESOL provision fits within existing funding rules and learner eligibility.

**Local authorities are asked to:**

- take the lead in bringing together key local partners (the LSC, Jobcentre Plus and providers, including community and voluntary organisations) so that jointly they can identify priority groups, the issues for these groups and how these issues will be tackled;
- begin work to identify priority groups and their needs over the next few months to feed into discussions between the LSC and providers from September 2009 for the 2010/11 academic year;
- share all relevant information on priority groups and local authority funded services that could be reshaped to meet their needs;
- work with the LSC and local ESOL providers to agree how to drive up demand among these priority groups and what changes could be made to provision to meet their needs; and
- with partners, ensure that all appropriate funding streams that can address the needs of the identified priority groups are considered and mobilised. This should include sources from all relevant public funds, as well as contributions from employers/individuals where appropriate.



### **Voluntary/community sector organisations are asked to:**

- be involved in local discussions with local authorities to identify currently excluded groups who could be helped by ESOL; and
- work with local authorities and providers to support outreach work and other engagement activities.

Voluntary and community groups are likely to be key to getting on board hard to reach learners and helping to overcome any cultural issues around women accessing learning or preparing to enter the workforce.

### **Providers are asked to:**

- work with local authorities and the LSC to ensure provision is responsive to any locally identified gaps in current provision i.e. flexible learning times and delivery locations, roll on, roll off provision, short intensive ESOL packages;
- prioritise the needs of those people identified as priorities for provision and shape provision so that it meets their needs. Consider other barriers to access – for example childcare arrangements;
- develop engagement strategies around any locally identified priority groups and measure success in bringing them into learning – the role of Information Advice and Guidance services will also be important in helping to point learners towards appropriate provision;
- include in the engagement strategies effective and equitable partnership work with appropriate voluntary and community sector organisations; and
- collect appropriate data to enable the impact of the new approach to be measured by the LSC.

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 This new approach to ESOL is intended to help partners deliver services that will enable currently excluded groups to play their full part in the community, contributing to economic development and thereby strengthening community cohesion.

6.2 It builds on the joined up approach at national level which has seen the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Home Office work more closely together to tackle migration impacts, promote integration and access to employment and ensure that those people who have made a long term commitment to living in this country are able to participate in their communities.

6.3 Ministers have a strong personal commitment to delivering ESOL in ways that helps the most vulnerable people in our society and will be looking for evidence that the new approach is having an impact and making a real difference.

6.4 It is important that the new approach is rolled out swiftly so that we can ensure that the people with ESOL needs who are most isolated can be reached and supported to progress. To make this happen, we will closely monitor the progress of the pathfinders and from the autumn disseminate key emerging experience so that it can inform the 2010/11 planning cycle, and be available to all local areas.

First published May 2009  
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills  
[www.dius.gov.uk](http://www.dius.gov.uk)  
URN 223-09-SK-ON  
© Crown Copyright

Reviewed by

