



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy for Wales



Ministerial Foreword

Prosperity for All sets out the Welsh Government's agenda for the remainder of this Assembly term. Our aim is clear, we want to build a Wales that is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, and united and connected. We want to help people into work and out of poverty, and we want to support people to live secure and rewarding lives.

We are committed to promoting integration, and to helping those who migrate to Wales to participate fully in the communities which become their homes. Being able to communicate with confidence is essential if they are to utilise the skillset which they bring with them. This will benefit both Welsh society and our economy. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is an essential part of our adult learning provision and is key to supporting and settling migrants and refugees.

Our approach was initially set out in our first *ESOL Policy for Wales*, which was published in 2014. This policy stated clearly that we recognised ESOL as an essential skill, with the same value as the provision of literacy and numeracy skills. This updated policy statement reaffirms that commitment, and also reflects the many changes that have happened which have impacted on our provision of ESOL over the last four years.

The demand for ESOL is increasing. As more people seek refuge in the UK and Wales, it is important that our provision adapts to meet the needs of this diverse set of learners. This policy forms an important part of our long-term aim for Wales to be a true *Nation of Sanctuary* for refugees and asylum seekers.

To showcase the different types of ESOL available, we have included a number of case studies throughout this document. Some of the activities are funded by Welsh Government, some of them funded through other sources; but they all serve to illustrate the diversity of the learners who need our help, and the innovative and creative provision that is being offered to meet their needs.

Our vision is to ensure that everyone living in Wales has equal access to the services they need to help them contribute to our vibrant and modern country. Our ESOL provision is a vital component of this, and helps to make Wales a great place to live and work.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'M. E. Myrddin'.

**Minister for Welsh Language
and Lifelong Learning**

Effective communication skills are essential.

Our ESOL provision has parity with all Essential Skills including Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision in Wales helps to equip any member of society with the language skills they need to live independently, access work and educational opportunities, and fulfil their potential – enabling them to actively participate in the Welsh economy, culture, and public life, as well as to have access to their rights and entitlements.

Wales has a long history of being an inclusive, multicultural and multi-faith country. The diversity of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in Wales adds to the rich culture of our society.

According to migration figures published by the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, 16,826 moved into Wales from outside the UK in 2015/16. This equated to a net increase of 9,676 people.¹ Individuals who migrate to Wales bring with them a range of skills and abilities which can benefit both our communities and the economy. In order for these individuals to thrive in our society, we must ensure we provide them with the support they need to develop their language skills.

When the *ESOL Policy for Wales* was first published in 2014, it gave a clear direction and set of priorities for the delivery and provision of ESOL in Wales. Many changes have occurred in our society since that time, and this updated policy statement reflects these changes and reconfirms our commitment to the delivery of ESOL provision.

A list of our priorities for action can be found at the end of the document and reflects our commitment to working closely with our partners across the sector to ensure our ESOL provision is effective and accessible to all who need it.

This document has been developed in close partnership with providers and experts from across the sector to ensure that it accurately reflects the needs of learners.

What is ESOL?

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is provision for learners whose first language is neither English nor Welsh, and who have for various reasons come to live in the UK. There is a clear distinction between ESOL and EFL (English as a Foreign Language), EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EAL (English as an Additional Language).²

ESOL is essential for integration and enables learners to function independently, to advance onto further learning opportunities or work; and supports greater community cohesion.

ESOL underpins equality of opportunities, and enriches the culture of our society.

¹ <http://wmp.infobasecymru.net>

² EFL is for learners who are in the UK temporarily to study; EAP is language support for International students; EAL is English language support for young people and is only available in schools.

ESOL learners

In our experience, the majority of learners who undertake ESOL classes do so in order to help them into further education and work; and/or to gain the language skills they need to help them to interact and function within society.

Learners come from a variety of backgrounds and often have had different experiences of 'formal' education before they came to the UK. Indeed, whilst many learners will come to Wales with higher education qualifications, some may not have had any form of education in the past and have little or no literacy skills in their own language, resulting in a classroom of learners who have mixed levels of literacy skills. This often means that the rates of progress for ESOL learners are extremely varied. The diversity of learner and learner experience which exists within a single ESOL class is vast.

There is no such thing as an 'average' ESOL learner and so setting a guide on how long it might take for someone to learn the language is almost impossible.

Dr Philida Schellekens, a consultant and author on ESOL, conducted a review of relevant research in 2011, which established that it would take an average of 1,765 guided learning hours for "learners (including a proportion of learners with no literacy skills in the first language) to progress from pure beginner level to a point where they could undertake study of another subject or take on a job with routine communication requirements".³

As such, the following predictions can be made for the length of time it could take for a beginner to reach Level 1:

- Full-time FE students (**450 guided learning hours** per year) would need almost **four years** of study
- Adult students who learn English **ten hours a week** over 30 weeks a year would need **five years and seven months** of study
- Adult students who learn English for **four hours a week** over 30 weeks a year would need **14 and a half years** of study

It is therefore vitally important that we assess learners correctly to ensure they are being signposted towards the type of provision that is most suitable to achieving their goals. While this can be challenging, it is essential as it will affect an individual's ability to learn and progress if the provision they are engaged upon is not suitable for their needs.

We are always looking for ways to improve the way we assess and manage ESOL provision. The following case study highlights one of the ways in which we are doing this:

³ Schellekens. 2011

Case Study 1 – REACH

REACH – Regional ESOL Assessment Central Hub – is a Creative Solutions Pilot Project being delivered in partnership between Cardiff and Vale College (CaVC) and Addysg Oedolion Cymru/Adult Learning Wales (AOC/ALW). It acts as a referral point across Cardiff for all organisations and ESOL delivery partners.

REACH assesses people who want to enrol on an ESOL course and assigns them to appropriate provision. As a central point of contact, it aims to reduce ESOL waiting lists and improve progression pathways and outcomes for learners.

The project was designed to directly address the large waiting lists for ESOL in Cardiff; and the lack of strategic collaboration between providers in planning and delivering provision. Organisations were often working in isolation when delivering ESOL services.

REACH enables individuals to discuss their needs with REACH staff to ensure they are placed in the most appropriate provision. Within 3 weeks of being assessed, learners are referred either onto mainstream provision within CaVC or AOC/ALW; onto specially designed flexible roll on/roll off courses provided by AOC/ALW in partnership with the Third sector; or online learning courses through CaVC. Learners are accessing ESOL classes quickly and not spending time on waiting lists.

REACH includes the provision of a database that supports the referral process and tracks learner progress and progression. All partners have access to their provision to see their learners and their assessment results, which will aid learning and development. In addition REACH has a website which provides a single entry point for registration and other ESOL related information.

This project brings together funded ESOL providers with Third Sector organisations to ensure ESOL learners in Cardiff have access to the support and provision needed for them to thrive. We are planning to roll this project out to other parts of Wales.

ESOL Provision

The quality and type of provision we make available is equally important if we are to benefit as many learners as possible.

In Wales, ESOL is delivered by a number of different organisations in the public sector, private sector and Third Sector. The Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities and further education institutions to deliver mainstream provision. Within this document, we use the term ‘funded providers’ to refer to these organisations.

Mainstream provision includes both full time and part time classes at a variety of levels. The majority is accredited, but we also support a significant amount of informal provision.

We ensure that the quality of our ESOL maintains a high standard, and that tutors are trained to the level which enables them to effectively and efficiently teach ESOL. Whilst we do not specify the qualifications needed, it is generally expected within the sector that ESOL tutors will have at least a Level 5 equivalent qualification that provides the specialist knowledge necessary for successful ESOL tuition.

We also endeavour to ensure tutors are supported appropriately, enabling them to reach the expected standards. Teaching ESOL can require more than just good teaching skills. The emotional and health needs of ESOL learners can often be extreme, and ESOL tutors must have the training needed to support their learners as best they can. There is also the danger that tutors may themselves be traumatized by hearing accounts of experiences as survivors become more able to relate their stories in English.

Supporting ESOL for further education and work

It is important that every member of Welsh society has the opportunity to fully contribute to our communities and economy. Where language is a barrier preventing an individual from competing for work using their existing skills and experience, then it makes sense for us to help them to gain those language skills. This will maximise the economic benefits of immigration. We also want to encourage ESOL learners to continue with their studies.

The following case studies highlight how access to ESOL can help learners to access appropriate employment.

Case Study 2 – OA

OA moved from Romania, with her husband and child in 2015, when her husband was appointed to the post of a registrar in Ysbyty Gwynedd. OA was a Dermatologist in Romania but was unable to practice in this country because her English skills were considered to be too low. She started a full-time English course in Coleg Menai in September 2016; she was assessed to be at Level 1 or IELTS 5.5. She did not miss a session and through sheer hard work and determination became a proficient English speaker and gained an IELTS Level 7. In June 2017 she gained a clinical attachment at Ysbyty Gwynedd. She is now working full-time in the hospital as a Dermatologist.

Case Study 3 – Irina Gonzales Marin

Irina Gonzales Marin's husband moved to this country to work as a nurse in Ysbyty Gwynedd. Irina worked as a GP in Spain but decided to follow her husband to Bangor. Her English language skills were assessed to be at Entry 3 or approximately IELTS 4.5. She joined a full time English Language course in Coleg Menai in May 2016; she quickly worked up through the levels and in June 2017 gained an IELTS 7.5. She also obtained a clinical attachment in Ysbyty Gwynedd and is now working full-time as a doctor. She hopes to eventually specialise as a GP in this country.

Case Study 4 – Nashwan Damar

As an asylum seeker from Kurdistan, Nashwan Damar had experienced a shocking and traumatic upbringing resulting in leaving his home country and family to seek a safe future here in the UK. When he joined Gower College, his relief was palpable that he had found a safe and caring environment where he could enjoy his studies.

Although his English ability was not strong, he was a confident learner and as his English slowly improved so did his determination and confidence, and he became a member of the ESOL student representatives. Having passed Level 1 ESOL, Nashwan gained employment with the EYST (Ethnic Youth Support Team) as a support worker for other refugees and asylum seekers, a role which he is very passionate about as it is so close to his own experience.

Whilst a basic understanding of the English language is essential, individuals also need a more detailed understanding of the vocabulary of their profession if they hope to progress into employment. Contextualised ESOL courses are a valuable asset, and can help individuals to work towards updating their existing qualifications to those recognisable within the UK.

A number of our funded providers are developing courses that embed ESOL within a vocational subject – for instance, construction, hospitality, care etc. These courses can be immensely beneficial to learners who wish to develop specific skills needed to find work.

The following case study shows how this provision is being developed within one of our Further Education colleges.

Case Study 5 – ESOL+ Vocational Courses at Cardiff and Vale College

ESOL+ courses are a means of offering more vocational and employment focused opportunities for ESOL learners to better prepare them for progression onto mainstream vocational courses or into work. The college plans its provision in line with the priority areas identified by the Regional Skills Partnership, realistic employment opportunities in Cardiff, and demand based on learners' skills/educational backgrounds and future aspirations. The college now offers ESOL+ courses in a range of topics including Hospitality, Construction, IT and Accounting.

The ESOL+ courses are 16hrs per week and include integrated ESOL Skills for Life, Employability and Study Skills; Vocational lessons delivered by a vocational specialist teacher, Tutorial & ILP Targets, and numeracy skills where learners are streamed into levels according to their ability.

The ESOL+ courses are aimed at learners wishing to fast track into work or mainstream FE in a vocational area. The college also runs an Adult Foundation for ESOL course in partnership with the Gen Ed. department as an academic route for learners wishing to progress into HE.

Case Study 5 – ESOL+ Vocational Courses at Cardiff and Vale College (continued)

Through working in partnership with mainstream vocational departments, the college has been able to increase awareness and understanding of the needs of ESOL learners, and also the skills and experience they bring from their countries. This has enabled them to break down historical barriers to progression and significantly improve ESOL destination outcomes. The college is now working with ACT, a private training provider, and the college Apprenticeships team to develop bespoke programmes with ESOL support to create further opportunities for ESOL learners to fast track into employment.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) supports ESOL learners to find work through Job Centre Plus (JCP) offices across Wales. Learners who are actively seeking work and who are in receipt of Universal Credit can get support from JCP to voluntarily access ESOL classes. Working in conjunction with Welsh Government providers, JCP supports job seekers to access the provision necessary to improve their employment prospects.

As we have highlighted in *Prosperity for All*, good employers place a premium on highly skilled workers and will themselves invest in developing and adapting their workforce. ESOL provision is a perfect example. In order for many ESOL learners to continue to develop their language skills after they have found employment, there is a need for them to continue to engage in formal ESOL provision within the workplace. Employers have a responsibility to contribute towards ESOL provision where it is applicable for their staff. ESOL can be delivered on the employer's premises, and courses can be adapted to reflect the relevant area of work.

The following case study shows how one of our Further Education Institutions is working with an employer to deliver ESOL provision in the workplace.

Case Study 6 – Dawn Meats Factory

Addysg Oedolion Cymru/Adult Learning Wales (AOC/ALW) is currently delivering four ESOL classes at Dawn Meats Factory in Crosshands, Carmarthenshire. ESOL courses have been delivered at the factory since 2012.

AOC/ALW first started delivering there through the Regional Essential Skills project, which was an ESF initiative for employed people to develop their Essential skills through Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL. This proved to be very successful for the employer, employee and provider, engaging around 30 to 40 learners and still maintaining these numbers today, with excellent attainment.

Commitment from the employers at Dawn Meats has remained constant. Each academic year begins with an Initial Assessment session to ascertain the clients' skills levels. This year, the session took place between 12 noon until 8.00pm to accommodate shift workers. This process was carefully coordinated to allow employees from all the various departments to attend whilst not disrupting production.

The learners are divided into groups according to ability and shift patterns. There are currently four classes in operation, at three different levels – Pre-entry; two classes at Entry 1; and one class at Entry 2. All courses are accredited through Agored; and are run at times that enable learners to attend without affecting the productivity of the factory.

Supporting ESOL for independence and social integration

Language is an essential tool for integration and community cohesion. It helps people to participate independently in our society, to contribute to the local economy, and to play an active positive role in Welsh communities all of which underpin and support current Welsh Government policies.

Whilst having effective communication skills is important for seeking employment, for a number of ESOL learners, accessing the workplace is not their ultimate goal. They are driven by the need to be able to engage more generally within society. This includes being able to:

- Communicate effectively with schools and support their children in education;
- Access health, welfare, housing services etc.; and
- Participate in their communities and the wider society.

Not having the ability to speak English can have a severely limiting impact on an individual's ability to fully integrate into UK society. It can lead to social isolation, and could make the individual more vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination. They are also far more likely to be reliant on welfare support as their migration has often fractured their social networks.⁴ Whilst ESOL provision may not in itself reduce this reliance on welfare support, it would contribute to enabling that individual to interact within society as independently as possible.

For many, being able to communicate effectively with schools and health services, which impact directly on their family's welfare, is the most important element of their learning. Providers have found that offering learning opportunities within a family setting can have a positive impact by encouraging all members of the family to learn together; and to socially interact with other families.

The following case studies highlight the way this has been effective.

Case Study 7 – Cardiff and the Vale Summer project

As part of their ESOL programme for refugees on the Vulnerable People's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), providers across Cardiff and the Vale worked together to develop a pilot programme to encourage integration and develop social/community networks.

Around 45 people, consisting of 10 families, took part in the immersive two week project. Each day, families would meet in the morning and separate into different groups – crèche and toddlers' playgroups; young people and teen activities; and ESOL lessons for those aged 16 and above. In the afternoon, the focus moved onto family activities and included trips to local attractions including museums and libraries which helped them gain a better understanding of the culture and history of Wales; as well as being extremely good fun.

The project was successful in making an impact on some of the 'soft outcomes' such as self-esteem and many of the attendees reported an increase in confidence. The one to one nature of much of the support meant that some concerns around mental health have been identified and appropriate support sought and put in place in the form of professional counselling. A number of attendees have continued to carry out voluntary work at the delivery centre, which has provided additional opportunities to build community relations and develop language skills.

⁴ Holtom, Bottrill, and Watkins. 2013. p30

Case Study 8 – ACE Cardiff (All Communities Engaged)

ACE Cardiff is a charity that aims to support children and young people that live in the more disadvantaged environments of Cardiff in a way that builds their confidence and creates an enjoyment of learning, which, as a consequence, will increase the likelihood of a higher attainment level with school examinations and better life opportunities. It also aims to increase the confidence of speakers of other languages to communicate effectively in their new environment.

Since April 2017, ACE Cardiff has worked with Hywel Dda Primary School to deliver a two hour ESOL class for parents every Friday morning. Their children join them for part of the time. The parents have become more engaged with the school, for example better attendance at parent's evenings, cooking and some have gone on to attend ESOL classes in the local community.

The group is based in the school and therefore able to incorporate all aspects of school life including supporting parents with parents evening, the school routines, school trips, understanding school newsletters and introducing Schoop (parent mail system) to parents. It also helps them to better understand how the children are taught to read, how to help with homework, and how the children learn about the various cultures and countries represented in the school as well as studying Welsh culture.

Parents have reported that the class has helped to give them confidence, helped them to understand the school and the community, engage with teachers and other parents, and importantly, helped them to feel part of the school 'family'.

Flexible provision

ESOL learners can be difficult to retain within learning because they face a number of barriers to their continued attendance (including asylum dispersal, poor health, difficulty in accessing effective travel and childcare facilities etc.). Many are also employed within low paid jobs which make attending classes at standard times very difficult to maintain. Our funded providers endeavour to offer provision that is flexible and adaptable to the needs of the learners.

Helping people into work is only part of the goal. We also need to help those already in employment to improve their wider career development prospects, and that means offering provision that is flexible, varied and adaptable. There cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach in terms of delivery of ESOL or expected achievements.

Providers are working together to develop new and innovative approaches to delivering ESOL to reach as wide a cohort of learners as possible. They endeavour to offer provision at a variety of times, at a variety of levels and offering a range of qualifications to suit all requirements.

The following case study highlights one of the projects that is aiming to support a more flexible approach to provision.

Case Study 9 – Access to Communication and Integration

As part of their joint Creative Solutions project (as outlined in Case Study 1), Addysg Oedolion Cymru/Adult Learning Wales (AOC/ALW) has developed an Access to Communication and Integration (ACI) programme of flexible learning.

The provision is being delivered by AOC/ALW along with Third Sector organisations within the community. This partnership approach is an important aspect of the success of the programme as it brings together the ESOL community to the benefit of the learner. It increases visibility of the programme and enables providers to work together to offer learners the widest possible opportunity to learn.

ACI offers something different to the mainstream accredited provision. It provides small bite size modules of non assessed learning on day to day issues faced by ESOL learners (e.g. Schools, Health, Housing, Jobs etc.). This provides learners with the essentials of communication as well as offering greater flexibility for those who may not be able to commit to a formal course of learning. Any missed modules can be taken at a later date. Modules are offered at different times of the day which means that it is more accessible for learners who are working or have caring commitments.

A key aim of the project is to progress the learner as far as possible towards their next level of language proficiency. As such, all learners are expected to have made progress by the time they exit the programme and return to REACH (Case study 1).

Those learners who successfully complete the ACI programme are given priority status to take up available places on mainstream accredited provision at either Cardiff & the Vale College or AOC/ALW. The provision goes to show the importance of flexibility in addressing the very specific needs of learners.

Funding

ESOL remains a priority within the Welsh Government's overarching adult learning policy – *Adult Learning in Wales* – which was published in July 2017.

Welsh Government funding for adult learning remains under mounting pressure, but we are committed to protecting the funding for the provision of ESOL and Essential Skills for adults.

Full details on the eligibility criteria for learners to access funded provision can be found in the Welsh Government's *Guide to the post-16 planning and funding framework*.⁵

Refugees in Wales are classed as 'home students' and as such have equal access to all Welsh Government provision. The Welsh Government also considers asylum seekers and their dependants as eligible for post-16 funding, providing they are in receipt of support under either of the following.

- i. The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.⁶
- ii. The Children Act 1989.
- iii. The National Assistance Act 1948.

⁵ gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/131031-guide-planning-and-funding-framework-en.pdf

⁶ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/33/contents

Asylum seekers refused asylum but eligible and granted support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 will be eligible for Welsh Government funding.

The Welsh Government considers all 16 to 18-year-old asylum seekers as eligible for funding, including any unaccompanied asylum seekers aged 16 to 18 years old who are placed in the care of the local authority.

Performance Measures

Progress and outcomes are fundamental to all learning provision; and we need to make sure that ESOL learners have definable goals, with clear opportunities for them to progress either onto further learning or into work.

We are working with our funded providers to make sure we have systems that accurately capture the progress made by ESOL learners, reflecting the individual modes of learning, and the length of time necessary for ESOL learners to progress.

Support for learners

Many ESOL learners may have suffered severe psychological or physical trauma before their arrival in the UK and as such they may be especially vulnerable and require more support in undertaking their learning.

It is vitally important for providers to not only make this support available, but to ensure they provide a safe and secure learning environment, and that staff are suitably trained to understand the potential difficulties these learners may face.

Learning a new language is difficult for most people, and it is important to have opportunities to practise and use the language in informal and social settings. We must help learners to practise their skills, and be supported within and outside the classroom.

Many Third Sector organisations offer drop-in sessions for ESOL learners that give them the opportunity to meet other learners and practise their English skills. Organisations such as the FAN Charity (Friends and Neighbours) run groups for ESOL learners to meet in a safe and social setting, which enables learners to practise their language skills and broaden their social circle by enabling them to meet other people in their locality.

Third Sector organisations also provide more formal, unaccredited, ESOL classes, which can help to support the more mainstream provision funded by the Welsh Government.

We are encouraging providers across the sector to work together to support learners effectively. The following case study highlights one such partnership approach.

Case Study 10 – University of South Wales and Welsh Refugee Council

The University of South Wales (USW) work with the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) to deliver an innovative solution for people in Cardiff who wished to learn English, but were on waiting lists for formal ESOL instruction. The partnership brought together qualified volunteer ESOL teachers and undergraduate English language teacher trainees to deliver a weekly class of drop-in ESOL instruction.

The venture began with one class per week. Fifteen people turned up for the initial ESOL lesson. Over the past three years, the scope and quantity of provision has increased substantially, thanks to funding from the Waterloo Foundation and the Community Foundation in Wales. There are now five English language classes with over 70 learners attending lessons each week. Evidence collected from various participants emphasises that the classes provide not just a linguistic, but also a social lifeline.

WRC is now taking a role in delivering ESOL classes as part of the ACI outlined in Case Study 8. Moreover, due to the collaboration, USW and WRC were successful in securing funding from the European Social Fund to implement a large scale research study to investigate the barriers to education, employment and language instruction experienced by forced migrants in the convergence areas of Wales. The research is due for completion in Autumn 2018.

In sum, the partnership has brought to light the terrific opportunities that emerge when universities work closely with charitable organisations. Bringing the two institutions together has enriched and deepened the educational experience of the student teachers. For the language learners, it has facilitated the development of tailored language classes as well as a broad range of initiatives such as courses on access to university, intensive summer schools and various bespoke employment-centred workshops.

Refugee Resettlement Schemes

A major change that has had a significant impact on the demand for ESOL since the last policy was published is the development of the UK Government's refugee resettlement schemes – the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS).

The UK Government states that English language skills are vital to help resettled people communicate within their new communities. ESOL classes are an integral part of the VPRS/VCRS and the UK Government has pledged an additional £10m ESOL funding to enhance the English language skills of adults to improve their resettlement and integration experience and employability.

Local Authorities across Wales have volunteered to support the new resettlement schemes and as such, people are being settled in communities across Wales, some of which are predominantly Welsh-speaking. Local Authorities who have settled refugees have a responsibility, as part of the VPRS/VCRS, to ensure that people have access to provision to improve their language skills. The focus is on the provision of English lessons, but where appropriate, local authorities can use their Home Office funding for the provision of Welsh language courses as well. Learning Welsh can further strengthen integration and community cohesion.

Local Authorities and Community Support groups across Wales have been looking at different and innovative ways of delivering their ESOL provision; ensuring that support offered to people under the resettlement schemes benefits the wider community and encourages community cohesion and integration.

The following case study shows how one local authority and community group are working together to support refugees to settle in the community.

Case Study 11 – Pembrokeshire County Council and Croeso Abergwaun

Pembrokeshire County Council and the Community Sponsorship group Croeso Abergwaun are working together to maximise their resources and the opportunities for resettled Syrians in their area.

The Croeso Abergwaun group in Fishguard was the first Community Sponsorship in Wales to sponsor the resettlement of a Syrian family as part of the VPRS. Since the family arrived in 2017, the community has been working to provide the support the family needs to settle effectively.

Providing the necessary ESOL classes proved a challenge though as the family was not able to access the existing classes in Milford Haven. To address this, Croeso Abergwaun developed their own ESOL classes with the help of qualified ESOL and TEFL tutors within the community who volunteer their time to support the provision.

The classes take place at the Learning Pembrokeshire Community Centre, and the family is provided with 6 hours of ESOL a week by Croeso Abergwaun. This is supplemented by a further 2 hours a week provided within a community class by Learning Pembrokeshire (the county council provision) itself. This class is also attended by other ESOL learners within the area.

The benefit to this approach has been not only that ESOL is being provided in an area that it previously hadn't been, but also that learners in the wider community are benefitting from the investment which, in turn, helps the resettled family to build links and social integration.

Requirements for Settlement in the UK

Issues relating to Immigration and Citizenship are not devolved and as such they are the responsibility of the UK Home Office. The Home Office can make changes to the Immigration policies for the United Kingdom at any time; and determine what access to provision individuals who come to the UK are entitled to.

The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act implemented a policy of dispersal across the UK. There are currently four cluster areas in Wales: Cardiff, Newport, Wrexham and Swansea. Demand for ESOL is, as expected, greatest in these areas. However, the introduction of refugee resettlement schemes now means that demand for ESOL is increasing in all parts of Wales.

Since 2015, individuals applying for settlement or citizenship are required to pass the Life in the UK Test and prove their knowledge of the English language. Applicants must prove their English language skills either by having a degree taught or researched in English; or by

passing a test at an approved Secured English Language Testing Centres (SELTs). A link to the list of SELTs can be found on our website.

However, refugees applying for settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain or ILR) are not required to prove their English language skills.

The provision of ESOL is a devolved responsibility and the Welsh Government determines the eligibility criteria for its funding. However, we are bound by the policies of the Home Office and are therefore flexible and adaptable to any changes or restrictions that are introduced.

The Welsh Language

Being a bilingual society provides a richness that can make learning English all the more interesting, and our funded providers are encouraged to integrate the Welsh language into their ESOL classes where possible.

Recognising and understanding that there are two languages in use in Wales is very important. In addition to supporting social integration, the Welsh language can also be a valuable skill in the workplace. Providers help learners to understand by integrating the Welsh language into their lessons.

This is proving especially important where families are being settled, through refugee resettlement schemes, into predominantly Welsh speaking communities. Providers and local authorities ensure that settled people have access to the language provision needed for them to integrate effectively. Local authorities can use their allocated ESOL funding from the Home Office to support settled people to learn Welsh, as well as English.

The following case study highlights how one ESOL learner recognised the importance of learning the Welsh language within his community:

Case Study 12 – Jakarin Raza

Jakarin Raza moved from Bangladesh to Caernarfon when he was 17. None of his family was able to speak English, so they applied to do a community English class at Coleg Menai, Caernarfon, in all 6 members of his family joined.

Jakarin wanted to work in IT or run his own business. In order to do this, he knew that he needed to speak English fluently and applied to do a full time English course at Coleg Menai, Bangor. When he started on this journey Jakarin couldn't speak English at all. The tutors helped Jakarin to realise that he lived in a bilingual community and living in Caernarfon he felt that he should learn to speak Welsh to feel a part of the community. He has recently started his own business in Bangor and being able to speak English and Welsh has certainly helped.

All of his family have benefitted from the college's English classes. His sister followed in his footsteps and is now in her final year of a hair and beauty course at the college and like Jakarin she has also learnt to speak English and Welsh. Who knows, she may also end up running her own business.

More generally, ESOL learners are encouraged to learn Welsh through the Welsh for Adults provision funded by the Welsh Government.

The National Centre for Learning Welsh is aware of the necessity to address the needs of ethnic minorities, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to access suitable provision to learn Welsh, and are looking at different options to help make the language accessible to as many people as possible.

The following case studies highlight some of the activities they are undertaking to support learners to access Welsh Language courses.

Case Study 13 – Welsh for Adults whose first Language is not English

The National Centre for Learning Welsh has used an Innovation grant to fund two projects between January and July 2018:

Learning Welsh in Cardiff

Cardiff University is working with the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) to offer intensive Entry level Welsh for Adults courses (4-6 hours per week or a block over a week or fortnight). Matt Spry has been appointed to work on the project. Matt is a trained Social Worker but has been working for the WRC for some time, and has volunteered to deliver informal Welsh classes in the African Café in Adamsdown. Because many in the refugee and asylum seeker community already trust Matt, it is hoped that they will be more receptive to opportunities to learn Welsh.

Learning Welsh in Gwent

Coleg Gwent is running a small project in Newport to better understand the feelings and opinions of people from multicultural backgrounds about learning Welsh and what the barriers to their learning might be. They are planning to offer language awareness raising courses and Welsh taster sessions (1 day spent sharing information, followed by 6 taster sessions of the language and language awareness) within venues that are already popular with members of these communities. With support from Newport County Council, they intend to produce a report on their findings which will help to promote effective working practice within minority ethnic communities.

Taking ESOL delivery forward

As the case studies in this policy statement have shown, there isn't 'one way' in which we are providing ESOL; and there is no such thing as a 'typical ESOL learner'. Our network of ESOL providers in Wales is working creatively and innovatively to support learners across the sector to access the provision that is most effective to them.

The circumstances which bring people to our country keep changing and demands on our ESOL services will continue to grow. Cohesive communities and a more equal Wales are fundamental to our principles and to the wellbeing of our future generations.

Delivering good quality ESOL remains a priority for the Welsh Government and supporting migrants to gain the language skills they need in order to make the best use of their existing skills is important to the wider Welsh economy. We want to make the most of the wealth

of talent that migrants bring to our country and supporting their language development is a critical part of that.

We will continue to work closely with our partners across ESOL provision, in the public, private and Third sectors, to ensure we remain innovative and creative in our approach to ESOL delivery.

The following are some of the actions we will be taking forward to ensure our ESOL remains effective and accessible.

The Welsh Government will:

- Continue to fund ESOL as an Essential Skill in line with our policy for funding Essential Skills;
- Continue to pursue alternative and additional funding sources, including available UK and EU funding streams, to support the ongoing deliver of ESOL;
- Expand successful pilot schemes (such as REACH and ACI) to other parts of Wales;
- Work with partners to develop a network of ESOL practitioners in Wales, to share and promote good practise, resources, and information;
- Work with partners and the Home Office to ensure a coordinated approach to all ESOL provision (within mainstream and refugee resettlement schemes); and to ensure sustainable progression routes continue to be available for all learners to support them to continue their learning – both within ESOL and more broadly; to improve their employment prospects;
- Consider the potential impacts of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, and the impact this might have on existing and future ESOL learners and demand and delivery in Wales;
- Work with partners to ensure all ESOL learners have adequate access to provision at the level appropriate to their needs; regardless of their entry route into Wales;
- Work with ESOL providers and the National Centre for Learning Welsh to strengthen the promotion of the Welsh language in ESOL courses and improve access routes for ESOL learners to develop their Welsh language skills and contribute to the Government’s ambition to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050;
- Consider different ways of capturing data on ESOL learners to reflect the complexity of the provision and the softer outcomes that can reflect progression;
- Continue to publish data on completion, attainment and success;
- Continue to promote and fund appropriate qualifications and units of credit;
- Learn from the outcome of the REACH pilot and work with public, private and third sectors to support a more coordinated approach to ESOL provision – through a wider roll-out of the REACH model or the development of ESOL Hubs;
- Work with providers across the sector to explore opportunities to fund crèches or collaborate with existing pre-school provision to remove this barrier to learners accessing provision.

We will expect our funded providers to:

- Ensure that both current and aspiring ESOL teachers have ESOL specialist qualifications and training – with the aim of making a Level 5 equivalent qualification the minimum standard within the sector;
- Effectively assess learners to ensure that they understand the level at which they currently are, the level they are progressing towards, and the level of any accreditation or certification awarded;
- Offer professional training opportunities and support on the additional learning needs of ESOL students;
- Ensure that assessors are adequately ESOL qualified;
- Increase and improve the role of ESOL trained classroom assistants;
- Encourage trained volunteers, to support the development of learners within the classroom, and in more informal settings;
- Improve the opportunities for learners to enrol at appropriate times by introducing more flexible enrolment procedures;
- Offer provision in a variety of locations, including in community and neighbourhood settings; and work with employers to provide in-work ESOL where possible;
- Ensure that class sizes are appropriate and relevant to the needs of the learners;
- Ensure that learners understand the level at which they have been initially assessed, the level they are advancing towards, and the accreditation they need to progress further;
- Offer provision to meet the variety of needs of learners, taking into account: appropriate levels, location, timetables and the educational backgrounds of learners;
- Encourage learners to support their development through access to on-line resources – including on-line courses and teaching aids;
- Work with partners to support learners to develop social groups for social interaction and skills practise.

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