



Project report

Improving outcomes for
multilingual migrants and refugees

Responding to the voices
of adult ESOL learners

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1 Executive Summary

This report details strategies and actions to improve language learning and societal outcomes for multilingual migrants and refugees, as identified in a stakeholder workshop held in Bristol in June 2023.

The workshop was held in response to the findings of research¹ on the experiences and priorities of adult learners of ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). The research raised several important implications for ESOL and integration policy and practice, and a University of Bristol policy briefing was subsequently developed which included draft recommendations.

The aims of the workshop were to share the research findings with local migrant and refugee stakeholder groups, who were invited to draw on their expertise to coproduce recommendations and actions and comment on the recommendations on the draft policy briefing. On the whole, the co-produced recommendations mapped to those on the draft policy briefing, elaborating on them and providing examples of ways to implement them. The workshop outcomes informed the final version of the recommendations in the finalised policy briefing.

Key recommendations

The key recommendations and actions identified in the workshop were as follows:

ESOL funding and provision

ESOL providers, employers and HE institutions should collaborate to support career advancement and progression to higher level qualifications. These organisations should work together to ensure better co-ordination of provision and services, provide targeted careers information and guidance, and strengthen progression pathways. It is important that refugees and migrants are able to transfer existing qualifications and professional skills and

be facilitated to acquire new ones to support them to fulfil their potential.

ESOL curricula should accommodate the diverse identities, aspirations and skills of learners to enhance learning and maintain motivation. The one-size fits all approach of mainstream ESOL should be remodelled in order to draw on learners' existing skills and cater for their diverse circumstances and requirements. Funding should be provided to support a more coordinated and locally centralised approach to ESOL provision, information and resources.

ESOL teacher training should include trauma informed practice and raise awareness of how marginalisation of migrants can impact on learning. Teachers should be trained in, and supported to use, participatory and multilingual teaching approaches. Training should be widely offered to both paid and unpaid ESOL teachers and curricula should be designed with the application of such teaching approaches in mind.

ESOL funding should be remodelled to ensure provision is accessible to all and supports the differing and wider needs of the learners. Provision should be flexible and accommodate individual circumstances and requirements.

Integration policies and strategies

Integration policies and strategies should:

Recognise integration as the 'work' of all members of society, not just specific groups. Integration approaches should engage with and encompass people from all sections of society and facilitate intercommunity connections and networks.

1 Court, J. (2021) "Here is a long way". Language learning, integration, and identity: A mixed methods exploration of ESOL learners' trajectories'. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Bristol.

Challenge negative stereotypes and tackle discrimination towards migrants, refugees and non-expert speakers of English. Anti-migration political rhetoric is counterproductive to the promotion of integration. There is a need to raise awareness of migrants' and refugees' cultures, languages and experiences, and the realities they face in the UK, in order to challenge harmful narratives.

Acknowledge the contributions migrants and refugees make to society, build on their existing skills, and involve those with lived experience of migration in solutions. Local and national integration and employment initiatives should engage migrants and refugees in lived experience leadership roles; this should include peer support and mentorship. More support is needed to help migrants access appropriate, good quality employment which utilises their existing skills and qualifications.

Increase the amount of training and employment programmes which support migrants and refugees to achieve their potential. There is a need for local and national level strategies to engage and incentivise employers to train migrants and refugees to enable them to access sustainable employment which facilitates their career aspirations and social mobility.

Fund and support services which promote feelings of well-being and safety of migrants and refugees. All professionals who work with refugees and asylum seekers should be properly trained in trauma informed practice.

Review the rights of people seeking asylum and allow them equal access to ESOL and employment. This would enable them to be more self-sufficient and contribute to society and would also improve the integration outcomes of those who are later given refugee status.



2 The research: Understanding ESOL learner's language learning and integration trajectories

This section describes the research which formed the basis of the stakeholder workshop, and details the key findings on the factors which shape ESOL learners' language learning and integration experiences.

2.1 The research

Many migrants and refugees in the UK face disadvantage and discrimination, and there is growing anti-migrant sentiment in some sections of the population.

Policy and public discussions surrounding migrant integration tend to focus on the individual responsibilities of migrants and refugees to improve their English skills, and to adapt their social and cultural practices. Yet migrant and refugee non-expert speakers of English can encounter multiple barriers to learning the English language and achieving their potential in Britain.

The research project was conducted by Jill Court at the University of Bristol and investigated adult ESOL learners' perspectives on their experiences and priorities regarding both language learning and integration. In-depth accounts of 14 ESOL learners' language learning and integration trajectories were captured through repeat interviews (32 interviews in total). A questionnaire was conducted with 409 learners across England and Wales.

The samples broadly represent the rich diversity of multilingual migrants and refugees in Britain.



2.2 Key findings

The research identified a 'Catch-22': English proficiency can improve integration outcomes for multilingual migrants and refugees, but positive integration experiences are also needed to facilitate progress in English learning.

Language learning is a process which takes place in a social context and is not limited to the classroom.

'When I attend ESOL I can meet new people, I don't feel lonely or nothing to do.'

Asylum seeking participant

The diverse experience, skills and multilingual expertise which migrants and refugees bring with them are often not recognised or valued.

There are many barriers to accessing and progressing in ESOL classes. Learning English can take years and maintaining motivation can be difficult. Supporting learners to hope that they can achieve a better future helps them to stay invested in their language learning.

There is growing evidence that participatory and multilingual teaching approaches can facilitate inclusive learning and address the multiple needs of ESOL learners.

There are many factors besides English proficiency which shape ESOL learners' integration outcomes.

'People don't like hearing you speaking different languages.'

Participant

Hostile attitudes towards migrants, refugees and 'non-native' English speakers can negatively impact ESOL learners' integration and language learning outcomes. ESOL learners' confidence to speak in English can be influenced by the responses of people they interact with.

Feelings of safety, wellbeing and hope of achieving positive futures are of particular importance for better English language and integration outcomes.

ESOL learners with insecure immigration status, especially those seeking asylum, face particular barriers to learning English and leading secure and fulfilling lives in Britain.

'People always like to belong somewhere, to feel that they are someone.'

Participant

30% of ESOL learner participants reported experiencing harassment in the previous 12 months. Participants with lower English proficiency were more likely to experience harassment and less likely to report positive interactions with British born people.

3 Stakeholder workshop

A half day workshop was held with local stakeholders who represent and support the interests of multilingual refugees and migrants.

The aims of the workshop were to:

- share key findings from the ESOL learner research with participants
- coproduce recommendations and actions to improve outcomes for multilingual migrants and refugees
- refine the recommendations in the draft University of Bristol policy briefing.

The workshop was facilitated by Jill Court from the University of Bristol, and Charly Ramuz from Adult and Community Learning, Bristol City Council. There were 23 attendees, including

in Britain. The findings of the ESOL learner research were shared, including case stories of 4 ESOL learners' trajectories (see Appendix), and the workshop participants discussed the extent to which themes from the research and the guest talks chimed with their personal and professional experiences. They recorded their reflections and ideas on flipchart paper. Based on these discussions, participants developed recommendations to improve outcomes for multilingual migrants and refugees, and reflected on the draft policy briefing recommendations.

All the recommendations were represented on wall mounted matrices and participants considered the actions needed at organisational, local and national levels to implement these. They considered what is being done already, or what actions are needed to implement recommendations or improve existing practice. They also reflected on how these actions could be done and by whom. Throughout the workshop, participants were encouraged to describe existing projects and strategies conducted by their own or other organisations which are already addressing these issues, highlighting existing good practice which could be developed and/ or replicated.

The talks and plenary discussions were audio recorded, and the content of these recordings, the flipcharts and matrices were collated to create the workshop outcomes, presented below, which consist of recommendations, existing good practice and actions needed. These were mostly consistent with the draft policy briefing recommendations, providing elaboration and examples of ways to implement them. Amendments made to the final policy briefing recommendations concerned: creating centralised ESOL resource banks, facilitating intercommunity connections, increasing the number of employment programmes for migrants and refugees, and involving those with lived experience of migration in solutions.



staff from the following organisations: Bristol Refugee Rights, Refugee Women of Bristol, Bristol Somali Resource Centre, Caafi Health, Bridges for Communities, Borderlands, Aid Box Community, Ashley Community Housing, City of Bristol College, Bath Welcomes Refugees, Good Faith Partnership, Adult and Community Learning Bristol City Council, the DWP and the WEA.

Short talks were delivered by guest speakers from Refugee Women of Bristol, the Somali Resource Centre, and Ashley Community Housing, on the challenges their members face in learning English and making lives for themselves

4 Recommendations, existing practice, and actions to improve outcomes for multilingual migrants and refugees

4.1 ESOL funding and provision

4.1.1 ESOL providers, employers and HE institutions should collaborate to support career advancement and progression to higher level qualifications.

There was much discussion about the importance of good quality information, advice and guidance, following agreement that the skills and experience which multilingual migrants bring with them often go unrecognised, leading, in some cases, to highly qualified people working in jobs well below their skill level. Targeted, specialist information, advice and guidance should be provided at all levels: organisational, local and national, to facilitate and accelerate learners' progression into meaningful employment or higher-level studies. This should include:

- bespoke advice and guidance for individuals at various points on their progression route
- current and locally relevant careers information which is easily accessible so learners and careers advisors can map pathways
- nationally, there is a need for better access routes and support for learners to transfer their existing qualifications and professional skills in order to work in the UK.

It is necessary to raise awareness of these pathways amongst migrants, employers and employment advisors.

Getting learners into meaningful employment could be supported through the provision of local, intensive 'ESOL + skills' courses. These should be organised in conjunction with employers, mapped to local vacancies and skills shortages and could lead to a guaranteed interview.

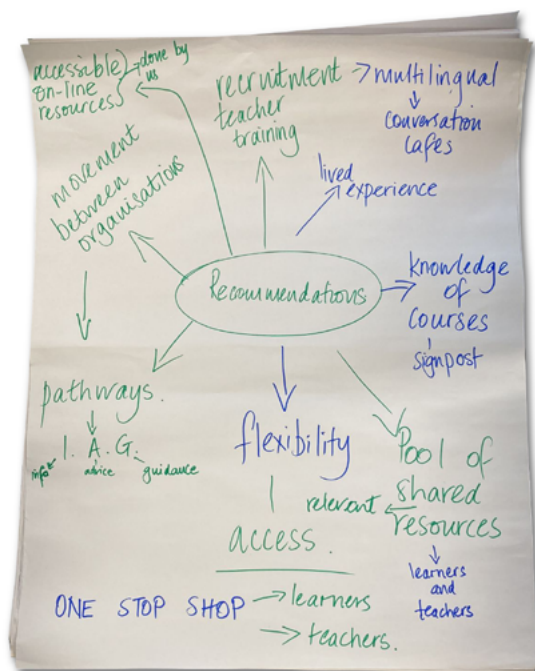
Employers should be encouraged to invest in ESOL for their employees, offering 'in-house' ESOL classes and allowing staff time to attend such provision.

ESOL providers and higher education institutions should strengthen their partnership working in order to firmly establish progression pathways into university.

4.1.2 ESOL curricula should accommodate the diverse identities, aspirations and skills of learners to enhance learning and maintain motivation. Funding should be provided for local-level centralised ESOL resource banks.

It was recommended that course providers should maintain a relationship with former learners who could share their 'success stories' with current learners. Events should be organised which bring together newer and more established ESOL learners, to provide a supportive network to encourage and motivate learners.

It was observed that for some learners, confidence and communication skills are more important than grammatical accuracy, whilst others may need academic English and 'fast tracking' to further qualifications. Consequently, it was recommended that the current, mainstream 'one size fits all' approach to ESOL provision should be remodelled in order to cater for ESOL learners' diverse circumstances and requirements.



Learners should be given a greater voice and role in shaping ESOL provision and curricula.

There was much support for the idea that funding should be provided for up-to-date ESOL teaching and learning resource banks, centralised at local levels. Recommendations included:

- providing centralised resources which are user-friendly, functional and relevant. These should include: teaching resources, self-access resources for learners, and resources to support wider service providers who engage with ESOL learners. Such resource banks should be widely publicised so stakeholders know where and how to access them, and they should be easy to use
- a wide range of resources should be available, including information on health and welfare, resources for families, and resources to support parental involvement in school activities. These should be co-produced with organisations with relevant expertise
- resources would need to be monitored for quality.

Additionally, it was felt that providing centralised, wide-ranging student-focused information and support would be beneficial to learners. This should include information about:

- support with essential skills e.g. Maths and digital skills
- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)
- sources of wellbeing support, including counselling
- public transport
- routes into vocational studies
- childcare provision.

On the wider subject of a 'centralised ESOL system', there was agreement that such a system would enable student tracking, progression and impact to be recorded, creating a valuable dataset to inform future planning and co-ordination of provision for ESOL learners.

It was highlighted that a locally-produced website (Learning English in Bristol and Beyond – www.leb.community) exists, as a source of information on local ESOL provision. It was

suggested that dedicated staffing would help overcome the challenge of keeping local providers' course information up to date on the website.

Additional support for groups of ESOL learners with specific needs, including learners with disabilities, learners with specific learning differences, e.g., dyslexia, and those who are new to literacy in any language was noted as a very underdeveloped area, nationally. It was felt that such groups of learners were not able to access learning opportunities on a par with their peers. There is a need to establish a nationally recognised ESOL-specific assessment tool to identify and diagnose additional learning needs. Funding should be provided to enable learners who require exam adjustments (e.g., for specific learning differences and disabilities) to obtain the documentation required by exam boards.

Ashley Community Housing

Ashley Community Housing provide training for migrants and refugees to help people integrate fully into the community. They provide English language training with the aim of moving people more quickly into employment or other meaningful activities, facilitating independence and opportunities to practice English skills.

4.1.3 ESOL teacher training should include trauma informed practice and raise awareness of how marginalisation of migrants can impact on learning. Teachers should be trained in, and supported to use, participatory and multilingual teaching approaches.

There was agreement that trauma-informed and participatory teaching approaches should be included in both initial teacher training and continuous professional development activities. A lack of available training opportunities, as well as a perceived incompatibility with a largely outcome-driven curriculum, result in few ESOL providers or teachers using such approaches.

It was strongly recommended that any training offered to paid teachers, especially related to trauma-informed and participatory pedagogy, should also be available to volunteer teachers,

who often have little access to training opportunities. This could be supported by a bank of teaching resources to provide information and guidance on using these approaches, as well as sharing good practice across the local network of ESOL providers.

It was noted that having an “English only” rule in class could reinforce feelings of marginalisation for ESOL learners, as it mirrors the negative rhetoric often reported in the media around using a language other than English in public.

It was recommended that ESOL providers should support teachers to use multilingual teaching approaches, which recognise and utilise ESOL learners’ full linguistic repertoires. There is growing evidence that these approaches facilitate language learning and can produce more inclusive classroom environments.

4.1.4 ESOL funding should be remodelled to ensure provision is accessible to all and supports the differing and wider needs of the learners.

There was wide agreement that the way ESOL is currently funded should be modified to ensure the needs of all learners are met, especially where eligibility restrictions for some learners create unequal access to ESOL provision.

Recommendations at both a local and national level include:

- removing eligibility restrictions to make ESOL free to all learners
- a funded, national ESOL strategy
- funding should have a greater degree of flexibility to allow providers to offer courses tailored to the differing needs of learners, including online and asynchronous learning (a course of study which can be accessed at any time)
- funding for childcare, transport and access to digital equipment and connectivity should be increased to remove these common barriers to accessing ESOL provision.

At a local level, it was recommended that providers worked with WECA (West of England Combined Authority) to develop a regional approach to ESOL, ensuring that ESOL is included in the West of England Skills Plan. It was suggested that providers could ‘pool funding’ or

contribute towards solutions, such as the Learn English in Bristol and Beyond website and a single Initial Assessment process.

There was consensus that there tends to be a focus on funding-driven, achievement-dependent outcomes for ESOL learners, which can lead to a depersonalised, exam-focused curriculum offer. Instead, provision should be funded in a more flexible way which promotes the recognition of learners’ existing skills and professional qualifications and enables a more personalised model of learning.

The Bristol Somali Resource Centre

The Bristol Somali Resource Centre have worked in partnership with the University of the West of England to run local conversation classes for women. These are designed to be accessible to women who cannot access formal ESOL classes due to work and childcare commitments.

4.2 Integration policies and strategies should:

4.2.1 Recognise integration as the ‘work’ of all members of society, not just specific groups, and facilitate inter-community connections across all sections of society.

It was recommended that equality, diversity and inclusivity training in workplace and educational settings should be broadened to include intercultural awareness including issues faced by people coming to the UK.

Facilitating intercommunity networking and gathering was commonly felt to be important to promote opportunities for people across all sections of society to connect and develop their intercultural awareness. There was a range of suggested organisational and local-level actions:

- support ESOL learners to organise and lead on celebration events to connect with wider sections of the community
- increase provision of coffee mornings, conversation clubs and other events aimed at encouraging social interaction between

all sections of the community. These would benefit from having a support worker attached to clients, where appropriate

- intercommunity networking events would be facilitated by free or low-cost access to rooms for community groups, perhaps in schools or colleges
- organisation of more local festivals of the type that create space and opportunity for new social connections to be forged.

Bridges for Communities

Bridges for Communities have held monthly Bridges Cafés for volunteers and families on refugee resettlement schemes and are considering restarting these. They have organised Sharing Festivals and were recently involved in the Community Iftar on College Green in Bristol. They run a Task Volunteering scheme which offers support for refugee families for specific tasks towards independence. For example, support may relate to learning English for job searching. They also run conversation groups in bridging hotels (temporary accommodation) for families on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme.

4.2.2 Challenge negative stereotypes and tackle discrimination towards migrants, refugees and non-expert speakers of English. Anti-migration political rhetoric is counterproductive to the promotion of integration.

It was felt that there is a need to change the national narrative and to raise awareness of the realities of why people migrate and the negative impact of being in limbo in the asylum system once in the UK. For example, TV advertising could be used to challenge the tone of narrative in the media and advocate for a more humane tone. Accountability and other mechanisms should be put in place to discourage politicians from manipulating xenophobia and hate speech.

4.2.3 Acknowledge the contributions migrants and refugees make to society, build on their existing skills and involve those with lived experience of migration in solutions.

There was much discussion on the benefits of organisations engaging people from refugee, asylum seeking and migration backgrounds in peer support or lived experience leadership roles to mentor and support others. They could provide lived experience examples of achieving success in different vocations, helping others to understand and navigate the pathways to achieve their goals. These lived experience leadership roles could include raising employers' awareness of the benefits of recruiting migrants and refugees and promoting success stories to employers.

It was pointed out that as there is a staff shortage in some sectors, and there is a need for better mapping of migrants' skills to employers' needs. Local companies could also mentor those who already have skills in relevant areas, e.g., catering, and information and digital technology.

Organisations and local authorities should provide creches at a variety of community settings to help people from migration and refugee backgrounds access work.

Ashley Community Housing

Ashley Community Housing engage 'community champions' to support other refugees and migrants. They have found that their clients benefit from the support of people with similar experiences to advise and help with cultural orientation to the UK.

Bristol Refugee Rights

Bristol Refugee Rights encourage and support people with lived experience to be involved at all levels in the organisation and emphasise the importance of services being designed and delivered together with people with lived experience.

4.2.4 Increase the amount of training and employment programmes which support migrants and refugees to achieve their potential.

There was a stated need for local and national level strategies to engage and incentivise employers to recruit or offer training and apprenticeships to migrants and refugees to facilitate progression to a level of employment which reflects their skills and qualifications.

Organisations at local and national levels should increase provision of vocational training which includes subject specific English language support.

Employers should be supported to share their experiences and good practices in recruiting and employing refugees and migrants, including the benefits and practicalities of doing so.

It was suggested that employers and local authorities should run mentorship schemes to help people improve their study and independent learning skills when working towards qualifications.

The Bristol and Beyond ESOL Providers' Network

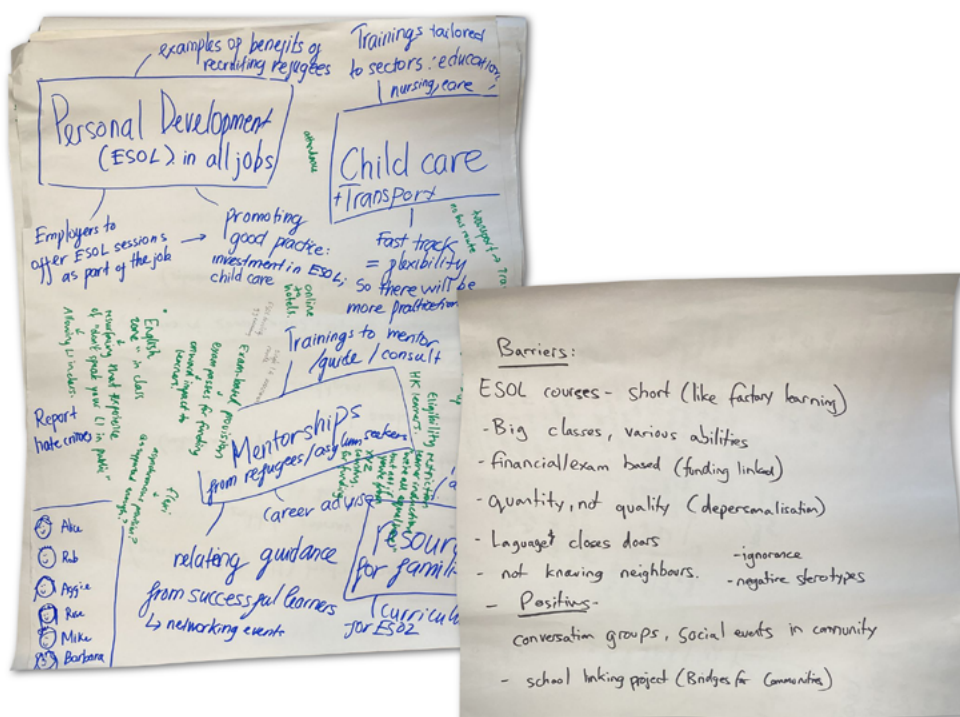
The Bristol and Beyond ESOL Providers' Network has set up an employer engagement sub-group to build connections with local employers and encourage recruitment from within the multilingual migrant population.

Caafi Health

Caafi Health engage refugee health professionals to work on a voluntary basis, connecting them to the local hospital and supporting work experience. These health professionals provide multilingual support for other refugees and asylum seekers, including assistance with e-consultations and registering with GPs.

Refugee Women of Bristol

Refugee Women of Bristol have staff and volunteers from refugee backgrounds, many of whom were once members. They work with partner organisations in Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership (BRASP), Learning Communities, and the University of Bristol to empower members and support them to progress and move on in life.



4.2.5 Fund and support services which promote feelings of well-being and safety of migrants and refugees.

It was felt that local and national strategies should recognise that trauma involves complex emotions. It was recommended that measures should be taken to reduce the distress and stress experienced by refugees especially in the early stages of arrival in the UK. The immigration system needs to take into account that the process of applying for refugee status is often a distressing and anxiety-inducing experience. All professionals who work with refugees and asylum seekers should be properly trained in trauma informed practice.

Caafi Health

Caafi Health run health promotion days for asylum seekers living in hotels. They require more funding to run further events. Caafi Health run health clinics in inner-city Bristol, to support people from migration backgrounds and help them access healthcare.

Bridges for Communities

Bridges for Communities run a befriending programme for isolated refugees and asylum seekers and they support families on the refugee resettlement scheme to become independent. They organise Walk With Me; a monthly men's walk and talk for men in asylum seeker hotels with local volunteers.

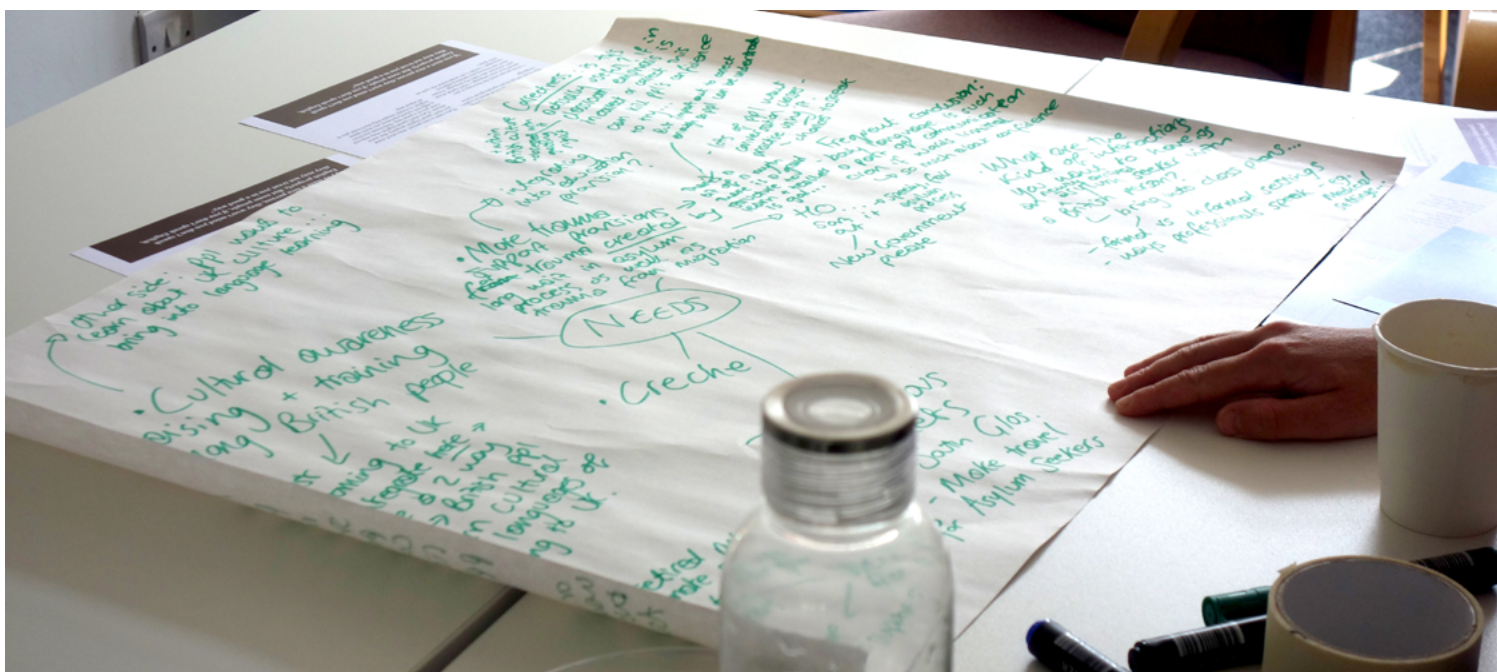
4.2.6 Review the rights of people seeking asylum and allow them equal access to ESOL and employment.

It was noted that allowing asylum seekers to learn English from the point of arrival, as well as access employment, would enable them to be more self-sufficient and contribute to society. It would also improve the integration outcomes of those who are later given refugee status.

It was suggested that, at the very least, people seeking asylum who are permitted to work should be allowed to work in roles beyond the shortage occupation list.

There was strong agreement that the skills of people seeking asylum are not being utilised sufficiently and that they should be facilitated to access volunteer work or other activities which would allow them to contribute to their communities and promote their well-being.

For example, it was suggested that people seeking asylum should be given free bus travel, and that a local authority scheme should be set up to enable retired people to donate unused free bus passes to asylum seekers.



5 Conclusion

Recommendations and actions to improve outcomes for migrants and refugees centred on a few core themes.

Migrants' and refugees' existing skills, qualifications and contributions must be recognised and utilised to help them settle and thrive in Britain. People with lived experience of migration should be involved in integration strategies and approaches.

ESOL provision and curricula should address learners' diverse aspirations and requirements and cater to their wider needs. ESOL teachers and volunteers should have better access to training and professional development which includes teaching methodologies grounded in current evidence-based research.


There was a general consensus that ESOL resources and provision are fragmented and need to be centralised and better coordinated and funded. Good quality advice and guidance, and supported pathways through ESOL, education and employment are also important to facilitate migrants to achieve their potential. Employers need to be supported to train and recruit migrants and refugees.

To facilitate social cohesion, it is necessary to tackle negative stereotypes and hostility and facilitate community connections across all sections of society. Integration and immigration policies should recognise the importance of supporting the wellbeing and safety of migrants and refugees.



6 Appendix: Case stories of ESOL learners' trajectories

On the next pages you can read the case stories that we prepared for our workshop.



Daryan's story: the importance of hope

Daryan is 42 and experienced limited formal education prior to coming to the UK. He said that he had limited English skills on arrival and felt quite miserable and that sometimes people took advantage of him.

Daryan started beginner ESOL classes, but after two years he left due to work and family issues, and had little opportunity to improve his English skills until he returned to ESOL three years later. He felt that his progress was impeded by his lack of formal education.

His feelings of demotivation were compounded when he talked to a teacher about going to university and felt that they discouraged him. He acknowledged that the teacher was probably just trying to be realistic but pointed out how demotivating this can be.

Daryan felt that encouraging ESOL learners to hope that they could achieve their goals helps them stay engaged with their learning.

'That is why I think don't talk the students "something is impossible for you or is difficult for you" because when I came to this college, I [was] like a child because I haven't any information about education or about the language, but I had hope which is not cost for anybody.'

"When I came to this college, I [was] like a child because I haven't any information about education or about the language, but I had hope, which is not cost for anybody."

'Maybe university is an impossibility for me at the moment. But when they told me, that "[university] is not for you" [it] quite make you disappointed.'

Demoralised by his slow progress, he considered leaving college. However, some time later in another ESOL class they watched a video about a person who had come to Britain with no English. This person attended ESOL classes and made good progress, finishing Level 2¹, obtaining other qualifications and securing a good job.

'When I sitting there, when I was very disappointed to learn, I told myself I have to do same like that. I am one of the person who is not speak English, and I have to continue and finish it. I think he same as me, why he can do it and I not learn? That video changed my mind and changed my life to continue.'

Consequently, Daryan persevered with ESOL and after a further nine years he progressed

to Level 2. He has completed community interpreting qualifications, interprets for others in the community, and was planning to become qualified for paid interpreting work. He is proud of the progress that he has made and that he can now help his children with their education.

'Now I'm Level 2 and I think I'm one of the person who nearly finish ESOL course. I speak to you at the moment, my language is not fluent, but I proper understand what people say.'

ESOL classes have improved Daryan's confidence, career prospects and ability to support his children. However, his story shows the barriers that learners may face, including lack of formal literacy skills, and a range of competing commitments.

Daryan highlights the importance of hope of achieving a positive future in maintaining engagement with ESOL over a long period of time.

¹ the highest ESOL level

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Funding for this publication was awarded by PolicyBristol from the Research England QR Policy Support Fund (QR PSF) 2022-24.



Ali's story: the impact of disadvantage

Ali is 28 and arrived in Britain 10 years ago seeking asylum. He has been moved between several cities since arriving in Britain, which has affected his ability to attend and maintain progress in ESOL classes.

10 years later, his asylum claim has not been resolved, and he feels that his life has been put on hold.

'When you don't have status it's like you always, like you [are] a second person. I'm living here without anything. It's difficult when you don't have a paper to live in this country. [...] They stop you to work, and they not allow many things. You don't know about your future, you have no hope of your future.'

He has made some good friends, but he feels he cannot fully participate in their activities, as he has a limited income and faces restrictions on his travel. Also, he is reluctant to tell his friends about his situation.

'It's not nice always you say "I can't go" and tell them your situation. When they talking about [work], you can't say "I'm not working". They don't know why you're not working, they think just you are lazy.'

"When you don't have status it's like you always, like you [are] a second person. I'm living here without anything. It's difficult when you don't have a paper to live in this country."

'You can't tell everyone your situation, it's not nice all the time you talk about your situation and your problems.'

Ali has no control over where he lives or who he lives with, and his current home is overcrowded. This impacts on his well-being as he is unable to feel secure even in his own home. In ESOL class he finds it difficult to concentrate because of the instability in his life, and the continuing conflict in his country of origin. Because of these difficulties Ali has begun to think of leaving the ESOL class altogether.

'I can't study, I have many problems outside the college. It's not easy, I never do homework at home because it's too much stress. I can't do anything. When I go to class, I can't learn anything. How you can concentrate, focus on your study if you have many problems outside ESOL?'

Ali's story demonstrates how experiencing disadvantage and precarious living conditions impact on the learning and wider experiences of ESOL learners, especially those with insecure immigration status. Feelings of well-being, safety and hope are crucial for learning English and making headway in Britain.

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Anna's story: public attitudes matter

Anna is in her late thirties and spent the first 10 years in Britain bringing up her three children with few opportunities to speak English.

When her youngest child started nursery, Anna joined an ESOL class. She felt quite unconfident about her English and found it difficult to find time to study whilst looking after children. Anna feels that when in public, she must refrain from speaking her home language.

'I know people don't like listening to you speaking in your language. I don't speak aloud with someone who talks my language. People don't like hearing you speaking different languages. I know, I can understand the look on their faces.'

Anna has made progress in ESOL but feels that some people respond negatively to the way she speaks English.

'If you meet a nice person, they won't mind you don't speak English properly. But some people, if you don't speak English, they may not treat you in a good way. They know you from a different country because you don't speak English. It means maybe they don't treat you in an equal way.'

"If you meet a nice person, they won't mind you don't speak English properly. But some people, if you don't speak English, they may not treat you in a good way."

She can feel anxious about speaking English, meaning that in some situations, even when she knows what to say, she becomes flustered and cannot express herself. This means she does not practise her English as much as she would like to.

On the other hand, when Anna is talking to someone who takes the time to listen and

communicate clearly, she can feel more confident to speak. For example, she has a neighbour who she finds easy to talk to because she is friendly and listens to what she has to say. Being in ESOL class, with others who experience the same challenges, has made her feel better about her skills, and more confident.

Anna's experiences highlight how ESOL learners' confidence to speak in English and participate in social life can be shaped by interactions with other people in society. Public attitudes towards multilingual migrants and refugees can impact on their experiences, including their language learning.

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Hanin's story: barriers to progress

Hanin attended university in her home country before coming to Britain, where she lives with her husband and son. She couldn't speak English when she first arrived, and spent a lot of time at home, feeling lonely and isolated.

Hanin had difficulties accessing ESOL classes at first, due to problems with her visa. Later, when she started ESOL at college, she soon had to leave when her son was born. She was frustrated about her language skills, and felt she had to rely too much on her husband.

When her son was older, she started ESOL again, and began to make good progress. She began to be able to successfully communicate in a wider range of situations, and this helped her feel more confident.

She progressed quite steadily through ESOL and began to feel good about herself and proud of her achievements. She completed an introductory childcare course, got a part-time job working in a creche, and progressed to Level 2 ESOL.

However, lately she has begun to feel less satisfied with her life. Her job provided an opportunity to speak English, but she now feels that it does not provide enough rich and varied practice. As she had to concentrate her attention on speaking to the children,

"And because my son, it's hard to provide childcare for him because it's so expensive... Sometimes... I feel like completely fed up for everything."

she felt she did not have enough opportunities to socialise with adults to extend her speaking skills. She was looking for another job that she could fit around caring for her son, but with no success. She was frustrated that although she had a degree from her country of origin, this was no help to her in Britain.

'Actually I lost my way, because I don't know how to start from, because I apply for lots of jobs, I didn't get [them], and I need to improve my English. And because my son, it's hard

to provide childcare for him because it's so expensive... Sometimes [...] I feel like completely fed up for everything.'

Hanin was looking at applying for a Level 2 course in childcare. She is proud of the good progress she has made in establishing a life for herself in Britain. However, now she appears to be feeling frustrated, and is struggling to maintain the confidence and motivation necessary to continue to work towards achieving her goals.

Hanin's story demonstrates the many barriers to accessing and progressing in ESOL, and the many challenges ESOL learners can face in maintaining motivation in their language learning and pursuing their goals in life. Although having a job can present opportunities to speak English, the nature of many jobs can limit further development of English skills.

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