

MAYOR OF LONDON

ESOL Plus Childcare

**Guidance for ESOL Adult Learning
Providers and Practitioners**



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Introduction

London is a city rich in diversity. One in three Londoners were born outside the UK, and more than 300 languages are spoken on our streets.

Although most migrants speak English fluently, data from the last Census showed over 210,000 working-age Londoners reported that they cannot speak English well; and around 25,000 said they cannot speak English at all. Not investing in the link between English-language development and employability presents a missed opportunity of unlocking the talent and skills migrant Londoners bring with them. The Mayor of London has emphasised the importance of English, and the need for government and cities to invest in English-language learning for community development and career progression. For those who speak limited English, improving English-language proficiency is associated with several benefits, including confidence, independence, self-determination, access to healthcare and education, and community integration.¹

Most migrants who do not speak English when they arrive in the UK want to improve their English-language skills,² but often face barriers in terms of the availability, sufficiency and flexibility of the ESOL offer. They often find themselves locked out of language-learning, stuck at a basic level, and

unable to progress to a level that would support their independence and integration. One of the most commonly cited barriers is lack of childcare provision, which has a disproportionate impact on female learners' ability to access ESOL.

The Mayor's ESOL Plus Childcare initiative worked with partners to pilot innovative projects that meet gaps in ESOL provision for learners with childcare responsibilities, particularly those who have faced difficulties in accessing and/or progressing within mainstream provision. These pilots were delivered between July 2018 and July 2019 by Poplar HARCA and Sutton College, with delivery partners in Croydon (Croydon Adult Learning and Training), Kingston (Kingston Adult Education) and Westminster (Westminster Adult Education Service). The key learning was presented at a workshop held at City Hall for ESOL providers who also contributed their existing expertise from delivery outside the remit of the ESOL Plus Childcare projects.

1. Collyer, M et al. (2018): A long-term commitment: integration of resettled refugees in the UK. University of Sussex.

2. Bell, R. and Plumb, N. (2017): Integration not demonization – the final report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration's inquiry into the integration of immigrants. London: The Challenge.



210,000+

The last Census showed over 210,000 working-age Londoners cannot speak English well

25,000

Said they cannot speak English at all



This guidance was formulated from the projects' learning and input from the provider workshop held at City Hall. It is designed to provide practical advice on how to set up or improve provision for learners with young children and childcare responsibilities.

The guidance is structured in two sections:

01. Set-up of provision

a. Outreach, assessment of need and recruitment of learners

b. Childcare arrangements

02. Course planning and delivery

a. Teaching and flexibility

b. Attendance and retention

c. Integrated activities

For a more detailed description of the projects and the key learning from the programme, please refer to the ESOL Plus Childcare evaluations.

COVID-19-RELATED CONTEXT

The UK was put into lockdown on 23 March 2020 in an attempt to limit the spread of COVID-19.

The majority of schools were temporarily closed to many students, alongside nurseries, daycare, children's centres and childminders, which changed the landscape and needs of parents with young children and limited English skills. Some of the effects on parents with English-language needs related to home education and the inability to come together with other parents. ESOL providers moved quickly to set up online provision for learners during the lockdown. This came with significant challenges and highlighted the risk of learners experiencing digital exclusion. Provision for ESOL parents plays an important role in reducing social isolation and loneliness which, because of the stay-at-home measures, were heightened. Parents who previously could attend ESOL and English-language activities had to adapt, often engaging in their own language development with children in the background and dealing with home education at the same time.

This guidance does not take into account measures such as social distancing and face coverings that may be implemented while dealing with COVID-19. On the other hand, it may provide useful considerations when supporting parents with limited English in approaching learning for themselves, and as a family.

“Provision for ESOL parents plays an important role in reducing social isolation and loneliness which, because of the stay-at-home measures, were heightened.”

01

Set-up of provision

Outreach, assessment of need and recruitment of learners

Before starting the recruitment process, it is **essential to gauge childcare needs in the local area**. Local authorities, including Single Point of Contact/ ESOL Advice Service and Early Help departments, can be a useful source of information in this respect, alongside partner organisations. A list of all the current Single Point of Contact models in London can be found [here](#).

The ESOL Plus Childcare projects confirmed what many ESOL practitioners already knew: **word of mouth is one of the most effective ways to reach ESOL learners**, but it takes time for the message to be passed on. It is advisable, where possible, to start the learners' recruitment well in advance of the start date by planning outreach activities and taster sessions before the programme begins.

Taster sessions will help learners become more comfortable with what the programme involves and provide an opportunity to clarify any doubts. Learners recruited early can be encouraged to take part in the outreach activities for other participants in the programme. This can be an opportunity for learners to develop their language skills and their confidence to become champions in the community.

Be mindful of the methods you use to reach learners, especially those who may be the most isolated. Bear in mind that language barriers and limited prior educational background will affect the efficacy of flyers, newsletters, social media ads and other established marketing strategies. **Face-to-face interactions are often most effective**. Other key assets, if available, are the translation of materials into community languages, and staff able to reach out to learners in languages other than English.

Building solid partnerships with local services is crucial to ensure that referrals can be made accordingly, in both directions. In particular, key services such as GPs and healthcare centres can help you engage with more isolated learners. If possible, outreach events should be organised in these venues alongside existing activities already regularly publicised to parents, for example, birth packs. This will ensure that even learners who are most isolated can become aware of the provision.

“Word of mouth is one of the most effective ways to reach ESOL learners”.



Childcare arrangements

There are several delivery models that can be considered when planning childcare provision alongside ESOL classes.

This section explores some of these options, and outlines which funding streams are currently available – as well as some additional considerations that may be useful at the planning and delivery stages.



Delivery models	Funding options	Additional considerations
<p>Crèche on-site at children’s centre (or other) premises, in a separate room from adult ESOL classes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific crèche funding from local Children and Family Centres for delivery on their premises • Specific funding routes, for example, projects funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly MHCLG) or the European Social Fund (ESF) • Adult Education Budget funded providers may reinvest revenues (including the ‘London Factor’ 10% uplift) as they see fit, including for the development of crèche facilities. 	<p>Crèche ratios, i.e. the number of children for whom each member of staff or volunteer can be responsible, are an essential aspect to be considered at the planning stage. This is because ratios will have financial implications and an impact on the number of children (and parents as a result) that can be accommodated in each class.</p> <p>Availability of crèches in <u>children and family centres</u> will vary considerably between local authorities.</p> <p>Evidence from learning providers suggests that this is the preferred option for many parents, particularly those with very young children, as they feel more comfortable having their child on site.</p>
<p>Funding learner childcare costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Early years entitlement scheme</u> • <u>Learner Support</u> available via adult education providers: learners can apply for Learner Support directly with their learning provider. Learner Support can cover childcare costs to a learner. • Specific funding routes, for example, projects funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly MHCLG) or the ESF • Specific funding routes, for example, projects funded by the MHCLG or the ESF • Job Centre Plus childcare funding through Universal Credit or Flexible Support Fund • UK Resettlement Scheme childcare funding for resettled refugees <p>(All subject to eligibility)</p>	<p>Local authorities hold details of all local childminders which include Ofsted ratings, location and languages spoken that would enable parents to choose, upon enrolment, a childminder located as close as possible to their class and proficient in a specific language if needed.</p> <p>Needs assessment and planning is crucial to ensure availability of places.</p> <p>Local authority coordination of all funding streams, such as through local Single Point of Contact services or Family Information Service, can help signpost learners to the most suitable funding option according to their individual circumstances.</p>

Delivery models	Funding options	Additional considerations
<p>Parent and baby/toddler programmes: informal activities with a family learning focus and an element of conversation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any funding route that allows for informal delivery. • Adult Education Budget providers can make use of Community Learning funding streams, as well as the non-formula funding flexibility, which allows providers to use up to 10% of their allocation for non-formula/informal provision. • Family/community learning • Suitable for volunteer-led provision 	<p>A suitable option for parents with small babies and those who might struggle to access formal provision due to eligibility or other barriers, or who are not ready to leave their child with a childminder.</p> <p>An ESOL Advice Service/ Single Point of Contact, if available locally, would play an important role in signposting parents to the most suitable type of provision according to their individual needs. They can also often provide data on crèche needs in the borough and hotspots.</p> <p>It is also worth considering online learning options. Since provision has been moved online due to COVID-19, it has been much easier for people with babies and no childcare support to attend.</p>

When designing ESOL provision that offers childcare, finding **suitable accommodation** for both the adult learners and their children must be part of the initial planning. Look for a space that is community-based and locally accessible, and ideally one that is already familiar and trusted by members of the local community.

Childcare facilities can be in the same building as the ESOL provision or held elsewhere. The ESOL Plus Childcare projects found that having children in the same building, but in a clearly separated room, was the best option – although this will depend on the age of the children. Where possible, it is advisable to **have the crèche room out of earshot** as it can be distracting and stressful for parents. The crèche should adhere to high standards, including the appropriate ratio of staff to children, and staff performance should be informed by Ofsted's regulations and samples of best practice.

"The facilities are so good here. Everything you need, you have ... Everything's nice."

Learner from Poplar HARCA

Take into consideration the time it takes to **build trust** – not only with learners, but also between parents and the people they are leaving their young children with. ESOL learners may prefer to leave their child with relatives, so where that is not an option it is important to ensure that the **childcare space is welcoming, culturally sensitive and friendly**. Children's centres are ideal locations where there is a good relationship between staff and the ESOL provider.

"Sometimes my son doesn't want to go with me. He wants more time. He likes the crèche too much!"

Learner from ESOL Plus pilot

Once the course starts, **factor in enough time for a full tour of the premises** so that parents feel comfortable with the space and know what would happen in case of an emergency. As part of the induction, it is helpful to establish and communicate clear rules related to **health and safety**. These may include rehearsing what to do in case of a fire and other rules the childcare setting may have. This can be used as a language-learning opportunity where learners ask key questions and express their opinions and feelings.

The settling-in process, for both parent and child, may cause some anxieties and take longer than **ESOL providers may be used to factoring in. Planning for a settling-in period over the first few weeks of the ESOL provision** is advisable, as it will build up parents' confidence to leave their children with others – sometimes for the first time. If the space is already known to participants, it will make the trust and confidence-building process easier. Learners should be encouraged to attend additional parent-and-child activities happening at the centre before and during their enrolment, where applicable, so they can both feel more comfortable with the space and staff.

During the length of the ESOL provision, there should be **learning opportunities for the children as well as regular communication with their parents**. If capacity allows, crèche staff are advised to arrange a one-to-one meeting with each parent to discuss the child(ren)'s development throughout the course. If possible, this should involve the ESOL tutor's input so that it can be integrated in the course planning. For instance, the tutor could plan a series of lessons role-playing a parent-and-teacher meeting, which will involve asking key questions about the child's progress. Rehearsing for these meetings could be used as a language-learning opportunity in class. The teacher is encouraged, if possible, to include basic normative child development knowledge as part of the lesson – perhaps a reading comprehension exercise – to guide the conversations with childcare and education professionals for their child(ren).

For learners who are pregnant or have newborn babies, there should be a stronger focus on **building a community of supportive local parents and fostering the parent/child relationship**. For learners with school-age children, it is imperative to fit classes around school hours to factor in the travelling time required for the school run.

Course planning and delivery

02

Teaching and flexibility

Equipping parents with the language to support their children is an important element when planning for ESOL classes with childcare support. Parents should be asked what aspects of parenting they feel more and less confident in, which can then be used for planning the course curriculum. It is likely that there will be commonalities within the

group. For instance, some parents may feel apprehensive about helping their children with reading skills, while others may feel anxious about speaking to their children's teachers without the help of a partner or friend, or indeed the children themselves. These provide excellent context for planning learning that is meaningful and directly relevant to learners' lives.

CASE STUDY

It was a privilege to be part of the team of The Story of Me and You. We spent a lot of time planning the course, making sure the content would be relevant to the women targeted for this course.

The reality was that we had to adjust the course as we went along, as new women joined each week and wanted to do the activities their friends had done. The activity of decorating a box to put all their props, photos... took much longer than planned as it became more therapeutic, and fulfilling a need.

We were hoping to start the sessions with singing, but the women came at different times. And so we tried having a singing time at the end of

the session, but many of the women were so eager to finish off their projects that we often sang in the background.

We prepared fruit for the women to eat during the session, but they were only interested in having a whole fruit at the end of the session. The language barrier was sometimes a challenge but we all made the effort to communicate or ask someone to translate. As a tutor I felt challenged by the lives of the women we met, and hope we will be able to provide a safe nurturing environment for many more women and babies.

**Rachel-Clare Davis –
Croydon Adult Learning
and Training tutor**

Planning an ESOL course for learners with childcare needs is **most effective when carried out collaboratively, actively involving learners and childcare staff**. This will ensure a high-quality outcome that meets the learners' varied needs. Ideally, teaching staff will be experienced in family learning, so they understand the flexibility in planning and approach that is needed for this kind of delivery.

A thorough initial assessment process will ensure a better understanding of learners' multiple needs, and enable you to make the programme more effective at supporting learners to achieve their aims and learning outcomes. The assessment process could be extended and integrated to form part of a comprehensive induction that consolidates the collaborative approach, and that can be turned into language-learning opportunities. **It is important to recognise the value of ESOL classes not only for learners, but also for learners' children and families**. The plan for the ESOL course should be devised around themes that are relevant to the participants' lives and address their needs as parents as well as ESOL learners.

Predetermined lesson plans should be avoided – outlining a structure based on previous delivery might be helpful, as long as it is flexible. Eliciting meaningful topics directly from learners and planning activities around those will have a greater impact on learning. This could be used as a framework for involving learners in the creation of learning objectives and themes. For instance, teachers could ask learners to bring in their children's school reports and build a series of learning activities around these.

At the start of the programme you could:

- discuss with the group their reasons for signing up to the course, and why learning English is important to them
- note down themes and language needs that emerge throughout the discussions that will help you towards planning
- make a group agreement together that reflects everyone's expectations and include the childcare staff in this part of the process.

Attendance and retention

ESOL learners with children may have additional emotional and social needs related to parenting and require additional support or flexibility.

Needs will be specific to each learner, and it is helpful to have an approach to attendance that is as flexible and understanding as possible. When discussing safeguarding policies with parents as part of the induction, it is important to build a network of services that learners can be signposted to according to their needs.

Taster sessions and the settling-in period, once the course starts, are good opportunities to explore potential issues related to attendance and establish possible solutions. **Learners should be supported in a holistic way by looking at all the factors that might be impeding them from attending regularly.** This is especially important when learners are vulnerable – knowledge of local services is crucial in ensuring that learners are supported beyond the classroom. ESOL tutors should have time planned into their allotted hours to enable them to provide this crucial additional support.

Creating an informal buddying system within the group can also help learners feel more connected. This can be done where learners share the same language, or it can be done in English. Learners can use this to support each other in case of absence, for example, collecting relevant worksheets or homework.

“I feel so happy with this group because I have no friends”.

“I have practised my English and helped other mothers to speak as well”.

Learners from Sutton College

Integrated activities

Integrating extra-curricular activities is useful to support both language and personal development. These could be visits to libraries or rhyme time with the children. Where possible, invite external speakers to present some of the work that is carried out in the local community. Find out what is happening and available in the area and make a plan with the group to engage in what they would find interesting or useful. Learners can be encouraged to take charge of the organising and develop language skills and confidence through the process.

Design activities to build confidence, encourage fun and inspire speaking with authority. These can be drawn from relevant examples from learners' lives and be practised in class – examples might include phone calls with service providers or visits with health professionals.

Learning English through craft and creative activities has proved to be therapeutic and may help level the playing field between learners with different levels of formal education. This could also be an opportunity to recognise and include the parents' cultural heritage as part of learning with their child, whether the activities are done with children or separately, and they could be repeated at home.

What did you find most useful about the course?

Amina feels that the following aspects were most beneficial to her:

- learning English in a relaxed atmosphere
- being able to spend time with other mothers, and build friendships that have grown beyond the course
- support from qualified crèche workers who helped with advice and care for her very young child
- practising how to speak and listen in English
- new craft skills she had never learned before.

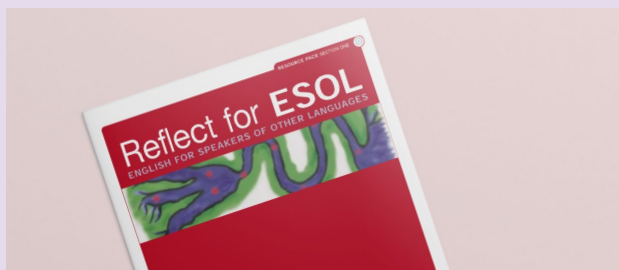
Amina from the Me and My Baby Course at Westminster Adult Education Service

Useful links

Research shows that multilingualism can have a very positive impact on child development,³ including increased cognitive and academic abilities as well as social skills. Learning Unlimited, in partnership with Campaign for Learning and the UCL Institute of Education, produced a Family Skills Toolkit that includes content on making the most of multilingualism and other strategies through play and joint parent and child activities. You can request a copy by clicking [here](#).

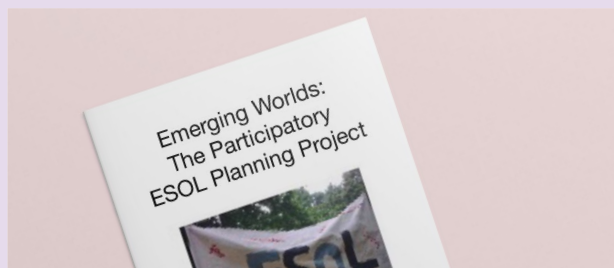
To help parents support their children, the Bell Foundation has created a short and easy-to-understand guide specifically for parents whose children speak English as an additional language. You can access it [here](#).

Other resources which may be useful in this context include the following:



Reflect for ESOL resource pack

The national core curriculum for ESOL learners emphasises a learner-centred approach. ESOL providers and teachers are expected to be aware of the range of needs, skills and aspirations that each learner has and the implication of these for the learning process.



Emerging worlds, emerging words

Five articles that explore how a group of teachers experimented with an 'emerging' curriculum. Co-written by Dr Melanie Cooke and Becky Winstanley, the papers report on five different areas of participatory ESOL: planning; topics; language; literacy; and evaluation.



Parents' Integration through Partnership

The Parents' Integration through Partnership (PIP) project was an innovative multi-strand project designed to support the language-learning and integration of non-EU mothers of school children at partner primary schools and children's centres in Haringey and Lambeth. It was funded by the Greater London Authority using the European Integration Fund.

Other formats and languages

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3. Wolleb, A. (2017): The benefits of multilingualism in the family. Reading: Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism, University of Reading.

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