

Mapping ESOL Provision in Greater London

May 2017

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.

In February 2017, L&W was commissioned by the Greater London Authority to undertake a mapping exercise of formal and informal provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in London, and undertake work to identify the language learning needs of resettled Syrian refugees in London.

This work aims to support London boroughs participating in the resettlement of Syrian refugees to provide appropriate ESOL learning to resettled adult Syrian refugees, and will contribute to the wider development of ESOL policy in London. It takes place at a time of considerable recent developments in skills policy in London, such as the anticipated devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the Mayor of London by 2019 and a recent review of Adult Community Learning.

This report, the case studies presented in Annex 1 and the borough-level reports in Annex 2, are based upon desk research, a survey of ESOL providers and a range of short and in-depth interviews with refugee organisations, ESOL providers and other stakeholders involved in the resettlement of Syrian refugees under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme. The work took place between February and March 2017, with an event for ESOL providers and other organisations and agencies working on Syrian refugee resettlement held in April 2017.

ESOL in London

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is the term used in the UK for English language provision for people who speak a language other than English as their first language and who are learning English as a second or additional language. It is intended for people living and working in the UK, rather than short-term visitors.

It is recognised that ESOL learners are highly diverse, with a range of learning needs. There is an established base of Education and Skills Funding Agency providers of ESOL in London, delivering considerable volumes of provision, complemented by informal and non-formal provision offered by other organisations, many in the third sector.

ESOL has been subject to variations both in terms of funding and the context of its delivery, affecting provision in London as well as throughout the sector more generally. ESOL providers and practitioners have been faced with changes to funding, policy and practice, often responding at short notice. Reductions in funding to the Adult Education Budget have seen participation in ESOL learning fall between 2010 and 2016, though many providers report high levels of demand. Some new initiatives have been introduced in response to

this, although the level of funding offered does not replace that which has been removed. These new initiatives include investment in Community Based Language Learning by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and additional funding for ESOL for resettled Syrian refugees by the Home Office.

Recent research into ESOL in the London context has highlighted potentially beneficial approaches which could help meet London's need for ESOL provision. These include: better strategic links and planning, to improve the availability of information about ESOL provision; supporting the development of progression routes from informal and non-formal learning; and creating routes for learners with specific needs, such as employment or vocationally focussed ESOL learning, to appropriate provision. Research has also identified high levels of demand for provision at the lower Entry and pre-Entry Levels, along with the need to remove barriers to accessing ESOL, such as a shortage of accessible and affordable childcare provision.

Learning Needs of Syrian Refugees

Learning and Work Institute's rapid review of the available literature, and interviews with organisations working to resettle Syrian refugees, identified several important aspects in meeting their likely language learning needs:

- the availability of pre-Entry level provision, and provision for learners with low literacy
- the importance of informal non-accredited learning pathways, for those not able to access formal learning immediately
- childcare provision to support access to ESOL
- the availability of information in local area
- the sufficiency and flexibility of learning hours needed, and appropriate content, in ESOL provision
- the availability of fast-track options tailored to employability
- awareness of other potential barriers to learning English affecting refugees, such as the need to provide support with wider needs, for example mental ill health and dealing with a history of trauma

Many of the factors identified as helping to meet the learning needs of resettled Syrian refugees have also been identified as areas which should be addressed to improve access to ESOL provision more generally. Case studies of initiatives which demonstrate the ability to

meet the learning needs of resettled Syrian refugees, and those which improve access to ESOL, have been included in Annex 1.

ESOL Mapping Exercise Findings

The ESOL mapping exercise highlighted the general characteristics of the current ESOL landscape including a range of current issues in provision. Borough-level data is presented in Annex 2. The general picture at city level is summarised below:

- There is a diverse base of established providers and a range of ESOL provision delivered across London. There is a greater concentration of ESOL provision in inner London boroughs, where there is also greater involvement of third sector organisations in ESOL delivery.
- Over half of providers, rising to two thirds of colleges, report that they struggle to meet demand for ESOL. Oversubscription of provision is evident in inner and outer London boroughs. This affects refugees' access to ESOL learning, and providers' ability to respond to their needs and those of other learners. ESOL provision that is available free of charge to learners is more likely to be found in inner London boroughs.
- Generally, demand reported by providers is predominantly at pre-Entry and Entry Levels, and this provision was frequently identified as being oversubscribed. This demand is mirrored in refugees' needs as reported by Syrian Resettlement co-ordinators and refugee organisations, which suggests a need for capacity building at this level.
- ESOL provision offers different levels, times, start dates, and sometimes offers more specialist content such as links to vocational learning or specific programmes for 16 – 19 year olds. However, it is more likely to be 'general' in nature, with few examples of provision specifically aimed at refugees in 'mainstream' Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) ESOL provision. This means that some refugees' language learning needs, such as higher level language skills for specific professional purposes, or basic language relating to the specific local context and orientation needs, can be challenging to meet. Home Office guidance recommends that access to ESOL learning for refugees resettled under the SVPRS should be provided within one month of arrival in the UK, which may present a challenge where access to provision is required at times outside of providers' planned start dates.
- The hours and intensity of ESOL provision average just 5.5 hours per week, although there is some evidence that provision in inner London boroughs tends to offer a slightly higher number of learning hours per week. This was considered by Syrian

Resettlement co-ordinators and stakeholders to be insufficient to support refugees' urgent need to learn English upon resettlement. Home Office guidance recommends that refugees resettled under the SVPRS are offered a minimum of 8 hours per week.

- Whilst numerous partnership arrangements are in place to support ESOL delivery, there is a lack of information about the provision available in many local areas, which often makes signposting and referral to appropriate provision challenging. Furthermore, strategic planning to co-ordinate ESOL learning opportunities is largely absent. As well as affecting referrals to provision, this also results in missed opportunities, such as more joined-up working between formal and informal ESOL provision, and the development of new partnerships, for example by working with employers.

Conclusions

Comparison of the identified learning needs of Syrian refugees with the general characteristics of provision in London suggests several priority areas for development. Addressing these areas – particularly the lack of infrastructure to support increased planning and collaboration – would not only enhance the availability and suitability of ESOL provision for those individuals supported by the Syrian resettlement scheme, but also improve the provision of ESOL in the capital more generally. Learning and Work Institute's analysis suggests that future initiatives to improve ESOL provision in London should focus on the following:

1. Identifying new and more diverse sources of investment to support the delivery and development of ESOL provision in boroughs of high demand
2. Further developing new approaches to strategic planning, commissioning and co-ordination of ESOL provision, at city-wide, sub-regional and borough levels, to help address oversubscription of provision, and improve the availability of information about provision to support signposting and referral
3. Developing approaches to increase the intensity of provision available to learners who need greater support, and the relevance of content to resettled refugees, particularly through harnessing the complementary role of informal learning and non-formal ESOL provision
4. Building capacity and expertise in the delivery of ESOL provision for learners with basic literacy needs and learners with 'pre-Entry' level language learning needs
5. Addressing the practical barriers to accessing ESOL learning, particularly the need for adequate provision of childcare facilities

2. INTRODUCTION

Overview

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We strive for a fair society in which learning and work help people realise their ambitions and potential throughout life. We do this by researching what works, influencing policy and implementing new ways to improve people's experiences of learning and employment. We believe a better skilled workforce, in better paid jobs, is good for business, good for the economy, and good for society.

In February 2017, L&W was commissioned by the Greater London Authority to undertake a mapping exercise of formal and informal provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in London, and undertake work to identify the language learning needs of resettled Syrian refugees in London.

This work aims to support London boroughs participating in the resettlement of Syrian refugees to provide appropriate ESOL learning to resettled adult Syrian refugees, and will contribute to the wider development of ESOL policy in London. London does not currently operate a regional model for the resettlement of Syrian refugees. However, the GLA and London Councils are in ongoing discussions with central Government about a potential regional function. The work also takes place within the wider context of public service reform and devolution proposals in a range of policy areas, including the anticipated devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the Mayor of London from 2019/20.

In the meantime, many London boroughs are already participating or planning to participate in the resettlement of Syrian refugees despite the challenges London faces (particularly in relation to the lack of affordable accommodation). The Government has provided additional funding for boroughs participating in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) to support resettled adult Syrian refugees to access appropriate ESOL learning. However, there is not yet a formal mechanism or resource to support sharing of learning and working collaboratively between London boroughs on Syrian Resettlement. It is intended that this report can be used as a tool to support collaboration amongst providers and commissioners, as appropriate.

Policy Context

There have been significant changes in London's skills infrastructure and provision, several of which affect ESOL in particular. These include: reductions in ESOL funding in England by

60% since 2009¹, area-based reviews of Further Education², and the anticipated devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the Mayor of London from 2019/20.

ESOL courses are delivered by a range of providers in London. These include private providers, third sector organisations, Further Education colleges, Institutes of Adult Learning³ and local authority Adult Community Learning services. To date it has been difficult to quantify the total supply of ESOL courses across London. For example, the ways in which ESFA⁴ funded ESOL provision is recorded in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data does not always give a full picture of ESOL delivery.⁵

The ESOL sector has experienced significant change in recent years. At the same time as reductions in the available ESFA funding, new funding streams and delivery initiatives have become available, although the funding is not commensurate with the ESFA funding reduction. Examples include Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) funding for Community-Based English Language (CBEL) provision, Home Office funding for resettled adult Syrian refugees, and funding under European Social Fund (ESF) initiatives. This fragmentation of ESOL funding has resulted in calls within the ESOL sector, and elsewhere, for a more joined up approach to ESOL funding and delivery. A national strategy for ESOL was a key recommendation of a 2014 Demos report on ESOL⁶, and has subsequently been the subject of advocacy activity by the National Association of Teachers of English and other Community Language to Adults (NATECLA)⁷. The Casey Review has also highlighted the importance of English language provision in securing integrated communities, and social and economic mobility⁸.

¹ House of Commons Library (2017) *Adult ESOL in England*. Briefing Paper No. 7905

² The government's Area Review programme focused on Sixth Form Colleges and General Further Education Colleges. It was designed to "establish the best institutional structure to offer high quality provision based on the current and future needs of learners and employers within the local area." Area reviews have been carried out by the FE Commissioner, the Sixth Form College Commissioner, the Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency, working with colleges, local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. The London Area Review comprised four sub-regional reviews and concluded in November 2016. Further information and reports on Central, West, East and South London are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/post-16-education-and-training-area-reviews>

³ Formerly known as Specialist Designated Institutions. The Institutes of Adult Learning in London are Hillcroft College, City Lit, the Mary Ward Centre, Morley College, the Working Men's College and the Workers' Educational Association.

⁴ The Education and Skills Funding Agency was formed in April 2017 from a merger between the Education Funding Agency and the Skills Funding Agency.

⁵ For example, some ESOL provision may be accredited through other qualifications such as Functional Skills English or take place as non-regulated (non-accredited) learning, which is sometimes 'invisible'. Association of Colleges (2014) *ESOL Qualifications and Funding in 2014. Issues for Consideration*.

⁶ Demos (2014) *On Speaking Terms*.

⁷ <http://natecla.org.uk/content/631/ESOL-Strategy-for-England>

⁸ *The Casey Review. A Review into Opportunity and Integration* (2016).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

With the support of the Department for Education, London government has conducted a review of Adult Community Learning in the capital's 33 boroughs (including the City of London). Alongside the Area Review, this review helped to build a picture of adult education provision in the capital. This ESOL project builds on these initial relationships and findings. The Mayor of London will also be developing a London Skills Strategy in 2017 in preparation for skills devolution and the findings of this project will feed into this strategy development.

This report details a more comprehensive picture of current ESOL provision in London, particularly in areas participating or planning to participate in resettlement, and an understanding of how this fits with the anticipated needs of resettled Syrian refugees within a rapidly changing skills context.

This is particularly important for London because although the city has many ESOL providers, this provision is varied geographically and there are boroughs participating in resettlement where ESOL capacity is limited. Relatively low numbers of Syrian refugees being resettled in individual boroughs could make co-commissioning of appropriate ESOL provision more efficient and better able to provide for a diverse range of needs likely to change.

3. ESOL: THE LONDON CONTEXT

L&W conducted a rapid review of recent research into ESOL, with a focus on reports published since 2010, those which addressed the London context specifically, and/or those which undertook research in the London area. This section establishes what ESOL provision is and who the learners are. It also identifies key recent policy changes affecting ESOL, particularly in London, and presents a summary of recent recommendations to improve ESOL.

Definition

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is the term used in the UK for English language provision for people who speak a language other than English as their first language and who are learning English as a second or additional language. It is intended for people living and working in the UK, rather than short-term visitors. The term ESOL has been used in adult education for many years to describe all English language provision, whether or not it leads to ESOL qualifications. Provision is offered at a range of levels⁹.

ESOL Learners

Sometimes referred to as second language learners, bilingual learners or multilingual learners, individuals with ESOL needs may come from one of four broad groups:

- People from settled communities already living in Britain who still need to develop their English skills.
- Spouses, partners and dependents of British or European Union citizens. These individuals, who may come from all parts of the world, have come to join their family and settle in the UK. Depending on their country of origin, they may be well-educated and highly skilled or, on the other hand, have little or no previous education, training or work experience.
- Migrant workers who come to the UK for better job opportunities or better paid work, many of whom come from European Union countries. Many are in low skilled, low paid work in the UK although they may have had higher level skills and training and previous work experience in another country.

⁹ In ESOL provision funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, ESOL may be delivered at Entry Level (sub-divided into Entry 1, 2 and 3), Level 1 and Level 2 (the highest level of proficiency). 'Pre-Entry' Level, usually delivered as non-regulated, non-accredited learning, is often used as a description for very basic English provision 'below' Entry Level 1, although the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum does recognise these learning needs within Entry Level 1. Levels are based on the National Standards for Adult Literacy, with Level 2 roughly equating to a GCSE pass at Grade C. Although not publicly funded, international English qualifications are available at levels equating to higher than Level 2. For example, these include IELTS (International English Language Testing System) qualifications required for some academic and professional purposes.

- Refugees and asylum seekers. Some may have had professional jobs in the past (e.g. doctors, lawyers) although others will have experienced a disrupted education due to civil war or unrest.

In London, the importance of ESOL provision for residents is well documented. The Mayor of London has recognised the need to provide ‘more support for people to learn languages when they arrive in a new country’ and signalled his intention to work with partners to increase the accessibility of ESOL.¹⁰ The GLA report *English Language for All* summarises the significant contribution made by ESOL provision in the capital:

‘Over 50% of the country’s ESOL provision takes place in the capital. London is a diverse and vibrant city with large migrant and refugee populations ... (which) include both long term settled migrants and ‘new’ economic migrants plus a smaller proportion of refugees and asylum seekers. ESOL provision enables London to benefit from the wide range of skills brought by [them]. London needs ESOL. It needs to enable people to acquire language skills to be able contribute positively to the London economy. There is ongoing demand for ESOL learning.’¹¹

The diversity of ESOL learners, and their learning needs, is also well recognised. Research with ESOL providers, many based in London, undertaken for the Association of Colleges noted that:

‘There is a wide range of educational, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic origin, first and other languages, life experience and trauma (for example through war, and torture). At one extreme, learners have little or no experience of formal education and are unable to read or write in their own language, which may also be based on a different script from English. At the other are those with qualifications and skills from their own country and good study skills, capable of learning quickly and progressing directly to higher level occupations.’¹²

With the introduction of ESOL qualifications in 2004, government funding has focused on achievement of these, although some non-accredited provision has been recognised and funded for learners at pre-Entry level. The qualifications were revised in 2014 and continue to be the key driver for Education and Skills Funding Agency funded providers. It has been noted that as well as developing language and literacy skills in formal, accredited provision, knowing how and when to use them outside the classroom is equally important:

¹⁰ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/sadiq-khan-building-bridges-rather-than-walls> ; A City for All Londoners (2016) https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/city_for_all_londoners_nov_2016.pdf

¹¹ GLA (2012) *English Language for All* https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/english_language_for_all.pdf

¹² AoC (2014) *ESOL Qualifications and funding in 2014: Issues for consideration*.

‘Greeting neighbours or engaging in small talk while shopping are as much part of the migrants’ learning process as the formal language classes’¹³

This suggests that informal and non-formal ESOL learning¹⁴ can have a complementary role alongside formal learning. Informal and non-formal provision are a well-established part of the ESOL landscape, and recent initiatives such as DCLG’s CBEL programme have provided further support to this.

Changes to ESOL Provision

ESOL has been subject to variations both in terms of funding and the context of its delivery. ESOL providers and practitioners have been faced with a number of changes to funding, policy and practice, often responding to changes made at short notice. This has required the sector to implement initiatives such as: reduced learner eligibility for provision and full funding; new curricula for ESOL learning contexts, such as Citizenship for ESOL learners and ESOL employability provision for Job Centre Plus (JCP); and introduce revised ESOL qualifications with fewer funded delivery hours into existing delivery models. More recently, ESOL has been on the agenda across Government, with DCLG introducing funding for CBEL provision from 2013 and the Home Office providing additional ESOL funding to support resettled Syrian refugees (2015).

Public spending on ESOL has reduced by 60% in real terms since 2009.¹⁵ This has reversed a period of widening participation and enhanced funding for ESOL between 2001 and 2007 under the Skills for Life Strategy, which also included adult literacy and numeracy provision. In England, participation in funded provision has fallen from almost 180,000 learners in 2009 – 10 to just over 100,000 in 2015 – 16¹⁶. In 2008, the relatively high volume of ESOL provision (over 50% of the Skills for Life budget in London) compared to literacy and numeracy provision led the government to restrict spending on ESOL. This included replacing automatic fee remission (i.e. free provision for all) with an expectation that learners would pay unless they were in receipt of employment-related benefits. Successive initiatives focused on employability and work-focused ESOL with the Skills Funding Agency and Jobcentre Plus working in partnership to prioritise ESOL for job seekers.

Groups affected by the funding changes were identified in the government’s ESOL Equality Impact Assessment in July 2011 as:

¹³ Mallows, D. (Ed.) (2014) *Language issues in migration and integration: perspectives from teachers and learners*.

¹⁴ ‘Non-formal’ learning refers to organised learning activities outside the formal education system. ‘Informal learning’ takes place where new knowledge and skills are acquired in the course of participating in activities which may not have an explicit learning objective, for example through work or participation in everyday activities and interactions with others.

¹⁵ House of Commons Library (2017) *Adult ESOL in England*. Briefing Paper No. 7905

¹⁶ House of Commons Library (2017) *Adult ESOL in England*. Briefing Paper No. 7905. Data on participation in ESOL in London was unavailable at the time of writing.

- Those in low-paid work;
- People with low-level English language and literacy skills;
- Women, especially those with childcare responsibilities.

In London, the impact upon those in low-paid work has been assessed by the GLA in its report on low-paid work and learning English.¹⁷ This report identified eleven barriers to learning English, including the difficulty of finding information about suitable provision, a lack of childcare and a range of practical constraints such as time and location of classes. Here, the impact on refugees' opportunities to learn ESOL is assessed in Section 3, on the learning needs of Syrian refugees.

Improving ESOL Provision

L&W's rapid review highlighted that recent research and policy reports from a number of organisations have made a range of recommendations to improve availability and access to ESOL provision. These include the Association of Colleges, the Casey Review, Demos, GLA, the National Association of Teachers of English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA), the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), the Refugee Council and Refugee Action. The main points relevant in the London context, and with potential to support refugees resettled under the SVPRS access ESOL, are summarised below. Recommendations which are outside the GLA's and local authorities' remits, such as reforms to national policy and funding arrangements, are not included here.

- *New, local approaches to co-ordination and strategy*

In 2009 the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) launched the 'New Approach to ESOL'¹⁸. This was aimed at local authorities to develop a local strategy for ESOL that would bring together all ESOL providers in the area and local authority services, where delivery may be affected by residents with low English language skills (housing, police, health, education etc). Success in this was patchy across the country, but there is evidence of this work in continuing partnerships in some London boroughs, such as Hackney, Haringey, Newham, Redbridge, and Waltham Forest.

The influence of the approach can also be seen in recent recommendations¹⁹ for a system of ESOL hubs at local authority level. Examples of initiatives nationally, such as Basic Educational Guidance in Nottinghamshire (BEGIN) and the Migrant English Support Hub (MESH) in Leeds, as well as those from London such as the Hackney ESOL Advisory Service

¹⁷ GLA (2013) *Migrants in Low-paid, Low-skilled Jobs: Barriers and Solutions to Learning English in London*.

¹⁸ DIUS (2009) *A New Approach to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)*

http://www.bollettinoadapt.it/old/files/document/866ENGLISH_LEARNING.pdf; BIS (2009) *Implementing the New Approach* <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/9470/2/implementing-the-new-approach-to-ESOL>

¹⁹ GLA (2012), Demos (2014) *On Speaking Terms*. In a report for the London Borough of Enfield, NRDC recommended that they bring together ESOL providers to form an ESOL partnership that could also share data to see who is accessing what provision and where. NRDC (2011) *Mapping ESOL Provision in Enfield*.

and the Newham ESOL Exchange, demonstrate the value of a more joined up approach to ESOL provision locally. These initiatives operate different models, for example some offer a common initial assessment services, whereas others provide a platform for sharing information about available provision. All have shown benefits such as improved access to provision, learners matched with appropriate provision which meets their needs, and reduced waiting lists, as duplication is avoided.

- *Better links between ESOL and vocational learning, to 'fast track' learners at higher levels into further learning and employment*

NIACE recommended that the Government should support the development of more language learning embedded into vocational courses, to enable migrants to unlock their existing skills and develop new ones, supporting the economic contribution they make²⁰. One function of local ESOL 'hubs' could be to support better linking of ESOL provision to vocational learning and employment, particularly for those with higher level language skills. This also fits with the evidence on refugees' language learning needs, as set out in Section 3 below.

- *Employment-focused ESOL provision*

In 2011, JCP introduced Skills Conditionality, whereby if language needs are identified as a barrier to employment, claimants on 'active benefits' can be mandated by their Jobcentre Plus adviser to attend an ESOL course.²¹ In 2014, additional 'ESOL Plus' funding through the Skills Funding Agency was introduced to support the provision of ESOL at Entry Level 2 and below for mandated learners. Although this funding has now ceased, mandated JCP clients still have priority access to Skills Funding Agency provision, though providers must use their normal Adult Education Budget allocation to fund the provision²². Integration of employability training into ESOL provision has been identified as helpful in supporting some learners into work²³, and previous GLA reports have identified best practice in ESOL for employment provision.²⁴

²⁰ NIACE (2015) *Making Migration Work. Labour Market and Skills Solutions.*

<http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/resource/making-migration-work/>

²¹ NIACE (2013) *ESOL for Employment* <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk.gridhosted.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ESOL-for-Employment.pdf>

²² Language and Employability Skills provision for JCP mandated customers AOC 2014

https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/Language%20and%20employability%20skills%20provision%20for%20JCP-mandated%20customers_0.pdf

²³ Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2012) *Analysis of English Language Support Provision in London for JSA and ESA WRAG Customers.*

²⁴ See for example GLA (2013) *ESOL Works: Building on Best Practice for Supporting People into Work.*

- *Addressing the need for pre-entry level provision and provision at lower levels*

Research into specific local areas often shows that demand for pre-entry ESOL provision is high²⁵. As the first stage in language learning for many, pre-entry is key to progression in the development of language skills. Aligned with this is the need for flexibility in allocating guided learning hours (GLH) according to individual need, particularly to recognise the time needed for learning at the lower levels and for those needing to acquire literacy in English. In ESOL ‘one size does not fit all’ and there is no ‘average learner’.²⁶ Research into ESOL for employment has also recommended the development of more options for learners at pre-entry level to facilitate progression.²⁷

- *Addressing barriers to accessing ESOL*

This is a dominant theme in the literature L&W reviewed. Key access issues identified including the availability of affordable and appropriate childcare provision²⁸, travel costs, the location of classes and the timing of classes. These issues have been identified as affecting specific cohorts of ESOL learners, such as women, low-paid migrant workers and refugees. Local ESOL ‘hubs’ which match learners to provision can be effective in helping to overcome some of these barriers.

- *Family learning*

Although there is no longer any ring-fenced Family Learning funding, many local authorities still offer Family Learning provision, which often supports ESOL learning needs. Research has shown sound correlation between the improvement of parents’ English language with the literacy progress made by their children in school.

‘Family learning could increase the overall level of children’s development by as much as 15 percentage points for those from disadvantaged groups and provide an average reading improvement equivalent to six months of reading age.’²⁹

This model also helps resolve childcare and barriers to accessing provision, as classes run alongside the child’s school day and schools offer a local, accessible community venue for the classes.

²⁵ GLA (2012), NRDC (2011). ‘Pre-Entry’ Level, usually delivered as non-regulated, non-accredited learning, is often used as a description for very basic English provision ‘below’ Entry Level 1, although the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum does recognise these learning needs within Entry Level 1. As learners often have basic literacy needs and may be unfamiliar with formal learning, providers often find it more appropriate to offer separate non-accredited provision to meet these needs, due to the time needed before a learner is ready to undertake formal qualifications at Entry Level 1.

²⁶ AoC (2014)

²⁷ CESI (2012)

²⁸ See, for example, DWP (2011) *Evaluation of the London City Strategy ESOL Pilot: final report*

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/197095/744summ.pdf

²⁹ NIACE (2013) *Family Learning Works* <http://shop.niace.org.uk/family-learning-inquiry-report.html>

- *Use of technology to enhance ESOL provision*

Whilst there is potential to make greater use of technology and digital learning to increase and diversify language learning opportunities, L&W has identified that more work is needed to build upon and extend existing good practice in the use of technology to enhance ESOL learning, and to overcome barriers to the use of technology experienced by some learners and providers.³⁰ Recently, some DCLG CBEL projects, such as English My Way³¹, have developed a 'blended learning' approach, combining online and classroom learning, and formal and informal activities, making the approach more accessible to learners with low levels of English.

- *The contribution of informal provision*

Recent initiatives such as the DCLG's CBEL programmes confirm a renewed interest in informal language provision's potential to support greater access to language learning, particularly for excluded groups. Demos recommended that formal and informal language learning should complement each other³², and this could be an aspect of a London or borough-wide ESOL strategy that brings together different provision types. This is echoed in the finding of the 2016 Casey Review for DCLG:

'The Government should support further targeted English language provision by making sufficient funding available for community-based English language classes, and through the adult skills budget for local authorities to prioritise English language where there is a need. It should also review whether community based and skills funded programmes are consistently reaching those who need them most, and whether they are sufficiently coordinated.'³³

Many of the suggestions above have the potential to benefit the way in which ESOL is provided in London, and to support access to it by specific groups such as refugees.

³⁰ Learning and Work Institute (2016) *Technology for English Language*. Unpublished policy roundtable report.

³¹ <http://www.englishmyway.co.uk/>

³² Demos (2014)

³³ The Casey Review (2016)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

4. LEARNING NEEDS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

L&W conducted a rapid review of the evidence base on the learning needs of refugees resettled in the UK. Short and in-depth interviews were subsequently conducted with agencies and organisations supporting resettled Syrian refugees in London, a range of London ESOL providers and other relevant London and national stakeholders in March 2017. The interviews aimed to identify key current issues in refugees' access to ESOL provision. We also conducted a structured discussion with Syrian Resettlement co-ordinators, and discussed the project at a meeting of the Mayor's Migrant and Refugee Advisory Panel. This section summarises the findings of these activities.

Refugees' English Language Learning Needs

The evidence concerning refugees in the UK has consistently identified language skills and ability to communicate as a key determinant for refugees' successful integration (social, economic and legal), for realising their aspirations and being able to live independently. This view is shared by refugee support agencies, researchers/experts in the field, representatives of the local and central government, the public and by all, resettled refugees and asylum route refugees³⁴. However, the study by Cheung and Phillimore confirms that, the degree to which the English language skills are valued by different stakeholders varies and that refugees rate the importance of learning English more highly than policymakers and researchers³⁵.

An example of Government's recognition of the importance of English language for effective refugee resettlement is evident in the requirement for local authorities to provide English language classes to refugees arriving through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement

³⁴ See, for example: Cheung, S.Y. and Phillimore, J. (2013) *Social Networks, Social Capital and Refugee Integration*. Research report for Nuffield Foundation, Nuffield Foundation; Doyle, L. and O'Toole, G. (2013) *A lot to learn: refugees, asylum seekers and post-16 learning*. London: Refugee Council; Refugee Action (2016) *Let Refugees Learn. Challenges and Opportunities to Improve Language Provision to Refugees in England*. Available at: <http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/letrefugeeslearnfullreport.pdf> ; Refugee Action (2016 a) *Refugee Action response to APPG on refugees – Refugees Welcome Inquiry*. September 2016. Available at: <http://refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Refugee-Action-response-to-APPG-on-refugees-Refugees-Welcome-Inquiry-Sept-16.pdf>; Tip, K. L., Morrice, L., Collyer, M. and Brown, R. (2016) Policy Briefing: ESOL for formerly resettled refugees in England. ESOL policy and delivery mechanisms. University of Sussex. Available at: <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=policy-brief-on-language.pdf&site=252>

³⁵ Cheung, S.Y. and Phillimore, J. (2013) *Social Networks, Social Capital and Refugee Integration*. Research report for Nuffield Foundation, Nuffield Foundation. An e-survey with 233 respondents to identify integration priorities of refugees, practitioners, researchers and policymakers

programme³⁶. Further evidence is the commitment to provide additional funding³⁷ to address the concerns voiced by local authorities and refugees resettled in the UK within the first 6 months of the programme³⁸.

London has the largest number of migrants among all regions of the UK³⁹ with 'over 50% of the country's ESOL provision taking place in the capital.'⁴⁰. Some estimates show that despite the dispersal policy that has been in operation since 2000, London hosts the majority of asylum seekers and refugees⁴¹. There is also some evidence to suggest that dispersed asylum seekers move back to London, to join family members or communities based there, once they receive leave to remain.⁴² The GLA has recognised that learning English is essential for many migrants and refugees who come to London who are not able to speak English very well as it is vital in ensuring that they can:

- 'understand the systems and the new culture
- access health and other services
- get jobs
- move into higher skilled work
- support their children's education
- feel safe in their local area
- become part of local communities, and
- contribute to London's life'⁴³

There is also an acknowledgement that a lack of English language is one of the major barriers to refugee employment and that ESOL provision enables London to benefit from the wide range of skills brought by migrant and refugee populations.

³⁶ <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-Syrian-Vulnerable-Persons-Resettlement-programme.pdf> p. 19

³⁷ On 4. September 2016, the Home Secretary announced that £10 million had been pledged for English Language tuition to help refugees integrate, in addition to the local authority per person tariff <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37268971>

³⁸ The National Audit Office report is a progress review of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme to June 2016 <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-Syrian-Vulnerable-Persons-Resettlement-programme.pdf>

³⁹ <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-in-the-uk-an-overview>

⁴⁰ GLA (2012) *English Language for All* https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/english_language_for_all.pdf

⁴¹ Allsopp, J., Sigona, N. and Phillimore, J. (2014) *Poverty among refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. An evidence and policy review*. IRIS WORKING PAPER SERIES, NO. 1/2014. Available at <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2014/working-paper-series/IRIS-WP-1-2014.pdf>

⁴² Refugee Council (2014) *28 Days Later: Experiences of New Refugees in the UK*.

⁴³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees/english-language-training-why-it-important>

Taking into consideration the diversity of refugee population overall and in relation to their education experience prior to arriving in the UK and their level of English language skills, a number of recent reports have been concerned with the lack of appropriate, accessible and timely opportunities for all refugees to learn English⁴⁴. Refugee Action, a leading national refugee support charity produced a report based on the investigation of refugees' experiences of learning English through ESOL and their experience of accessing courses in relation to their backgrounds and aspirations⁴⁵. The report argues that current arrangements are inadequate and more needs to be done to ensure access to ESOL provision that meets refugees' needs and do so in a timely manner. The Refugee Action findings echo those of other earlier studies⁴⁶. The authors also draw attention to refugees' drive to learn English and their high regard for education.

Despite the government's recognition of the importance of English language for successful integration and participation in the UK economy and communities, the cumulative impact of the reductions and the changes to ESOL funding over the last 10 years, has been a sharp reduction to both the entitlement to learning and the number of places available (see Section 2). Refugee Action identify this to be at the core of the current inadequacies to support refugee learners: 'the funding cuts have resulted in shortages of provision, waiting lists, and other barriers to participation, particularly for women.'⁴⁷ As well as impacting on the overall reduction in the provision, the changes introduced in 2011 included the withdrawal of the discretionary Learner Support Fund which had allowed providers to help with childcare and transport costs and to help support those most in need to access learning.

Key Issues in Meeting Syrian Refugees' ESOL Learning Needs

L&W's analysis of stakeholder interviews conducted for this report identify current issues in the provision of ESOL for refugees, and challenges in meeting the needs of individuals resettled under the SVPRS. These are summarised below. It is notable that the issues which affect refugees' access to ESOL, and providers' ability to meet their learning needs, frequently mirror the issues in ESOL provision more generally.

⁴⁴ Refugee Action (2016); Tip et al (2016); The Centre for Social Justice (2017) *The Syrian Refugee Crisis: a resettlement programme that meets the needs of the most vulnerable*. Available at: <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Syrian-Refugee-Crisis-Final-002.pdf>

⁴⁵ Refugee Action, (2016) *Let Refugees Learn: Challenges and opportunities to improve language provision to refugees in England*, http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/support_us/campaign/join_a_campaign/let_refugees_learn/our_report

⁴⁶ Cheung and Phillimore (2013); Doyle and O'Toole (2013); Phillimore, J. (2011) 'Monitoring for equality: asylum seekers and refugees' retention and achievement in ESOL' *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 15(3): 317-329

⁴⁷ Refugee Action (2016), p.32

- *Support for pre-Entry provision, and for learners with low literacy*

Several organisations noted that refugees arriving through the SVPRS have diverse education backgrounds, qualifications and employment experience and also vary in their English language skills, making it difficult to generalise. However, some reported a recent shift in the demographics towards learners with low literacy skills in Arabic and low English language skills on arrival.

'More recent arrivals come from villages and we are finding that they do not have literacy in Arabic. This is different from the earlier arrivals on the programme.'
(Refugee Organisation)

Despite this need, suitable ESOL provision, at pre-entry level or Entry level 1 and with literacy support was reported to be particularly difficult to access.

- *The importance of informal non-accredited learning pathways*

Informal and community based provision was seen as an important stepping stone for some learners, particularly those less experienced in formal learning. Providers and refugee organisations agreed that this should not be seen to replace the need to support refugees to access formal learning but rather form a part of an individual learning journey. Those unable to read and write in their own language are often deterred from accessing formal accredited provision. It was reported that refugees wish to and benefit from access to informal English learning opportunities, either in addition to formal ESOL or to bridge the time whilst waiting for formal classes to become available.

- *Childcare provision to support access to ESOL*

The situation with childcare differs in different boroughs and across different organisations but, typically, arranging access to ESOL for refugees with childcare responsibilities is a key difficulty. Reported issues included: ESOL providers not having on-site crèche facilities; classes with crèche are often limited and/or informal; the available childcare provision being unaffordable; a shortage of childcare places even when funding is available; some parents wishing to remain with their children whilst learning. The potential to make progress with learning for women as primary caregivers, who are restricted in this way, can be severely limited. One support worker reported that in one London Borough, the only provision that offers crèche is a one-hour English conversation class, once a week.

'For families who live in [the borough], I have not been able to find any ESOL providers who have a crèche. Only today I have found a provider in [the borough] who have conversational English with a crèche and I am about to share this with the family.'
(Refugee support worker)

One organisation supporting refugees reported that additional Home Office funding under the SVRPS had made a difference, but the discrepancy with the support provided to refugees arriving through the asylum route, including Syrian refugees not supported under SVPRS, was hard to explain to clients.

- *Availability of information in local area*

A refugee agency working across London boroughs reported that local information on ESOL provision is not readily available, meaning that support workers have to research the availability for each client. They find that the availability of ESOL fluctuates and that a range of factors impact on refugees' opportunities to access courses without delays, such as the availability of classes at a suitable time and appropriate level.

Refugee organisations, support workers and potential referring agencies such as health care providers or faith organisations felt that there was a lack of clear information about ESOL funding, due to the complexity of the eligibility criteria for funding for formal ESOL provision. Some reported that different providers operate slightly different eligibility criteria, which is confusing for all. One interviewee noted that learners who are eligible may be turned away as *'providers tend to play it safe'*.

In one case worker's experience, the initial information and advice as well as assessments and enrolment processes varied greatly from provider to provider. In the case worker's experience, this was better managed by larger providers with potential learners getting good information and support. In the case of smaller, community based providers, clients were more likely to be given the wrong information, resulting in disappointment.

Providers were also aware of this issue – for example, when attempting to refer to alternative provision if they lacked capacity, or a learner was ineligible for funding.

'It's hard to give clear advice about where to go as there are so many places offering and no comprehensive listing' (ESOL provider)

- *Sufficiency and flexibility of learning hours needed, and appropriate content, in ESOL provision*

ESOL provision was often reported as needing to be more flexible and respond to learners' needs. For example, providers' courses do not always start at times which coincide with the arrival of new refugees, or other potential learners. Courses starting at different times would therefore make it possible for new learners such as newly arrived refugees to access courses all year round, thus avoiding the risks associated with the delays in accessing ESOL. Joint working, with smaller providers running shorter programmes dovetailed with opportunities to access more substantial provision available in colleges, was suggested as a one way to help overcome barriers to accessing ESOL.

Support workers reported that refugees, whether in formal ESOL provision or not, are keen to maximise opportunities to learn English language. However, not all provision was suited to meeting this aspiration, as course hours were considered to be insufficient.

‘We found that the ESOL courses that Syrian refugees have been able to access do not match their needs in terms of hours of learning and frequency of classes and the curriculum was not suitable for people who were very new to the UK. Providers are not incentivised to provide intensive ESOL’ (Support worker)

However, it was also noted that for some learners – particularly those with little experience of education and those with the lowest levels of English language proficiency – that an overly intense course structure could be overwhelming and thus counter-productive.

In terms of course content, those working to support the orientation of newly resettled individuals felt that ESOL courses needed to be more ‘resettlement-focused and tailored towards starting a new life’. ESOL provision was felt by one stakeholder to be ‘blanket, generic provision’.

As a result, refugee community organisations in London, regardless of the main communities they represent, have been a valuable source of support to recently arrived Syrians, who have been able to attend activities which maximise opportunities to learn English. This has been facilitated through community based activities such as informal ESOL courses, organised trips, volunteering placements and opportunities to meet with others in London.

‘One of the key agencies that is being supportive and that all clients are finding very helpful is Akwaaba in Hackney. They offer Sunday drop-in sessions to refugees and asylum seekers from across London. Some of my clients have begun to volunteer at Akwaaba, some are attending ESOL sessions, meeting with their peers, going on outings and are overall more aware of the cultural diversity in London.’ (Support worker)

Links with community organisations and the use of volunteer schemes were reported as providing important, supplementary content to ‘generic’ ESOL provision, to help refugees adapt to new surroundings. Support organisations reported providing orientation activities to help refugees access key services, such as public transport, and deal with a range of issues such as applying for driving licences and liaising with a child’s teacher. This often required support with using technology and digital skills, such as setting up e-mail accounts and managing passwords. Several organisations reported using, or were considering the use of, volunteer schemes to provide activities such as buddying, conversation clubs and other practical support.

- *Fast-track options tailored to employability*

Those supporting resettled Syrian refugees often noted that refugees were keen to access employment as soon as possible on arrival. Volunteering and work placements were seen as helpful in supporting the transition into work for those who were ready, particularly where placements were matched to previous employment and skills. However, the challenges of childcare provision and the risk of disruption to secure housing through loss of housing benefit on entering work were also identified as a barrier to timely progression into work.

'They are very keen to start work and they are frustrated at the length of time that it takes to access ESOL and to progress. They want to work straight away, they want to provide for their families, they want to give back to this country rather than passively receive support.' (Refugee organisation)

Organisations generally felt that working with JCP was beneficial, where mandation of ESOL training for JSA claimants supported more immediate access to appropriate ESOL provision. However, some organisations reported that it was difficult for JCP to refer learners to pre-Entry provision and that learners were sometimes referred to other programmes whilst already accessing ESOL provision. It was also noted that JCP's priority appeared to be entry to any kind of employment, whereas some refugees expected to be able use their existing skills or re-train for a related profession, once they had had sufficient opportunity to improve their English.

- *Other barriers to refugees learning English*

Refugee organisations highlighted the need for those working with resettled refugees to be aware of wider issues which have the potential to impact on learning English. Appropriate and timely access to services such as health care (including primary care and mental health services), housing and debt advice and translation facilities can help to ensure that learners remain able to participate in ESOL provision. Agencies supporting refugees and ESOL providers reported that it was important to share relevant information when setting up new provision for refugees, to ensure that the full range of needs was being addressed.

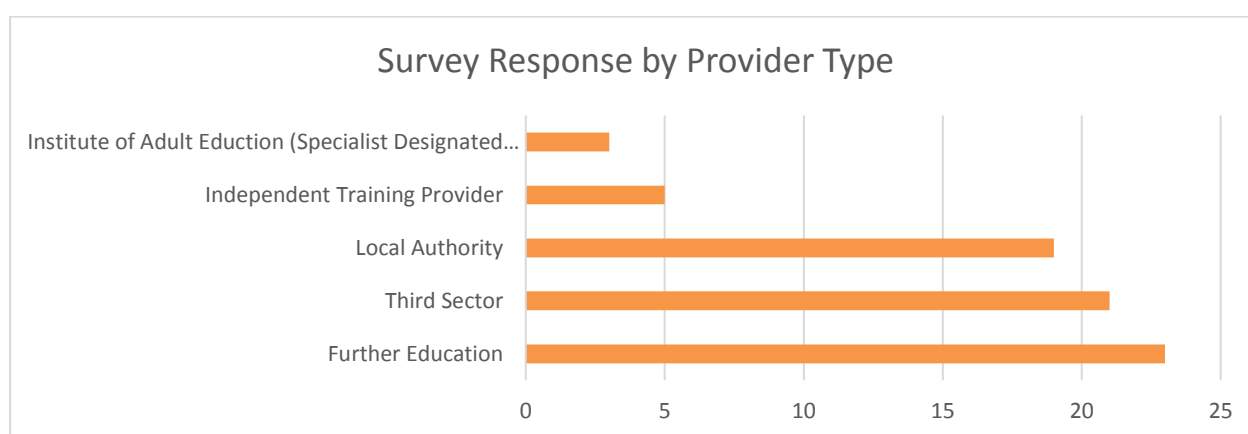
When working with new refugees, providers need to be aware of other issues such as the history of trauma, lack of prior education experience, lack of familiarity with the UK context and local issues. Coordination with other agencies is important for effective signposting and co-working. This is very patchy. (Resettlement co-ordinator)

5. ESOL MAPPING EXERCISE FINDINGS

This section sets out the general characteristics of ESOL provision in London, identified through a mapping exercise. Annex 2 reports on ESOL provision at borough level. L&W's approach to the mapping of ESOL provision consisted of the following activities:

- Initial stakeholder conversations to identify the principal characteristics of the provision landscape
- Desk research, to identify the main providers operating in each borough, and analysis of ILR data to map the number of completed ESOL learning aims by borough
- An on-line survey, informed by the initial stakeholder conversations, to gather additional information about providers' ESOL provision

The survey was disseminated to ESOL providers through a range of L&W, GLA, London Councils and other networks over a two-week period in March 2017. 71 responses were received from providers in 31 of the 33 London boroughs, including the City of London. The main findings and issues arising were discussed with Syrian Resettlement co-ordinators and ESOL providers at a project event, Supporting Syrian Refugees with ESOL, held in April 2017.



Base = 71.

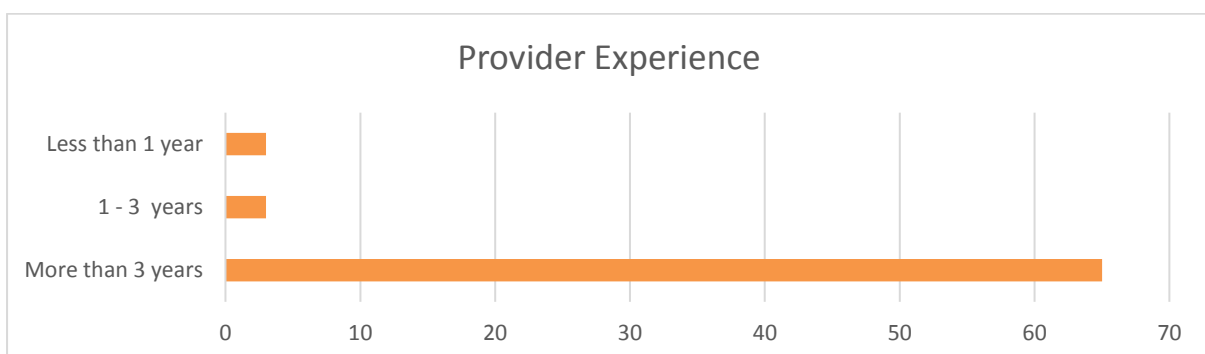
The London ESOL Provider Base

In almost all boroughs, a Further Education provider and a local authority Adult Community Learning provider offer formal ESOL provision funded by the ESFA. Desk research indicated that, at the time the mapping exercise was carried out, over 100 organisations were actively involved in offering ESOL in London, with a greater concentration of providers in inner London boroughs. However, it was also apparent that in the third sector there were a number of organisations, particularly in inner London boroughs, able to offer mainly non-formal provision when funding was available, so the number of ESOL providers can and does fluctuate. Time constraints have also limited the extent to which it has been possible to

identify all providers, particularly small community-based organisations, in this mapping exercise.

Volumes of provision vary considerably between boroughs (see Annex 2), broadly reflecting differences in the demand for ESOL provision from borough to borough. In the case of local authority provision, this may be delivered through an in-house adult learning service, through sub-contracting to other providers, or a combination of the two. In many boroughs, ESOL provision is supplemented by a diverse range of provision offered by third sector organisations, which ranges from informal language learning activities, to non-formal (non-accredited) classes and formal (accredited) ESOL provision. Additionally, many providers work from more than one site, some providers (of all types) work in several London boroughs, and others across the city more generally. ‘Travel to learn’ patterns are complex. Some providers reported that, due to their central location, they tended to attract learners from all over the city, and many learners cross borough boundaries to access provision that meets their needs, for example to fit with work commitments or the availability of convenient public transport.

Almost all providers surveyed reported that they had delivered ESOL provision for three years or more, with little difference between inner and outer boroughs. The newer providers were more likely to be third sector organisations. Overall, this suggests an experienced provider base is in place, with the potential to offer ESOL provision to support resettled refugees and develop ESOL delivery to meet the current and future needs of the city’s residents. However, for some organisations, particularly in the third sector, involvement in ESOL delivery varies according to the availability of funding to offer provision.



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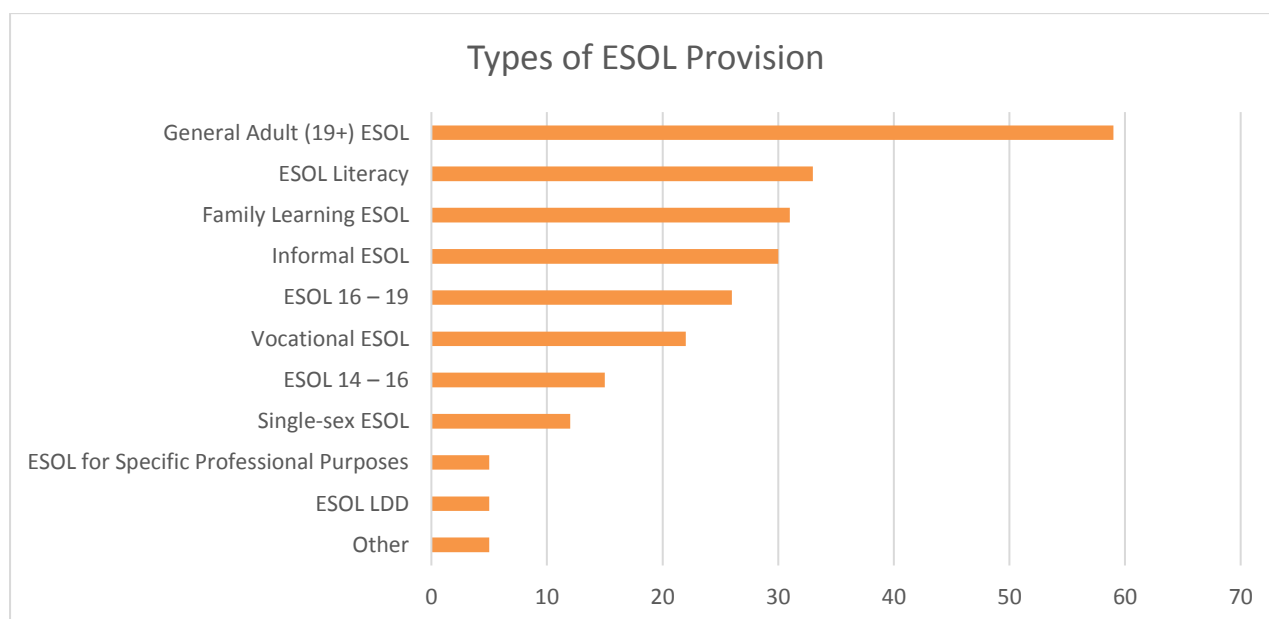
The size of ESOL provision varies across the provider base, with some third sector organisations reporting providing ESOL for very small groups of learners, whilst larger FE college providers reported capacities in the 1000s. Within Adult Education Budget allocations, providers must achieve a balance between the number of course hours a typical ESOL programme offers, with the number of learners that can be accommodated at each level to meet local demand. These provider-level curriculum planning decisions, along with

choices made about qualifications and content, explain the variations in course hours available to learners (see below).

Types of ESOL Provision

Most providers offered ‘general’ ESOL provision for adults, i.e. provision intended to meet the needs of a range of adult learners and not targeted at specific cohorts such as refugees. Around half indicated that their provision included basic literacy for learners who need to acquire literacy as part of their language learning. Other common types of provision reported were ESOL in family learning, involving parents and children in language learning, and informal ESOL to support or complement language learning. This frequently included conversational clubs and classes. Less than a fifth of providers surveyed reported offering ESOL in single-sex classes.

For young adult ESOL learners, around a third of respondents, mainly FE colleges, reported provision for 16 – 19 year olds, and in some cases recruited ESOL learners from the age of 14. Third sector providers were also involved in ESOL for learners in the 14 – 19 age range, for example to support recent arrivals who faced difficulties in securing a school place, particularly when arriving during Key Stage 4.



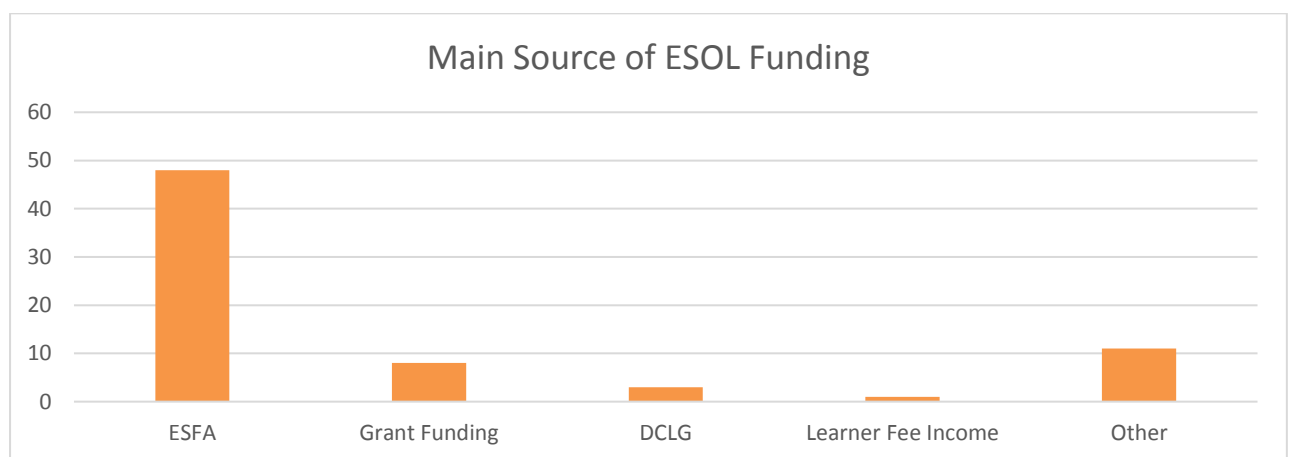
Base = 71. Respondents were able to select multiple options.

Just under a third of providers reported linking their ESOL and vocational learning, and a small number offered provision aimed at developing language skills for specific professional purposes, e.g. medical professions. Few providers reported specific provision for ESOL learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, although some colleges and local authority providers felt that their Additional Learning Support arrangements would enable them to meet the needs of learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability.

Being general in character, most ESOL providers' provision was not intended specifically for refugees, whilst not necessarily being unsuitable for refugee learners either. Providers offering provision specifically for refugees tended to be third sector organisations with a remit to support refugees or specific migrant communities.

Sources of Funding for ESOL

Two thirds of providers surveyed reported that their ESOL provision is mainly funded by the ESFA. Under ESFA funding rules, learners are eligible for fully-funded (free) provision if they are unemployed, and co-funded if they are not, meaning that the learner is expected to make a 50% fee contribution. Course fees vary according to the number of hours of learning provided, but can amount to several hundred pounds for a year-long course. Further eligibility restrictions apply to certain immigration statuses. For example, asylum seekers are not eligible for the first six months, and then only for co-funding.



Base = 71. Vertical axis indicates number of providers responding.

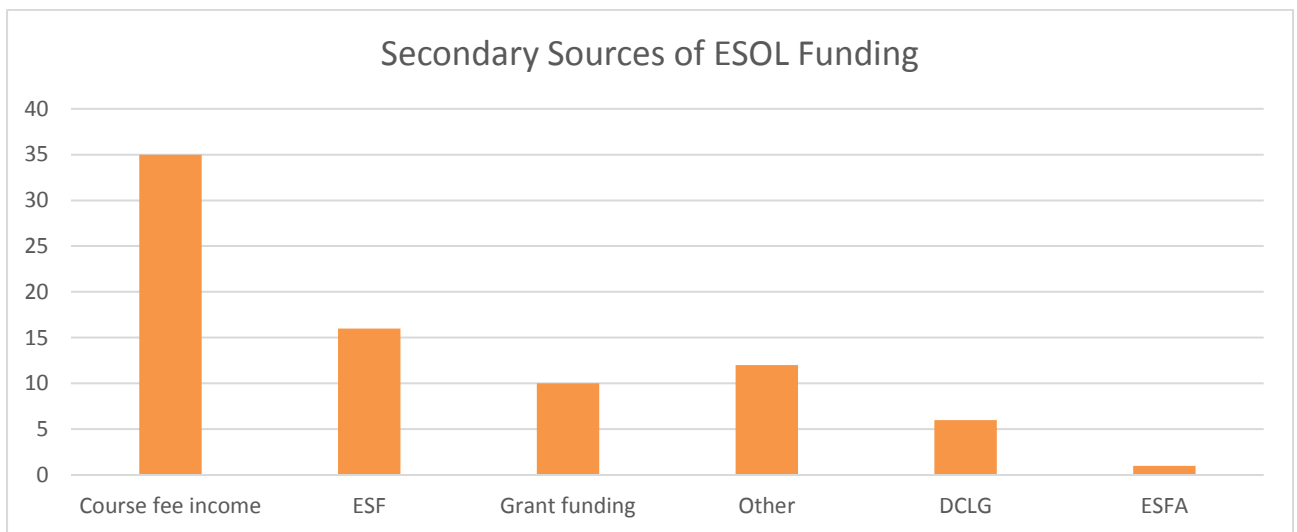
Grant funding was reported by a small number of providers as a source of ESOL funding, with a number of funding organisations mentioned, including:

- BBC Children in Need
- Bell Foundation
- Big Lottery
- City Bridge Trust
- Comic Relief
- Education Endowment Fund
- Greater London Authority
- Ministry of Defence – Armed Forces Covenant
- Pilgrim's Trust
- Ruth Hayman Trust

- Unbound Philanthropy

Three providers reported that DCLG funding for CBEL⁴⁸ was their main funding source. Other sources of funding mentioned included sub-contracted ESFA allocations from local authorities, fund-raising activities and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Providers were also asked about the other sources of funding they used to deliver ESOL. Around half reported course fee income, reflecting the co-funding arrangements in ESFA funded provision. Almost a quarter of providers reported using the European Social Fund to deliver ESOL, illustrating its significance as a supplementary source of investment in ESOL in London. Other sources of funding again included fund-raising activity, and in one case provision paid for by a local school.



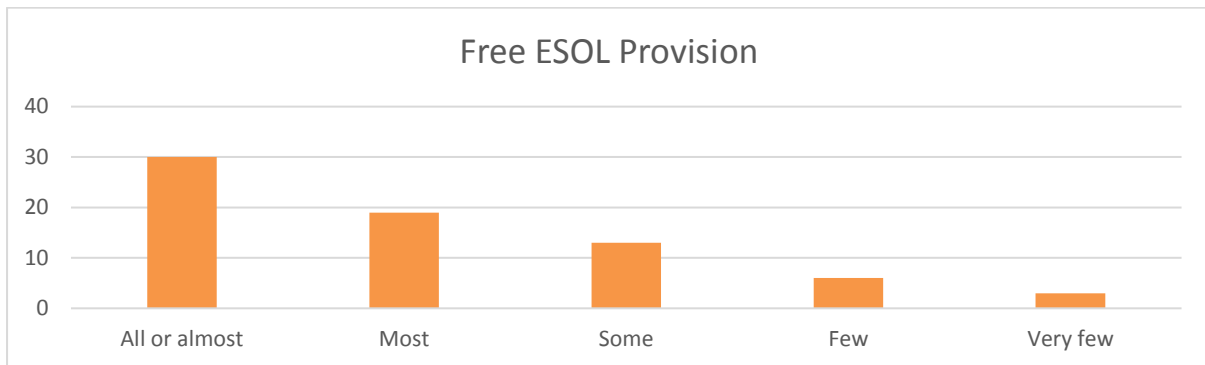
Base = 56. Respondents were able to select multiple options. Vertical axis indicates number of providers.

Despite the co-funding arrangements which apply in ESFA funded ESOL provision, many providers reported that learners were able to access their provision free of charge. Just under half reported that all, or almost all, learners were able to do so, and around two thirds reported that all or most (over two thirds of learners) could access free ESOL in their provision. Third sector providers responded that their provision was available free of charge, and this is reflected in the overall picture. ESOL provision was more likely to be available free of charge in inner London boroughs, reflecting greater involvement of third sector providers in ESOL delivery in inner London. The availability of fully-funded provision free of

⁴⁸ Since 2013, DCLG has funded a number of time-limited English language projects, which aim to deliver language provision in new ways and target learners in greatest need, including those excluded from ESFA funded ESOL in priority geographical areas. From January 2016 to March 2017, six providers nationally shared £3m to deliver new English language tuition to 10,000 learners. <http://learnenglish-communities.tumblr.com/>

charge to the learner may also reflect providers' partnership working with JCP to offer ESOL to the unemployed, who are eligible for fully-funded provision.

A further explanation is that some providers report using Functional Skills English qualifications, which are fully funded for all learners, to accredit some courses in their ESOL provision (see page 31). Around a half of providers whose main source of ESOL funding was the ESFA, and who reported that all or most learners were able to access free provision, also reported some use of Functional Skills in their ESOL provision.



Base = 71.

Partnerships

Over half of providers surveyed reported working in partnership with other organisations to deliver and recruit learners to ESOL provision. Two thirds reported working with local stakeholders to plan ESOL provision, with around a half of these providers citing various forms of engagement with Jobcentre Plus.

Examples of partnerships included working with:

- Schools
- Children's Centres
- JCP
- Other ESOL providers – of the same or different type e.g. colleges and adult education services, colleges collaborating on ESF projects
- Libraries, cultural and heritage organisations
- Local community organisations, and faith organisations
- Third Sector organisations
- Housing associations

Partnership working was reported to help enable certain groups, including refugees to access provision, and to support access more generally through the use of community venues and childcare facilities.

“All our provision takes place in venues in the local community: children's centres, primary schools, heritage locations, community centres, faith organisations, and libraries. They provide the venue free of charge and a crèche where one is offered, and we provide the teacher, any accreditation costs, resources etc. In some cases, the host organisations support with the recruitment of learners.” (Local Authority provider)

“We work with schools, children's centres, businesses who ask us for ESOL classes. We work in partnership with them to develop programmes that support their learners and the organisation's objectives. Refugees are part of that.” (FE provider)

“We work with 30+ partnership organisations across Camden, including some third-party commissioning work, but more usually providing ESOL classes in their venues for their client groups. These may include refugees but we also work with Camden Council to place refugees in our existing provision.” (Institute of Adult Learning)

However, there were few examples of partnership working with employers to support ESOL learners' progression into work.

Opportunities to Access ESOL Provision

Providers reported offering opportunities to join ESOL provision throughout the year, with the most common model being termly starts. However, providers operate a range of different systems, which may affect the opportunities available locally at a given time, particularly where demand is high. Provision which learners can join at any time was most likely to be offered by third sector providers. Further Education colleges were more likely to work on a two-semester intake, although not all used this model, with termly provision most commonly offered by local authority providers.



Base = 71.

Many providers reported offering regular advice and initial assessment opportunities throughout the year, with the frequency related to their intake model.

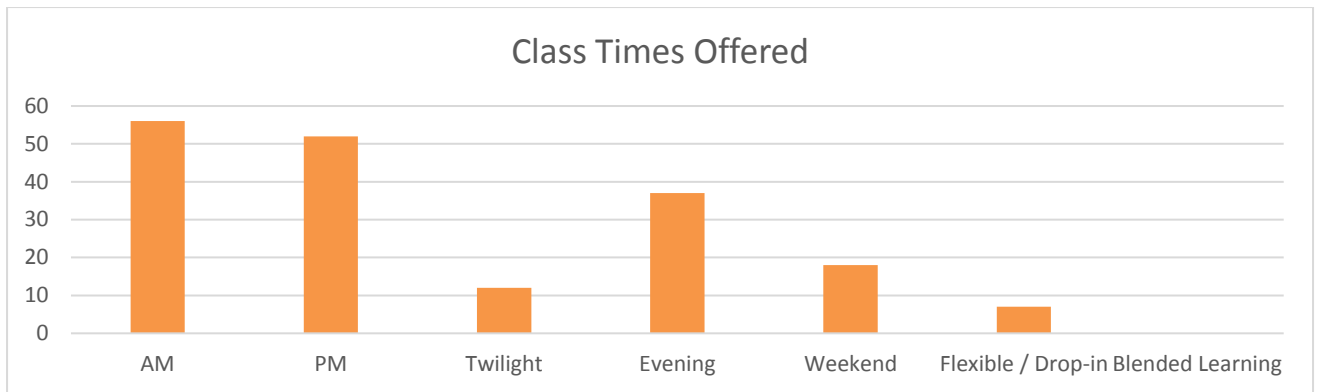
Providers recruited ESOL learners in a variety of ways. These included:

- Local advertising, including in local community media
- Word of mouth
- Outreach and partnership with community organisations
- Publicising classes available at other local services e.g. libraries, schools, children's centres, community centres, GP surgeries
- Working with local schools
- Provider website
- Referrals from local agencies, such as Social Services
- JCP
- Taster courses to generate interest
- A borough-wide ESOL co-ordination service (Hackney)

Some providers were able to offer support to help learners access ESOL provision. Just over a third reported offering help with childcare (including crèche provision), and almost half of providers were able to assist with travel costs. Around a third offered support with the costs of studying (such as exam fees and course materials⁴⁹). Sources of funding for these types of support included the Discretionary Learner Support Fund available within ESFA funded provision, and support provided by JCP to eligible learners to cover childcare and travel costs.

Providers typically reported offering classes at a range of times throughout the day, with more than three quarters of respondents offering morning or afternoon provision. Daytime classes are often timed to fit in with the school run and the availability of childcare, both of which were seen as important in enabling parents to attend lessons. Just over a half of providers offered evening provision, and around a quarter offered classes at the weekend. These were seen as important in enabling learners in employment to access ESOL.

⁴⁹ Under ESFA funding rules, providers are not permitted to charge fully-funded learners for exam registration fees.

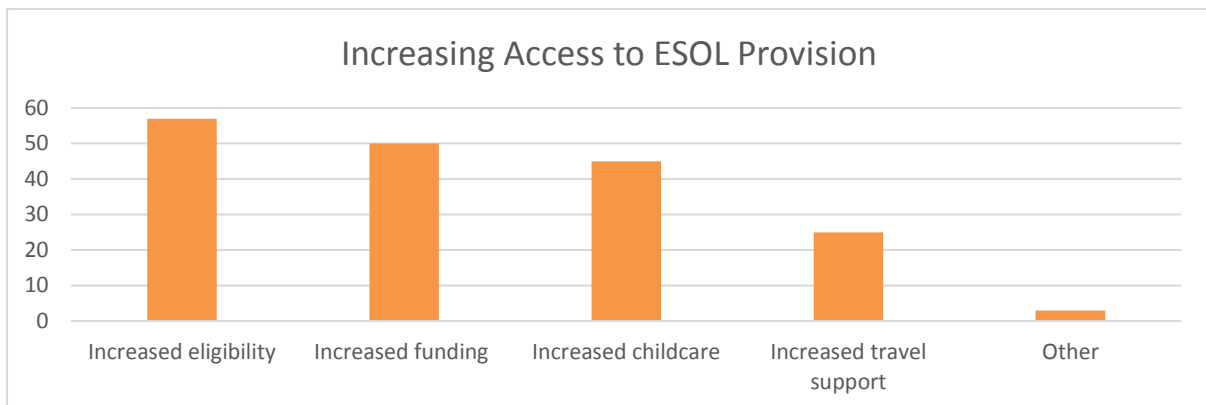


Base = 71. Respondents were able to select multiple options

Survey responses did not yield any examples of the use of blended learning models, in which classroom learning is supplemented with online learning. Although providers often reported including ICT in ESOL delivery, one respondent suggested that there may be challenges around online delivery for some ESOL learners.

“Digital delivery is hampered by low levels of IT literacy within our cohort.” (Local Authority provider)

When asked for suggestions for improving access to ESOL provision, around three quarters of providers agreed that broader eligibility criteria for ESFA funded provision would help more learners to access provision. Almost two thirds cited improving the availability of childcare and crèche provision as a key factor in improving access.



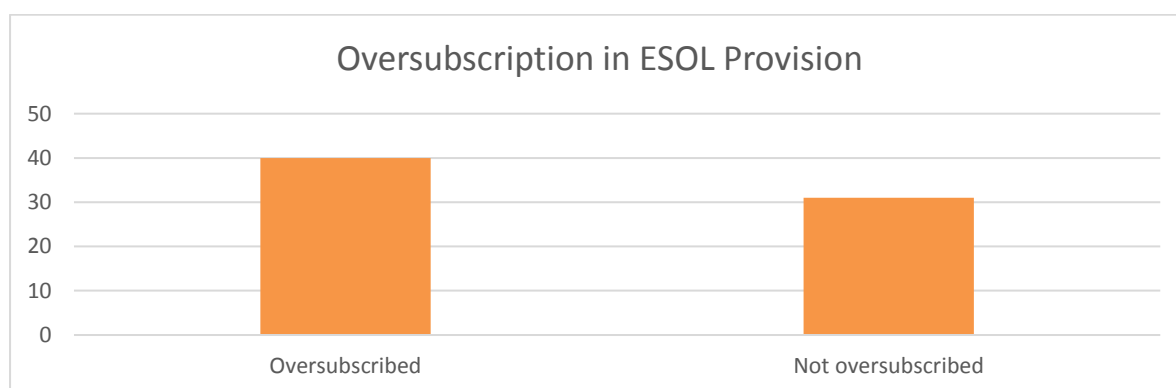
Base = 71. Respondents were able to select multiple options.

Demand for ESOL Provision

As shown by the ESOL levels offered by providers above, just under half of providers reported that the demand in their local cohort was mainly for ESOL at pre-Entry and Entry Levels. Only two reported demand predominantly at the higher levels, which reflected a

specific local context. One in seven providers mentioned that their local demand for ESOL was mainly from women⁵⁰.

Recent research suggests that ESOL provision, particularly for refugees, is often unable to meet demand⁵¹. L&W's survey asked if providers considered any part of their provision to be oversubscribed. This was defined as where demand generally exceed supply for a course, particular level, time or location, regardless of whether waiting lists were held.



Base = 71

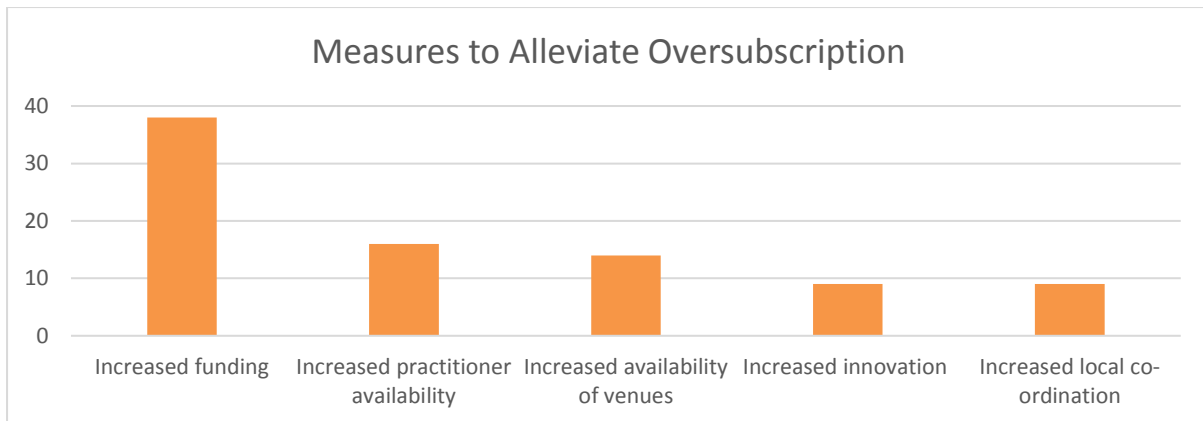
More than a half of providers reported oversubscription in their ESOL provision. This was consistent across Further Education colleges, local authority providers and in third sector provision. Around a half of local authority and third sector providers considered their provision to be oversubscribed, and over two thirds of colleges reported that demand for ESOL exceeded supply. Oversubscription of provision is evident in inner and outer London boroughs. Further information at borough level is available in the borough highlight reports, Annex 2.

As well as generally within ESOL provision, oversubscription was reported as a particular issue in pre-Entry and Entry Level levels, and in morning classes. Other issues raised by providers included rising demand for 16 – 19 provision in certain boroughs, and 'spikes' in demand which could vary by level or at certain times in the year, and were accordingly found hard to predict by providers.

The survey presented respondents with suggestions for measures to alleviate oversubscription. Over a half of respondents believed a general increase in investment would help to increase capacity to meet demand.

⁵⁰ This reflects the national picture which suggests that around two thirds of ESOL learners are female <http://natecla.org.uk/content/631/ESOL-Strategy-for-England>

⁵¹ Refugee Action (2016) *Let Refugees Learn. Challenges and Opportunities to Improve Language Provision to Refugees in England.*



Base = 71. Respondents able to select up to 3 options.

Other responses highlighted the need for stability and flexibility of funding.

“To be able to offer more courses the college needs to have more funding security - if the demand is there we can offer the classes, however it is difficult to make the sums add up when cuts threaten the curriculum, planning ahead is difficult as funding comes to us on a one year basis.” (FE provider)

Flexibility of funding – such as the recently enhanced flexibilities to use non-accredited delivery under the Adult Education Budget⁵² - would increase the potential to offer different types of provision, and to include prospective learners currently excluded from funded ESOL provision (for example those unable to complete a qualification within the funded number of hours).

“New non reg [non-accredited] funding however has been a blessing as we can offer classes to cohorts who were previously excluded.” (FE provider)

Local co-ordination of provision did not rank highly in the survey responses, perhaps due to limited experience of this among providers, as systems currently operate in only two London boroughs – Hackney⁵³ and Newham⁵⁴. However, several providers were able to identify a rationale and the benefits of a more strategic approach to planning local ESOL provision.

“We used to carry out annual mapping to find gaps etc. however in recent years we have lost the administrative and management functions to carry this out effectively.” (Local Authority provider)

⁵² Skills Funding Agency (January 2016) *Adult Education Budget. Changing Context and Arrangements for 2016 to 2017.*

⁵³ <https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/AdultLearning/Pages/Hackney%20ESOL%20Advice%20Service.aspx>

⁵⁴ <https://www.aston-mansfield.org.uk/newhamesolexchange>

“In addition to demand from within our own borough we are affected by demand from adjacent boroughs (and even further) where oversubscription to ESOL classes is even more severe.” (Third Sector provider)

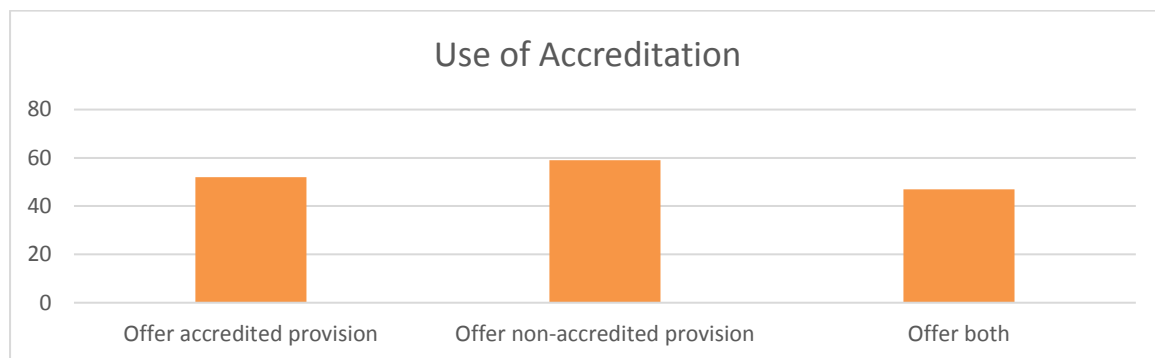
“A single, common strategic plan for ESOL across London, with mechanisms for cross-referral, plus a reinstatement of the ESOL support infrastructure which used to exist, but which was taken away several years ago [...] would be of massive benefit.” (Institute of Adult Learning)

“Hackney Learning Trust offer a model of borough-wide IAG and referrals to organisations offering classes. This model helps us reduce waiting lists, not just in the college, but in the borough. It is an excellent service for clients and providers.” (Hackney FE provider)

“I find information about ESOL services to be very inaccessible, even to those who have a strong command of the English language. It would be great to have a centralised system that a staff member could enter a learner's postcode and find out which services are available, when, where and for what price.” (Third Sector provider)

Content of ESOL Provision

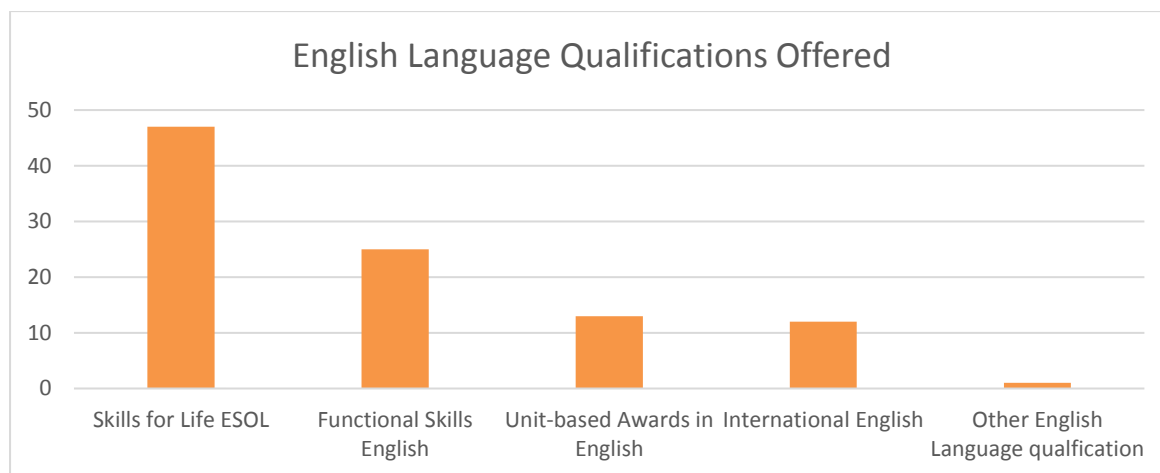
Accreditation was available in around three quarters of ESOL provision surveyed and most offered non-accredited learning in at least some of their provision. Two thirds of providers offered a mix of accredited and non-accredited learning.



Base = 71. Respondents were able to select multiple options.

Where learning was accredited, providers reported a range of qualifications used in ESOL provision. Almost all providers offering accreditation made use of the Skills for Life ESOL

suite of qualifications⁵⁵. However, around half of providers reported use of Functional Skills English⁵⁶ qualifications in parts or all of their provision.



Base = 52. Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Research by NIACE⁵⁷ has highlighted that ESOL providers commonly use Functional Skills English for several reasons, which include:

- To offer fully-funded learning to ESOL learners who would otherwise be co-funded and therefore have to make a fee contribution
- To facilitate smoother progression to further learning, by ensuring that ESOL learners enter further learning such as vocational courses with the same qualifications and on the same terms as other learners
- To facilitate progression into work, on the basis that Functional Skills English qualifications are better understood and more widely recognised by employers

However, the research also found that there are concerns about the suitability of Functional Skills English qualifications for ESOL learners. This was particularly the case for learners with

⁵⁵ The current Skills for Life ESOL qualifications were introduced in 2014 and are available from Entry Level 1 to Level 2. They are offered by a range of Awarding Organisations, such as OCR, Pearson, City and Guilds, Trinity College London, English Speaking Board and NOCN.

⁵⁶ Functional Skills English qualifications are intended for learners who speak English as their first or expert language. They are available from Entry Level 1 to Level 2 and offered by around twenty Awarding Organisations. Functional Skills qualifications are currently the subject of a national reform programme led by the Education and Training Foundation. The programme will revise the national standards and subject content underpinning Functional Skills, develop new a revised core curriculum and see new Functional Skills qualifications ready for first teaching in 2019.

⁵⁷ NIACE (2014) *ESOL Learners' Progression to Functional Skills English and GCSE English Language Qualifications*. Unpublished report to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

lower levels of English language proficiency and for learners needing more substantial learning hours to progress.

Some providers also reported using other subject accreditation in ESOL provision, particularly maths, ICT, employability and vocational qualifications. This was intended to support ESOL learners to progress to further learning and employment.

“With a tailored package of ESOL training, we provide opportunities for participants alongside ESOL provision [...] such as ICT, Health and Social Care, Child Care, Food Hygiene, Health and Safety, Administration, Employability, Security Services, Cleaning and Support Services [...] With these courses English is heavily embedded within them so that students will be able to gain employment with the certificate at the end of the course.” (Independent Training Provider)

Where non-accredited learning was available, providers – which included FE colleges, ACL services and third sector organisations – reported different purposes and rationales for the provision. These included:

- to offer provision at pre-Entry level⁵⁸
- to increase the number of hours available, to ‘bridge’ between levels where learners had completed an accredited course at one level but were identified as needing further consolidation of skills to progress to the next level
- to increase the number of hours available to support learners with basic literacy needs

“We have a good number of learners who come with significant literacy issues either having a first language with different script, or poor educational backgrounds. The non-accredited provision helps us breach the skills gaps.” (FE provider)

- to cater for learners with little experience of formal education, who were not familiar with exams or sufficiently confident to attempt them, or for whom exams were simply not appropriate

“Some learners have not had any prior education so struggle to meet the exigencies of an exam in the short period of time allowed (funded) for the exam course. Some learners find exams really stressful and don't need an exam but want to improve their English for life and family needs.” (FE provider)

- to offer more flexible, responsive provision to meet the needs of learners and engage those less confident to participate
- to offer additional activities such as conversation clubs and reading groups

⁵⁸ There are few options for accreditation at pre-Entry level, and no qualifications that are funded. ESFA provision at this level is delivered using non-regulated learning aims.

“We aim to support clients who have experienced or are experiencing significant barriers to ESOL learning by providing informal, easy to access initial ESOL provision. We aim to move learners on into more formal, accredited provision whenever possible.” (Third Sector provider)

“Accreditation would not necessarily help us achieve our goals which are to engage, break isolation, build confidence and peer support across language groups/cultures and facilitate people to progress to formal ESOL and other opportunities...” (Third Sector provider)

“Job Centre Plus learners can leave at any time to start work and therefore not take any exam. Their priority is to improve their English, not necessarily to take an exam.” (FE provider)

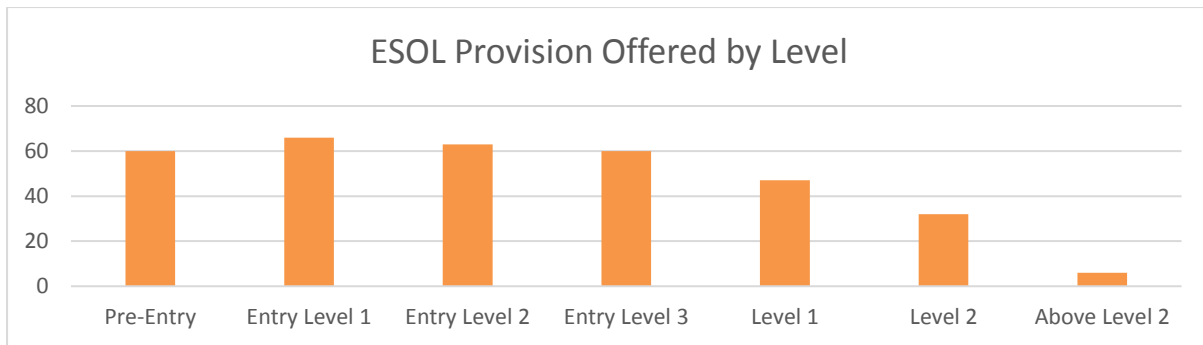
“We also try to improve the economic prosperity of the Borough by focusing on providing residents with routes into better jobs and careers, volunteer opportunities and work experience. So we have courses on improving confidence, supporting your children in learning, healthy lifestyles etc. to address these objectives.” (Local Authority provider)

Levels

Most providers reported offering ESOL provision across the range of levels, and this was consistent across inner and outer boroughs⁵⁹. In general, most ESOL provision was taking place at pre-Entry and Entry Levels, reflecting the needs of local learner cohorts. Fewer providers reported offering ESOL at higher levels, with around two thirds offering Level 1 and just under half offering Level 2. In part, this may reflect lower demand at higher levels, but may also result from learners being able to progress into to higher learning, employment or simply ‘get by’ from around Entry Level 3⁶⁰. Very few providers reported offering provision above Level 2. This is likely to result from much of this type of provision being unfunded by the ESFA, and therefore delivered in the private sector mainly to international students of English as a Foreign Language, rather than for ESOL learners who are settled in the UK.

⁵⁹ See note 7 above.

⁶⁰ NIACE (2014) *ESOL Learners Progression to Functional Skills English and GCSE English Language Qualifications*. Unpublished report to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.



Base = 71. Respondents were able to select multiple options.

Whilst ESOL learners may have ‘spikey’ profiles, in which proficiency varies across speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, most providers preferred to offer ESOL provision in single level classes where possible, or groupings of no more than two adjacent levels. Very few reported offering completely mixed-level provision. Providers felt that single level provision was more effective and learners made better progress in single-level classes, whilst acknowledging learners would have spikey profiles within or around the level of course to which they were allocated. It was also recognised that single-level provision requires a viable number of learners to organise separate classes.

“In accredited and non-accredited provision an initial assessment is carried out to establish level of skill. Grouping learners by single level classes ensures for more focused teaching, learning and assessment.” (Local Authority provider)

“We differentiate within the levels - a single level class is a better learning environment.” (FE provider)

“Our ESOL learners progress with single level classes - particularly at absolute beginners.” (Local Authority provider)

“We find mixed-level classes are rarely effective in developing learners' language skills.” (FE provider)

However, providers reported some use of mixed-level delivery in certain cases. This was particularly the case in community-based or outreach provision, where lower number of learners prevented organisation by level, and the alternative to offering a mixed-level class was no provision at all. Other contexts in which mixed-level approach was used included in workshop-style and drop-in delivery, informal activities and conversational classes.

“We deliver ESOL mostly in schools and children's centres and the parents are mixed levels. There are not usually enough of a particular level to run a class purely for that level. This would also mean turning some parents away.” (Local Authority provider)

“Our in-house courses are generally single level with some spiky profiles. In outreach provision, we allow some mixed level classes in order to prevent barriers for

vulnerable learners to access provision at their local Children's Centre or school. If we did not allow mixed level, we may not enrol enough learners to run the courses.”
(Local Authority provider)

Course Duration and Intensity

Just over half of providers surveyed reported offering longer courses, of more than 13 weeks in duration. Shorter courses, of between six and 13 weeks, were offered by most others, with very few providers reporting courses under six weeks in duration.

51 providers gave information about the typical number of hours of ESOL classes a learner could expect in their provision. Responses ranged from 1.5 hours to 15 hours per week. The most commonly reported model was 6 hours per week, with the average being 5.5.⁶¹ There was some difference – although not statistically significant⁶² – in the mean number of hours reported by outer London boroughs (5.1) and inner London boroughs (7.9)

Summary

In summary, the ESOL mapping exercise highlights a range of current issues in provision.

- There is a diverse base of established providers and a range of ESOL provision delivered across London. There is a greater concentration of ESOL provision in inner London boroughs, where there is greater involvement of third sector organisations in ESOL delivery.
- Over half of providers, rising to two thirds of colleges, report that they struggle to meet demand for ESOL. Oversubscription of provision is evident in inner and outer London boroughs. This affects refugees' access to ESOL learning, and providers' ability to respond to their needs and those of other learners. ESOL provision that is available free of charge to learners is more likely to be found in inner London boroughs.
- Generally, demand reported by providers is predominantly at pre-Entry and Entry Levels, and this provision was frequently identified as being oversubscribed. This demand is mirrored in refugees' needs as reported by Syrian Resettlement co-ordinators and refugee organisations, which suggests a need for capacity building at this level.
- ESOL provision offers different levels, times, start dates, and sometimes offers more specialist content such as links to vocational learning or specific programmes for 16 –

⁶¹ Median hours reported = 5.5; mean 5.6.

⁶² Likely to reflect the sample size, but at $p=0.065$, the figure is close to significance.

19 year olds. However, it is more likely to be 'general' in nature, with few examples of provision specifically aimed at refugees in 'mainstream' Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) ESOL provision. This means that some refugees' language learning needs, such as higher level language skills for specific professional purposes, or basic language relating to the specific local context and orientation needs, can be challenging to meet.

- The hours and intensity of ESOL provision average just 5.5 hours per week, although there is some evidence that provision in inner London boroughs tends to offer a slightly higher number of learning hours per week (7.9 hours).
- Whilst numerous partnership arrangements are in place to support ESOL delivery, there is a lack of information about the provision available in many local areas, which often makes signposting and referral to appropriate provision challenging. Furthermore, strategic planning to co-ordinate ESOL learning opportunities is largely absent.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Comparison of the learning needs of resettled Syrian refugees against the general characteristics of ESOL landscape in London suggests some priority areas for the development of ESOL provision. Addressing these areas would not only enhance the availability and suitability of ESOL provision for those individuals supported by the Syrian resettlement scheme, but also improve the provision of ESOL in the capital more generally. This report aims to provide a starting point for further collaboration between ESOL providers and Syrian Resettlement co-ordinators. However, further work, involving all relevant stakeholders, will be necessary to identify appropriate actions that can be implemented to improve ESOL provision in London more widely.

The priorities L&W has identified are as follows:

- 1. Identify new and more diverse sources of investment to support the development of ESOL provision in boroughs of high demand**

Whilst there is a considerable amount of ESOL provision delivered in London, the principal factor limiting capacity is the availability of stable and sustained funding. This affects the ability of resettled Syrian refugees – and others with language needs – to access the provision they need. Whilst the SVPRS does provide additional resource for ESOL learning, meeting the demand for ESOL more generally will require additional investment from a range of sources. This has implications for the planned devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the London Mayor from 2019, and the forthcoming London Skills Strategy in 2017. Providers indicated that additional sources of ESOL funding, such as the European Social Fund, play a role in ensuring that disadvantaged groups can access ESOL. Securing continued social investment, and that a proportion of this is used to support access to ESOL, should be a focus of strategic planning in preparation for the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. Further work is required to identify how businesses and employers can support ESOL provision. Providers should also ensure that they are aware, and make use of, new flexibilities in non-regulated learning created by the changing context of the Adult Education Budget. This can allow them to offer new kinds of learning which enable different kinds of learners to access ESOL provision, helping to meet local priorities, such as high demand by learners with low levels of literacy.

- 2. Further develop new approaches to strategic planning, commissioning and co-ordination of ESOL provision, at city-wide, sub-regional and borough levels**

The evidence from London boroughs such as Hackney and Newham, along with other examples nationally, points to the potential to maximise the impact of the existing resources and infrastructure in ESOL. The benefits include reducing waiting lists and times,

improving information, advice and guidance and developing more systematic referral, recruitment and progression routes for learners. All of these issues have been raised as affecting resettled Syrian refugees' access to learning, and have the potential to benefit others with language learning needs. Providers report that a wide range of partnerships is already in place to deliver ESOL, and these provide a basis for further future joined up working and collaboration. However, the experiences reported by providers and agencies supporting learners to access provision suggest that allocating a relatively small amount of resource to strategic co-ordination could unlock greater capacity in the current system. It could also support better signposting to more specific provision, such as ESOL linked to a particular vocational context, or employability support, for those who would benefit from this type of learning. Greater strategic planning and co-ordination could also support increased diversification of existing partnership arrangements, and help to broker new partnerships, such as links with employers to support progression from ESOL learning into work. Under Home Office guidance on English language provision for refugees on the SVPRS, up to 25% of the additional ESOL funding under the SVPRS may be spent to develop ESOL infrastructure where there is an identified need. Resettlement co-ordinators, ESOL providers and other local stakeholders, should therefore consider, as a starting point, how this resource might be used to enhance strategic co-ordination in ways suggested above. Further work to support strategic planning and co-ordination in ESOL should also connect with the actions taken forward from Area Reviews and the recent review of Adult Community Learning in London.

3. Develop approaches to increase the intensity of provision available to learners who need greater support, and the relevance of content to resettled refugees, through harnessing the complementary role of informal learning and non-formal ESOL provision

Greater strategic planning and joint working between different kinds of ESOL providers, as outlined above, could contribute to the available provision being better able to meet the needs of resettled Syrian refugees. Evidence from providers and refugee organisations suggests that non-formal and informal activities, often provided by community based organisations can support formal ESOL provision in a number of ways. For example, non-formal classes, informal conversation clubs, and speaking buddies can increase the opportunities for ESOL learners to interact in English, and provide opportunities to practise their skills over time, in addition to time spent in formal learning environments. Family learning provision focussed on language could also contribute here, drawing on the desire to be actively engaged and involved in their children's education as a key motivation for English language learning amongst parents of school aged children. Increasing opportunities to learn in different ways is important given that reductions in funding, and the restricted learning hours available within ESOL qualifications, have resulted in the provision of formal courses which offer relatively few learning hours per week. Factors such

as exposure to language input, opportunities to interact and to consolidate skills over time are all fundamental to effective language learning.

Less formal approaches to ESOL provision, which should be viewed as complementary to formal classes (and not as a replacement for them), can also help supplement the content of classes by offering language learning which is tailored to the immediate orientation and familiarisation needs of resettled refugees. Whilst formal ESOL providers offer language learning in contexts intended to be relevant to learners, such as health and education services, and employability, the greater flexibility available in less formal provision can be utilised to offer immediate support with language for everyday purposes and local orientation.

4. Build capacity and expertise in the delivery of ESOL provision for learners with basic literacy needs and learners with ‘pre-Entry’ level language learning needs

As noted above, capacity in ESOL generally is constrained by the available funding. A particular area of demand, for both resettled refugees and in many London boroughs more generally, is provision at the lowest levels of language learning and for learners who need to acquire basic literacy as part of their language learning. As well as directing investment towards these levels to increase capacity, measures should be taken to enhance providers’ expertise in providing these kinds of courses. This should include opportunities for practitioners to undertake professional development, as teaching basic literacy skills to adults is a specialist area not always covered in ESOL teacher training. Under Home Office guidance on English language provision for refugees on the SVPRS, up to 25% of the additional ESOL funding under the SVPRS may be spent to develop ESOL infrastructure where there is a lack of provision, and capacity building is deemed a necessity.

Resettlement co-ordinators and ESOL providers in London boroughs where there is an identified need for pre-Entry level and/or basic literacy provision could therefore consider pooling resources to fund appropriate professional development opportunities to increase the number of teachers trained in this specialism. Greater strategic planning and co-ordination could also play a role in supporting collaboration between providers to build capacity in this area of ESOL more widely. Professional development and capacity building activity should also include a focus on supporting digital inclusion and developing basic digital skills for learners at these levels, as low levels of literacy are strongly linked to digital exclusion. Further work could be undertaken to link this with the Mayor’s wider agenda on digital inclusion. Professional development should also include opportunities for volunteers and others working in non-teaching roles with ESOL learners to be able to support language learning effectively.

5. Address the practical barriers to accessing ESOL learning, particularly the need for adequate provision of childcare facilities

ESOL providers and refugee support organisations consistently identified childcare-related issues as having a key impact upon learners' ability to access provision. This included the provision of crèche and other childcare services, and also the need for providers to have sufficient capacity to offer classes at times, particularly in the mornings, which fit with parents' childcare commitments and the school day. Lack of childcare provision was reported as a key barrier to women being able to access ESOL. In some areas, consideration may also need to be given to addressing other practical barriers such as travel costs and the timing of classes. Reductions in ESOL funding have often affected providers' ability to offer childcare (and other support) alongside classes, so any additional investment in ESOL, whether through the additional ESOL funding provided under the SVPRS or more generally, should include further support for childcare. There is also the potential for more co-ordinated approaches to ESOL planning to support this, for example in matching learners to provision with the appropriate facilities and through partnership working where ESOL providers offer classes at venues where childcare is available. Further work to develop this should link in with the Mayor of London's activities to enhance strategic overview of the social infrastructure and ensure more accessible childcare facilities.

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- Blackfriars Settlement
- Breaking Barriers
- City Lit
- English for Action
- Hackney ESOL Advice Service
- Haringey Adult Learning Service
- HOLEX
- The Home Office
- London Borough of Islington
- London Learning Consortium
- London Voluntary Service Council
- National Association of Teachers of English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA)
- Newham Adult Learning Service
- Redbridge CVS
- Redbridge Institute of Adult Education
- Refugee Action
- Refugee Action Kingston
- The Refugee Council
- Tower Hamlets College
- Shpresa Programme
- Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service
- Westminster Adult Education Service
- Workers' Educational Association

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