



ESOL Mapping Report

August 2017

An overview of the Provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages in Wales





Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP)

Enabling a rights based approach to the inclusion of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Wales.

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Contents

•	Executive Summary:	4
•	Background:	6
•	ESOL Policy:	7
•	Methodology:	8
•	Survey Findings:	9
	ESOL Provision and gaps identified:	9
	ESOL Learners:	13
	Hours of learning:	14
	Type of learning:	14
	Travelling to class:	14
	Barriers to learning:	15
	ESOL Childcare Funding:	15
	Young People Aged 16-18:	16
	The Welsh language:	17
	Practising English outside class:	17
	Summer provision:	18
	Progression:	19
	Employability:	19
	Lessons learnt:	21
	Working across regions:	21
•	Recommendations:	23
•	Further information:	26



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision in Wales is produced as part of the requirements of the Home Office-funded post of ESOL Coordinator. All 22 Local Authorities (LAs) in Wales have resettled families under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme (SRP), and the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). LAs are required to make sure that beneficiaries of these schemes are able to access ESOL provision within a month of arrival, and for a minimum of 8 hours per week. The role of the ESOL Coordinator is funded by the Home Office to help coordinate provision, identify and resolve barriers, share best practice, develop infrastructure, encourage regional working, and support Local Authorities to deliver the ESOL requirements.

ESOL is regarded as an essential part of the integration process, and as a Basic Skill by the Welsh Government, available free up to the level of functionality. Functionality is considered to be the ability to read, write and speak at a level necessary to function and progress in work and society. The aim of this report is to provide an overview of how beneficiaries of the resettlement schemes are accessing ESOL provision, and how easily, in order to identify gaps and make recommendations on how to address issues identified.

The ESOL survey itself supports much of the anecdotal evidence we have been receiving. Many of the beneficiaries arriving in Wales have very low or no literacy levels in their own language (predominantly Arabic), and so formal ESOL provision poses its own challenges. Added to which there is an evident shortage of available places in classes at the right pre-entry level, and this can hamper language acquisition for newly arrived families. This lack of capacity and appropriate provision for SRP and VCRS refugees needs to be addressed.

The Home Office recommends formal ESOL provision for beneficiaries of the resettlement schemes, but accepts that informal ESOL may be the only provision available, and in some cases, may even be more appropriate because of learning styles. The responses in the survey demonstrates that community ESOL, provided by the Third Sector, needs to be more freely available.

Although many of the beneficiaries are far from being ready to move towards employment, it is recognised that vocational ESOL+ courses need to be available throughout Wales. It is clear that embedding ESOL within practical/ vocational training courses will be more effective for many of the beneficiaries than formal classes, both in terms of building on existing skills, providing refugees with a pathway to employment, and in terms of making the learning experience more relevant.

A sharing of ideas and good practice on ESOL learning was also called for within the survey responses. Many Local Authorities have responded innovatively to gaps in provision, finding and commissioning bespoke ESOL, working with volunteers in the community to support ESOL learning, using local charities to create childcare and family learning projects, making sure that provision is available over the summer period.

Many lessons have been learnt since the resettlement scheme began in September 2015, and it is hoped that this report and its findings will help Local Authorities and ESOL providers think strategically about the provision of ESOL, how best to use resources and the possibility of pooling resources across regions in some instances. The geography of Wales doesn't always make this a practical option, but there are already instances of regions working well together.

The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act implemented a policy of dispersal across the UK and, as a result, there are currently four asylum seeker dispersal areas in Wales: Cardiff, Newport, Wrexham and Swansea. Demand for ESOL is, as expected, greatest in these areas.

Whilst it has been relatively easy to gather information about the refugees resettled under the SRP and VCRS, it is far more difficult to present a true picture of how the wider migrant, refugee and asylum seeking population are accessing ESOL, other than to return to the reference made to the lack of capacity, and very long waiting lists. Further work will be required to understand access to ESOL for this population.



ESOL MAPPING REPORT

BACKGROUND

Since September 2015, the UK Government has committed to resettling up to 20,000 Syrian vulnerable persons through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme, in response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

The people coming to the UK as part of this programme are identified by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as being the most vulnerable, in desperate need of assistance and many have significant needs, which include:

- **women and girls at risk**
- **survivors of violence and/or torture**
- **refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs**
- **refugees with medical needs or disabilities**
- **children and adolescents at risk**
- **persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity**
- **refugees with family links in resettlement countries.**

On the 21 April 2016, the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme was announced by the UK Government, to resettle up to 3,000 children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The VCRS will extend to all 'Children at Risk' as defined by the UNHCR; it will be open to all 'at risk' groups and nationalities within the MENA

region where UNHCR has determined that resettlement is in their best interests.

In addition, from the beginning of July 2017, following advice from the UNHCR, the SRP is being extended to enable UNHCR to refer the most vulnerable refugees from the MENA region who have fled the Syrian conflict and cannot safely return to their country of origin, whatever their nationality.

At the end of March 2017, over 7,000 adults and children have been admitted under the SVPRS and 472 have been resettled in Wales. There are currently 4 families resettled in Wales under the VCRS.

The need to improve resettled people's English language skills is considered an essential element of their integration and journey towards self-sufficiency. All Local Authorities participating in the SRP and the VCRS are required to make appropriate ESOL language support arrangements for resettled people within one month of their arrival. Whilst Wales is a bilingual country, the priority is learning English, and the focus of the ESOL funding available from the Home Office is specifically on English language acquisition.

The Home Office expects most ESOL provision to be formal, so that learners have the opportunity to gain an accredited qualification. For quality assurance and value for money, the recommendation is to use providers registered

with quality assured ESOL tutors qualified to at least ESOL Level 3.

However, in acknowledgement of the barriers to formal learning that some individuals may face, it is accepted that occasionally, it may be appropriate to deliver or complement this provision with informal ESOL classes or sessions. This may be because informal provision is the only ESOL available at that time, or because an individual may be more comfortable attending informal ESOL, depending on their personal circumstances, or find it is better suited to the level they are currently at.

ESOL POLICY IN WALES

The Welsh Government's ESOL Policy for Wales (June 2014) provides a steer for the delivery of ESOL. The policy states that ESOL is a Basic Skill, and as such has parity with the essential skills of literacy and numeracy.

Wales is an inclusive, multicultural and multi-faith country. The diversity of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in Wales has significant benefits for Welsh culture and society, but in order for refugees to reach their full potential, they must be provided with the support they need to develop English language skills.

The Welsh Government pledge is to *"continue to provide public funding to support the delivery of ESOL classes for all up to the level of functionality."*

English language is an essential tool for integration and helps people to participate independently in society, to contribute to the

local economy, and to play an active positive role in Welsh communities. The ESOL policy exists in Wales to enable learners to gain the ESOL skills they need in order to make use of their existing vocational, professional or academic skills. It's important that every citizen of Wales has the opportunity to fully contribute to society and the economy.

The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act implemented a policy of dispersal across the UK and, as a result, there are currently four asylum seeker dispersal areas in Wales: Cardiff, Newport, Wrexham and Swansea. Demand for ESOL is, as expected, greatest in these areas.

HOME OFFICE FUNDING FOR ESOL

The Home Office provides funding to support Local Authorities with the resettlement of families. This is currently £8,250 per head in the first year, decreasing to £1,000 by the fifth and final year of support. The funding is intended to cover the additional health, housing, social and education costs locally, and includes provision for ESOL for **adults over the age of 19**.

Furthermore, additional ESOL Funding can be claimed (a one-off payment of £850 per adult) to help pay for additional or specialised ESOL, or to ensure provision of ESOL when families arrive during term times.

ESOL Childcare Funding can be claimed by local authorities to help remove barriers to attendance for some beneficiaries.

METHODOLOGY

This survey was developed by the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) in consultation with the Local Government Data Unit Wales (the Data Unit), and is fundamental to understanding the ESOL landscape and successful delivery of ESOL going forward.

The survey aimed to gather views on current ESOL provision from Local Authorities and other known parties delivering the UK government's asylum and refugee schemes within Wales. This is in line with the Home Office requirements for the Mapping of ESOL provision available for the SRP and VCRS. The survey was designed to: identify available provision, identify who is delivering ESOL across Wales, and to assess how effectively respondents feel current ESOL provision is in meeting the needs of migrants and asylum seekers, in particular beneficiaries of the SRP and VCRS scheme.

MATERIALS

The survey consisted of 38 individual questions split under 12 different themes. The survey was delivered online using the Data Unit's survey tool. Links to access were sent out to known parties identified by the WSMP.

SAMPLE

The target sample for the survey were local authorities within Wales, who were encouraged to cascade the survey to SRP/VCRS support workers. The survey was also sent to a wide range of organisations within the ESOL and the Voluntary Sector, and responses from other organisations were

accepted. Specific attention was paid to obtaining the fullest possible responses from asylum dispersal areas as the picture in these areas regarding supply and demand is more complex.

RESPONSES

A total of 29 responses were received. A responder may have chosen to 'skip' a question or leave areas of the survey blank if necessary. Some questions may also have missing data as not all questions were mandatory. As the WSMP know the target audience for the survey and could identify who the incomplete and partially complete responses were, some qualitative data has been lifted and used from them to further inform this report.

Not every respondent answered every question. The total number of responses has been listed on relevant data tables. Percentage results in these data tables are calculated as the relevant number of response for an option divided by the number of responses that were given for that specific question. It should be noted that the sample size and audience for individual questions therefore is variable.



SURVEY FINDINGS

The respondents were predominantly from the Local Authorities, and in some areas responses came primarily from ESOL Providers. There were also responses from Job Centres and one support organisation. There was very little response from the Voluntary Sector, even though the survey was cascaded widely across Wales. However, a previous scoping exercise undertaken in 2016 outlines much of the informal ESOL provision provided by the Third Sector in Cardiff, and it is evident that in areas such as Swansea, there is a wide variety of informal provision.

An overwhelming majority of respondents thought that a mix of Formal ESOL and Informal ESOL provision works best.

Which approach do you think works best?

	Count	%
Formal ESOL provision only	1	3.7
Informal ESOL provision only	1	3.7
A mix of formal and informal ESOL provision	25	92.6
Total	27	100.0

‘Formal’ ESOL provision usually means mainstream college provision or provision delivered by an accredited teacher. ‘Informal’ ESOL is often delivered by volunteers, or in a community setting, and does not lead to accreditation.

Local Authorities told us that formal ESOL backed up with additional ESOL sessions in a more relaxed, community setting where learners are able to practice what they learnt in class is considered the most effective approach.

FORMAL ESOL PROVISION

Although the survey was distributed as widely as possible, most of the responses came back from Local Authorities, with the focus on the SRP and VCRS learners.

The Survey showed that formal ESOL college courses exist in all areas. This means that in theory all the Syrian beneficiaries should be able to access ESOL, but the reality is that finding classes at the right level and within reach, with places available at the right times for enough hours, is not always possible. Some FE Colleges are flexible and able to react to the need for provision as it arises, showing a good understanding of the needs of refugees. Others require registration in the autumn for enrolment in the following academic year, which is clearly not practical for resettled families arriving throughout the year. In addition, Swansea and Cardiff in particular have long waiting lists – 500 reported to be waiting for

college courses in Swansea – and not everyone will get a place. The Home Office ESOL additional funding of £850 per head means that in theory Local Authorities are able to commission bespoke classes for their resettled adults if they can find qualified teachers, but it could be that other refugees and asylum seekers may be left without access to ESOL classes. However, this may compound issues around a ‘two-tier’ approach to refugee integration with some refugees provided greater access to ESOL than others and where possible, we will seek to encourage an approach which sees classes which have mixed groups of learners.

Across Wales, many classes are run by Adult Learning Wales [ALW], leading to an Agored qualification, and taught by accredited teachers.

GAPS IDENTIFIED IN FORMAL ESOL PROVISION

Two Local Authorities reported that they found no gaps in local provision – one an asylum seeker dispersal area, and the other more rural. This, however, is very much the exception, and the other respondents report issues around:

- **a lack of capacity at their local colleges**
 - **a lack of crèche or childcare facilities**
 - **not enough provision for pre-entry level**
 - **classes tied to the academic year**
 - **issues around transport and getting to the college**
 - **a need for more intensive courses**
 - **a lack of higher level courses (for those wanting citizenship or IELTS qualifications for employment)**
 - **difficulty in providing the recommended number of hours, class times**
 - **a lack of qualified teachers.**
-

One respondent did recognise the potential to pool resources across local authorities and also made the following points:

“

We are meeting with the new coordinator for the college....to understand provision from September onwards. These points are not so much about gaps in provision, but my thoughts on what the right ESOL provision should look like. ESOL should be provided at the right level, based on initial assessment; easily accessible for students to get to, without having to walk long distances – classes in community venues might be useful; flexible, allowing students to join at different times, and an ability to cope with differentiation; friendly and supportive, with enough hours as part of a planned and monitored approach to develop language over a period of time, moving on to more advanced classes when ready; mixed classes, not just SRP beneficiaries; plenty of opportunity to listen, understand and speak at first, to develop confidence in oracy, then develop literacy; easily accessible childcare nearby.

”

INFORMAL ESOL PROVISION

We know from the short scoping exercise that was conducted by the WSMP at the end of 2016 that the Third Sector provide a great deal of informal ESOL provision, especially in asylum seeker dispersal areas. In **Cardiff**, drop-in non-accredited classes are available at the Welsh Refugee Council (including 2 sessions a week delivered by USW ESOL trainee teachers as part of their assessed teaching practice), Trinity Centre through Space 4U, Oasis Centre. Friends and Neighbours (FaN) groups and conversation classes are also available at Oasis. Oasis are also working towards becoming an accreditation centre for Agored Cymru.

In **Swansea**, non-accredited ESOL provision for pre-entry through to Entry 2+, and Intermediate / Advanced is delivered by Unity in Diversity on two evenings a week, Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) deliver one class a week, Swansea University deliver two drop-in ELTS classes, and Adult Learning Wales (ALW) also deliver 27 different ESOL courses in community venues, although these are all accredited (Agored) and therefore not strictly ‘informal’.

In **Newport**, the British Red Cross provide female only classes, and a varied programme of learning and support. Male and female-only ESOL is available at the Sanctuary Project at Bethel Church. There’s provision at Shaftesbury Church, Share Centre, and the Newport and District Refugees Support Group run an international drop-in, with a 4-week rolling induction programme.

3 survey respondents reported that they were unaware or uncertain of any informal ESOL provision in their area.

In other local authority areas, there is clearly a variety of informal ESOL provision ranging from drop-ins at local churches, sessions through play with the children, weekly sessions guided by the families at the local library, organised walks and ‘conversation afternoons’ to regular classes with TESOL university students. In some areas, there’s a broad range of non-accredited community classes run by various Third Sector organisations, all well attended and highlighting the response in areas of great need due to the numbers of refugee and asylum seekers. This provision can range from being held in a classroom environment in the community, to being much more informal, such as women-only Language and Play sessions run by the British Red Cross, with childcare provided, or female only ‘Coffee and Laughs’ focused on conversational English for BME residents and occasionally asylum seekers or migrants.

GAPS IDENTIFIED IN INFORMAL ESOL PROVISION

4 respondents said they could identify **no gaps in the informal** ESOL provision available, and another said they would welcome details of how informal provision works in other areas. A few other respondents said they found it difficult to access information about what was available.

Of those who reported gaps, these include lack of childcare (although the ESOL Childcare Funding has helped plug the gap in some cases); unsuitable class times; consistency of classes (they are not always regular due to dependency on volunteers); a reliance on funding and volunteers leading to a lack of continuity; a lack of knowledge of exactly what was available; a feeling that families needed time together and so had no time to attend informal classes on top of formal ESOL provision; a lack of coordination with formal ESOL, so that progression became difficult; a need to strengthen the links between formal and informal provision; not enough focus on standardised topic-related ESOL (health, police, culture, leisure etc.); and a suggestion that local, bespoke, small group provision that was flexible and practical would be helpful.

One Local Authority has succeeded in adding to the hours of learning by providing informal classes that supplement the formal provision, and makes this point which reinforces some of the other comments about the challenges for volunteers, and linking formal and informal ESOL:

“

Informal providers face the challenge of delivering a programme of second language instruction without having the support of an educational organisation to provide a syllabus / materials / photocopying facilities / whiteboards / PCs with projector facilities etc. Given this, a more suitable way of framing the picture of informal provision may be to question how informal providers can be supported to work alongside formal provision.

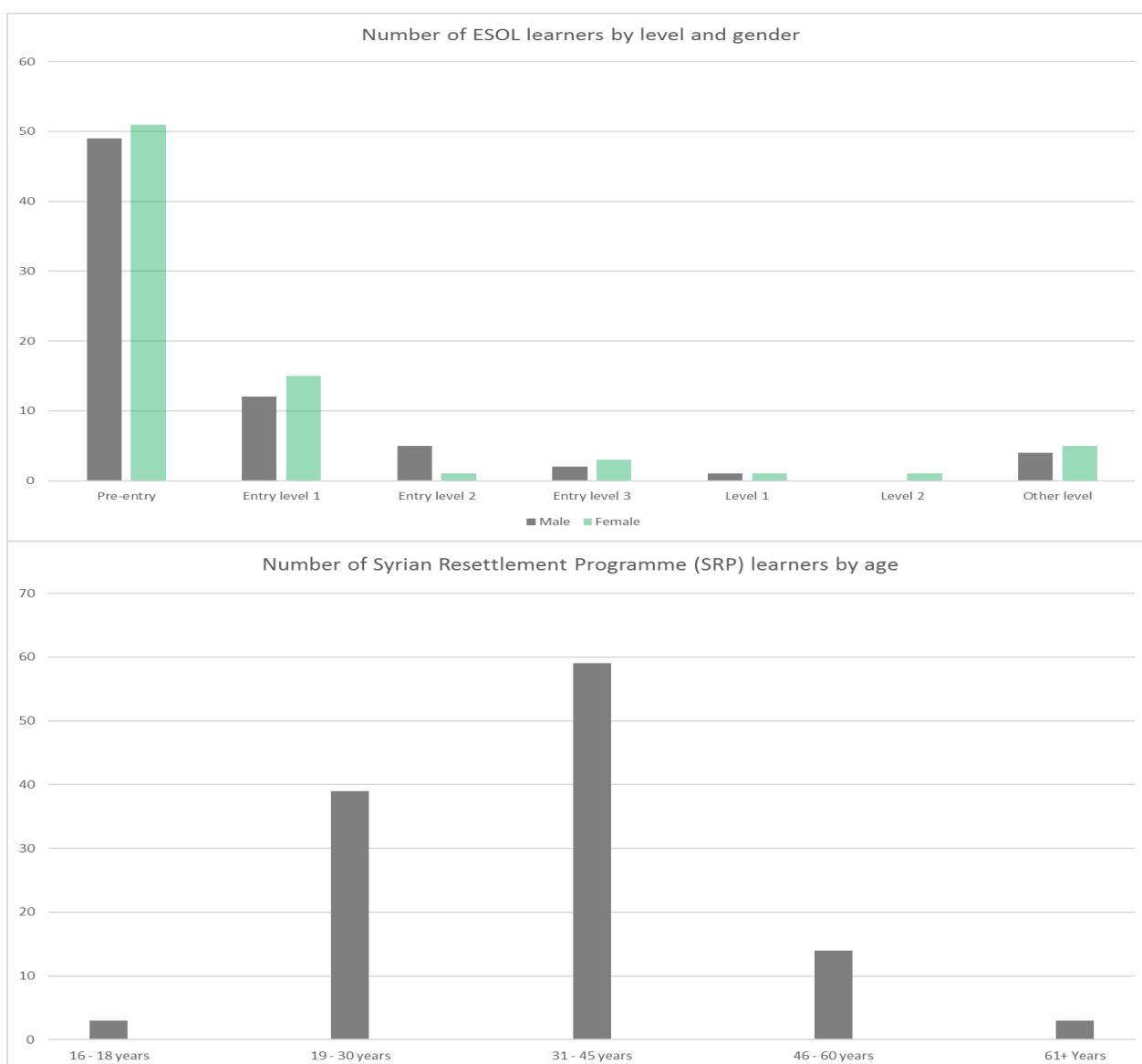
”

ESOL LEARNERS

80% of respondents reported that their learners are assessed on arrival and that most of the learners are arriving with little or no English, and often no literacy skills in their own language (predominantly Arabic). Correct assessment allows the learner to understand their starting level, and gives a better idea of their progression. In Wales, it is recommended that the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) is used, but many reported that their beneficiaries do not have enough English to allow them to be assessed using WEST.

This low starting ability in English often means that accessing ESOL within the recommended time of one month can be problematic. This can be due to arrival being out of synch with term times, or the appropriate level classes being full. Demand at pre-entry level, especially in the dispersal areas, is significant. Even when a college works on a roll-on/roll-off basis, if other students have 'rolled-on' a few weeks previously, the class is already too advanced for newly arrived beneficiaries. Some Local Authorities are getting around this by using the ESOL Additional Funding to commission bespoke classes, sometimes in the home, until the learners feel confident enough or are able to attend formal classes.

By far, most learners, both male and female, are pre-entry level, with a far smaller number at Entry Level 1 and only a scattering of numbers through the other levels as far as Level 2.



HOURS OF LEARNING

While the Home Office recommends a minimum of 8 hours' formal English classes, accessed within a month of arrival, it is accepted that for some learners with very little English or for those who find the formal environment a barrier, informal ESOL may be appropriate. Either way, the survey showed that reaching the 8-hour target is not easy or guaranteed. One respondent suggested that:

“
The 8 hours of ESOL provision recommended by the Home Office should be qualified by the stipulation of '8 hours' instruction at an appropriate level.
 ”

On average, how many hours of ESOL support do you think learners are accessing?

	Count	%
None	2	8.0
Less than 3 hours	3	12.0
3 - 5 hours	6	24.0
5 - 8 hours	7	28.0
More than 8 hours	7	28.0
Total	25	100.0

TYPE OF LEARNING

Most of the learning (**57.7%**) is reported as being formal, which is the recommended provision, but a large number (**42.3%**) also report that the learning is a mix of both formal and informal.

TRAVELLING TO CLASS

In a country such as Wales, it is no surprise that transport, or the lack of it, is often an issue. Most are using buses to go to classes, and a few walk and use the bus. Occasionally, taxis are paid for by the Local Authority where no other means of transport is available, and a couple of families are reported to be driving – one as far as the neighbouring authority to access classes three times a week (a round trip of approx. 45 miles).

On average, how far do your learners travel to access ESOL classes:

	Count	%
Less than 5 miles	17	65.4
5 - 10 miles	6	23.1
10 - 15 miles	2	7.7
More than 15 miles	1	3.8
Total	26	100.0

BARRIERS TO LEARNING

This was a multi-choice question, and respondents were free to choose as many answers as they thought indicated the barriers their learners faced.

What do you think are the main barriers to learning?

	Count	%
Childcare issues	16	64.0
Gender	5	20.0
Age	2	8.0
Waiting list	4	16.0
Lack of capacity	7	28.0
Class times	9	36.0
Term times	3	12.0
Costs	3	12.0
Transport	14	56.0
Low literacy skills	16	64.0
Confidence	18	72.0
Trauma / mental health	10	40.0
Physical health	7	28.0
Disabilities	2	8.0
Job seeking or volunteering	5	20.0
Medical appointments	6	24.0
Irregular attendance due to medical or other appointments	5	20.0
Maintaining minimum attendance rate	5	20.0
Other (please specify):	2	8.0
Total number of respondents	25	

Confidence was seen to be the biggest barrier, closely followed by childcare issues and low literacy skills, with transport close behind. It may also be worth noting that trauma/mental health scores higher than waiting lists, lack of capacity or class or term times.

It should be noted that up to the end of June 2016, we know that 55% of people resettled in the UK through the programme are survivors of torture or violence¹, or both. Many respondents report that ESOL tutors may have to spend time dealing with personal issues and informal counselling, which they may not be equipped to do, and which may affect the smooth-running of the class.

ESOL CHILDCARE FUNDING

It is recognised that making childcare available is essential to ensure that parents, and women in particular, are able to attend classes. Not all colleges are able to offer crèche facilities, and so the Home Office has established an ESOL Childcare Fund (£600K for 2017/18) as a way of helping Local Authorities either pay for childcare or establish a bespoke project. **Our survey showed that just under half had applied for this funding.**

¹ National Audit Office Report, 12 September 2016 - <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-Syrian-Vulnerable-Persons-Resettlement-programme.pdf>

There is no guarantee that bids will be successful. Creative and innovative projects that maximise the family learning aspect are encouraged, although often, using and paying for an established crèche or nursery makes the most practical sense.

“

We have an informal project running with a local charity who provide opportunities for families to learn through playing with their children, and also claim day nursery costs so that adults can attend together.

”

YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-18

The ESOL Funding as part of the SRP or VCRS is intended for adults aged 19+, but there is considerable feedback to suggest that young people aged between 16-18 could be slipping through the net – too old for school services, and not able to access Further Education courses due to poor levels of English. This is especially true in the dispersal areas where there is growing concern about young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers moving into adulthood with no hope of gaining qualifications or furthering their education.

A total of 7 young people were reported as not receiving any ESOL provision, but note that the survey did not succeed in fully catching the situation for asylum seekers and refugees outside the SRP and more work is needed to establish the numbers of young people, 16-18, who are not accessing ESOL provision.

A total of 11 respondents contributed to this table of barriers to their learning.

What do you think are the main reasons young people are not participating?

	Count	%
Low literacy skills	5	45.5
Transport	3	27.3
Term times	0	0.0
Gender	1	9.1
Confidence	4	36.4
Not eligible	1	9.1
Lack of capacity	5	45.5
School/college attendance	5	45.5
Funding issues	2	18.2
Funding issues as transition to Further Education	2	18.2
Lack of provision for this age range	3	27.3
Other	0	0.0
Total number of respondents	11	

THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Learning English in a bilingual country can provide learners with a greater challenge. Bilingual signage and Welsh place names can all be difficult when the English language is 'alien' as well. Whilst it is accepted that learning English is the priority, providers are encouraged to integrate learning about the Welsh language and culture into their ESOL classes where possible. In North and West Wales, there are certainly learners who can manage basic greetings and simple phrases in Welsh, which can help enormously with integration in these more Welsh speaking areas of Wales.

3 respondents said their learners had expressed an interest in learning Welsh, but accepted that English language acquisition was the priority at this stage. Some are already practising simple Welsh greetings in cafes or community venues. In some areas, Welsh is very much the language of local schools, and to date, one nine-year old child has achieved fluency in Welsh.

“

Immersive Welsh language centres exist in many parts of Wales, so that children moving in to Wales can learn enough Welsh to integrate with classmates, and in some cases, continue their education in the Welsh language. After several weeks of being immersed in the local Welsh language centre's activities, one Syrian child is now able to converse in Welsh, and now speaks better Welsh than English. This is helping to raise language awareness with the family, who have nothing but praise for the positive language learning experienced by their child. This will undoubtedly help with conversations in Welsh with fellow school pupils, and in future, should the family remain in North Wales, the Welsh language is seen as a useful qualification when applying for jobs, especially in the Public Sector.

”

PRACTISING ENGLISH OUTSIDE OF CLASSES

Learning any new language as an adult is challenging, and confidence is quickly gained where beneficiaries can practice what they have learnt outside of class. Many refugees have internet in the home, primarily as a way of keeping in touch with family members. Community activities are an informal way of learning in a less formal environment and can significantly enhance language acquisition and confidence – taking part in events, getting to know the area, making friends. Volunteering enables people to recapture a sense of identity, or to feel they are giving something back.

Are learners able to access any of the following to practice their English outside of classes?

	Count	%
Internet at home	16	66.7
Internet elsewhere other than home	11	45.8
Language apps on smartphones	13	54.2
Informal drop in centre or Friends and Neighbours (FAN) groups	12	50.0
Volunteering	15	62.5
Community activities	15	62.5
Family learning events	4	16.7
Other	0	0.0
Total number of respondents	24	

SUMMER PROVISION

43.5% of respondents said they were able to secure ESOL classes or learning events over the summer, while **56.5%** said they had no provision available.

Whilst it is recognised that continuing the learning over the summer is helpful, to ensure that progress can continue to be made in September, and that language skills are not lost, many families just want to be together over the summer period, and some feel tired and in need of a break from formal learning and classes. One local authority reported waiting for confirmation of the ESOL Childcare Funding to pay for summer childcare, allowing parents to continue with 4 hours of provision a week. Many rely on the Third Sector to organise days out to practice English, and some informal provision continues over the summer.

“

The ESOL tutor arranges activities and trips to local places of interest, to help learners get to know the local area and learn more English through ‘practical learning’. Local charity Sova have a range of activities that they can offer. The local university offers a ‘Summer School’ in 2 week blocks which our beneficiaries could attend on a non-residential basis.

”

“

The college is providing classes twice a week through July at the campus location. Adult Learning Wales have agreed to deliver 2 x 3 hour classes each week during August, using the campus location.

”

PROGRESSION

As learners improve and move towards employment, they may need more specialist ESOL courses. The response to the question about these ESOL classes was low, but this was no doubt because many of the beneficiaries are far from being able to look for paid employment yet. It is accepted though that **Vocational ESOL 'plus' classes** would be valuable at beginner level for those with little educational background in their own country, but who have skills that they would like to be using, and who would probably respond better to learning in this manner.

Currently, the only ESOL+ courses in Wales are available at Cardiff and the Vale College. ESOL+ courses are an opportunity to learn English in the context of trades and skills, such as construction and plumbing, business administration, hospitality and catering, health and social care / childcare.

Are any of the following courses available locally?

	Count	%
Vocational ESOL+	2	20.0
Academic pathway ESOL	3	30.0
PoliceESOL	3	30.0
International English Language Testing System (IELTS) support	4	40.0
Informal Classes delivered by University ESOL /TEFL departments	5	50.0
Total number of respondents	10	

EMPLOYABILITY

Employment is an important part of the resettlement process and a step towards self-sufficiency for resettled refugees. It gives the wage earner an identity, and may help address issues around the impact of the benefit cap.

The lack of ESOL 'plus' classes featured highly among the issues identified, as did transport issues, and the lack of volunteering opportunities. The lack of proof of qualifications or verification issues around transferring qualifications were seen, at this stage, as less of an issue.

What issues have you identified with helping your learners move towards employability?

	Count	%
Lack of higher level ESOL classes	9	40.9
Lack of IELTS provision locally	3	13.6
Lack of vocational ESOL+ classes locally	10	45.5
Lack of proof of qualifications or experience	8	36.4
Verification issues around transferring qualifications	5	22.7
Appropriate volunteering opportunities	10	45.5
Transport issues	11	50.0
Other	6	27.3
Total number of respondents	22	

Many of the resettled Syrian males previously worked in the construction industry, and will need a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Smart Card to work on construction sites. UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) can help with the transferring of overseas qualifications.

One Local Authority has a young woman who's a nurse, keen to return to her profession. She will need to reach International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 7 before she can do this and so has a long way to go with her English before this can happen.

But, bearing in mind that many Local Authorities are new to resettling refugees, there's more confidence than not about meeting ESOL needs locally in the future, with **46% confident of meeting needs going forward.**

As learners progress and improve, how confident are you that their ESOL learning needs can be met locally?

	Count	%
Very confident	5	17.9
Confident	13	46.4
Not confident	9	32.1
Not at all confident	1	3.6
Total	28	100.0

“

Each learner will have different aims. Some will wish to be able to use the second language (English) simply to get by, while others may well wish to take professional qualifications as a necessary stepping stone to achieving their career aspirations. Meeting the needs of the learners will depend very much on the individuals involved and the locations in which they find themselves.

”

LESSONS LEARNT

The SRP and VCRS are funded for five years, and many local authorities are thinking strategically about future spending to help new arrivals and learning from their initial experience.

Based on lessons learnt so far, are you likely to do any of the following to help future learners or new arrivals?

	Count	%
Use funding to expand existing provision	15	65.2
Use funding to create something new / bespoke	14	60.9
Improve capacity through additional training	6	26.1
Encourage ESOL providers to take the lead on expanding provision	14	60.9
Work with community sector to establish more informal ESOL sessi	18	78.3
Total number of respondents	23	

“

Perhaps the greatest lesson is that there is a great deal of goodwill in the community, and that collaboration – making personal contacts – leads to a vastly improved programme of language instruction.

”

“

I had wondered about something on ‘debriefing’ initially, as at first, I think it was a bit emotional...Tutors manage it but perhaps some support in coping with this side of things may be useful.

”

WORKING ACROSS REGIONS/POOLING RESOURCES

The Home Office guidance to ESOL funding emphasises the need to maximise funding and impact through working regionally. Some local authorities are already working on a regional basis, in some cases building on established regional structures and partnerships, realising that pooling resources will be more cost effective and make best use of resources available.

However, the geography of Wales doesn’t always mean that this is possible or practical.

How likely are you to pool resources and work with other local authorities in the future?

	Count	%
Very likely	5	22.7
Likely	11	50.0
Unlikely	5	22.7
Very unlikely	1	4.5
Total number of respondents	22	

“

If pooled resources created a source of ESOL available outside of the county borough, I would be keen to utilise this. However, it is dependent on whether the families would travel.

”

“

I think it would be wise for LAs to be encouraged and provided with the opportunities to discuss provision / share good practice. This also relates to FE colleges that may explore sharing / coordinating ESOL provision.

”

We would like to thank those organisations and individuals who responded to our survey and who are working with us to take the work forward. The consideration of the following recommendations will form the basis of our collective efforts going forward.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The final survey questions asked what continued support was needed from both the WSMP and the Home Office. These responses, along with the additional comments provided throughout the report, and responses gleaned from meetings and individual conversations, form the recommendations of this report. In addition, although Wales does not have devolved powers in regards to immigration, the ESOL policy in Wales, and the recognition of the importance of ESOL to migrants resettling or working in our communities, mean that responsibility for some of the actions arising from the recommendations will fall to the Welsh Government, working together with the Home Office and WSMP.

- WSMP to continue work with Home Office, Welsh Government and other partners and seek to **identify how new and existing sources of investment to support ESOL delivery in areas of high demand can enhance English language acquisition by refugees**
- WSMP ESOL Coordinator to continue to **support strategic local approaches to planning, commissioning and co-ordination of ESOL provision – to help increase the intensity of provision** for learners who need it, and ensure the relevance of course content to resettled refugees, in line with Home Office, Department for Education (DfE) and Welsh Government guidance
- **Improve capacity:** long waiting lists, issues around flexibility in some colleges to respond and adapt as local needs change, a lack of classes at appropriate levels all combine to make accessing ESOL provision really challenging in many areas, especially dispersal areas, and needs to be addressed. **More work is needed to better understand the underlying issues around capacity** (which also examines access to ESOL for wider populations of learners), to establish whether it is purely the volume of learners, or whether there is a fundamental shortage of accredited tutors, or both
- **Home Office to consider whether there is a need to increase ESOL funding (for formal and informal provision)** in order to make sure that there are enough suitably qualified tutors to teach in enough classes at the appropriate level in all areas of Wales
- Welsh Government to consider how best to support and enable **professional development for practitioners**, as well as **increasing the volume of provision** in order to meet identified need

- **Develop ESOL infrastructure in some LA areas without sufficient provision:** ESOL Coordinator should advise Local Authorities on best uses of resources available in order to develop infrastructure, particularly in rural or remote areas where refugees may have to otherwise travel some distance to attend classes
- **Address the needs of pre-entry level learners.** It is clear that more classes are needed aimed at absolute beginners, available all year round, and made available to all refugee and asylum seekers because research shows that mixed language groups aid faster language acquisition. This work could be supported with guidance for Local Authorities and ESOL providers on how to set up effective interim ESOL provision until formal provision becomes available, or until beneficiaries' progress to the ESOL levels offered in colleges
- **Provide an online and readily available directory of information about ESOL provision in Wales.** This need comes through in many of the responses, and could mean that the ESOL Coordinator, with support from the sector, develops a Directory of what is available with examples of how others may have commissioned bespoke classes. It could also work as an interactive map of some kind, although this type of resource would need to be updated on a regular basis
- **Improve online links between ESOL providers across Wales** by establishing an **online ESOL platform** on which to communicate and share ideas and information, coordinated by WSMP ESOL Coordinator
- **Utilise this platform as a way of identifying and sharing good practice** so that all local authorities and ESOL practitioners can easily see what is working, and adapt ideas to suit their own needs. Information about innovative projects, getting local volunteers involved, family learning events, sharing resources could all be shared on this digital hub, or a private Facebook group, or some other means that allows for easy and secure access and updates
- **Make sure there are mentors and support workers** to deal with issues which learners present with and which may inhibit their learning, for example around administration or budgeting, or more serious issues such as psychological distress or trauma so that ESOL tutors are able to focus on effective delivery of classes

- **Continued Support from the Home Office for funding childcare.** Issues around childcare are apparent in the responses to many of the questions. Without childcare, many women find it impossible to attend ESOL provision. Successfully funded childcare projects benefit not only the mothers, but also the children. Making the childcare available to a mixed group enhances the opportunity for learning and integration
- **Increase provision of ESOL for trades and job opportunities.** Many of the beneficiaries will learn English better in a more practical, vocational setting, where they can see opportunities for re-entering the workplace. Colleges throughout Wales need to be able to offer ESOL+ vocational courses. This is especially important as the earlier cohorts of refugees move towards employment
- **Ensure that classes are accessible for 16-18 year olds.** There is concern that this vulnerable age group needs to be able to access organised classes to avoid them moving into adulthood with no chance of qualifications and being socially and educationally isolated. This is particularly relevant to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Dispersal areas in particular report high levels of young people finding it difficult to access ESOL. This might be dependent on further work to confirm the numbers of 16-18 year olds affected, and how they might be supported
- **Home Office to continue funding for the ESOL Coordinator's role, in line with the SRP Resettlement Coordinator,** to continue the central coordination and capacity building around ESOL for SRP and VCRP beneficiaries, in recognition of the importance of English language acquisition to integration and employment
- Welsh Government to continue to Chair the **ESOL Steering Group** in partnership with the WSMP. The ESOL Steering Group will support implementation of the report's recommendations and the development of an action plan and help ensure ongoing and effective coordination and knowledge sharing on ESOL delivery across Wales



FURTHER INFORMATION

Wales Strategic Migration Partnership - LINK: <http://www.wsmp.org.uk/>

Knowledge Hub: Syrian Resettlement Programme for Wales - LINK: <https://khub.net/>

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme - LINK: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472020/Syrian_Resettlement_Fact_Sheet_gov_uk.pdf

ESOL Policy Wales - LINK: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/esolcourse/?lang=en>

Welsh Refugee Council - LINK: <http://welshrefugeecouncil.org.uk>

British Red Cross - LINK: <http://www.redcross.org.uk/en/Where-we-work/In-the-UK/Wales/Wales>

UK Government Syrian Resettlement Fact Sheet - LINK: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472020/Syrian_Resettlement_Fact_Sheet_gov_uk.pdf

UK NARIC - LINK: <https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>

UNHCR - LINK: <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/>

