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Individualised ESOL provision: Slough Borough Council

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Brief description

An ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) programme at Slough Borough Council supports the integration of learners into the community and prepares them well for employment or further study through a carefully personalised programme.

Overview – the provider’s message



‘One of the challenges of the Migration Works and Migration Connects programmes has been bringing different parts of the council together to provide seamless delivery that benefits the learners. These programmes have enabled us to effectively align resources coming into the council with the teaching expertise provided by the lifelong learning team. Managers have worked well together and used feedback from learners to develop customised programmes that add value and create

opportunities. This has been done through having one person working with the groups to provide a well-coordinated and concentrated effort to support learners through their different programmes. Learners make quick progress and the programme is very successful.

I’d advise others to ensure good communications between the key players, so that they agree common aims, roles and responsibilities, and build on their respective strengths for more effective delivery.’

Philip Wright, Head of Lifelong Learning

The good practice in detail

The 'Migration Connects' programme evolved from a European Integration funded project called 'Migration Works'. **Inspectors** said that this programme improved the economic wellbeing of newly arrived immigrants to exceptional levels. They described the programme as being 'outstanding in offering an extensive range of programmes and enrichment activities that have raised learners' skills and expectations'.

The programme is intended for newly arrived third country nationals who have been admitted to the UK in a category that may lead to settlement and have been in the UK for less than five years. Many are spouses, some are highly qualified from their home country, but they all want to improve their language skills and their prospects of working or studying further.



Gideon Reuben, Saira Minhas and Seema Kamboj

'We wanted to devise a programme that integrated learners into the community by offering a holistic course that included information, advice and guidance, ICT, ESOL, citizenship and life in the UK', says a member of the migration connects team. 'We try to make the learning fun and at the same time prepare learners for exams. Within the programme there is also recognition that learners retain their own culture – and we support this through a very successful diversity event. Some of our

biggest successes have been learners who lacked confidence to attend by themselves at the start and after a few months were able to present, in English, to a large group of people. You can see their growing levels of confidence. Often learners who have successfully gained employment in a related field to their skills or expertise continue to attend to increase their language skills.'

Many people have worked together to construct an exciting programme that is very successful. The ICT and ESOL tutors deliver sessions jointly to provide bilingual support for learners and to put the language into a computing context. Each ICT or language course is offered at a range of levels to suit the learner's needs. The courses typically run for 10 weeks, although many shorter taster courses are also offered. Some of the taster courses have an element of challenge, like 'learn 50 new words in a day'; others give learners a flavour of vocational programmes, provide personal development, such as driving theory, and confidence building related to finding employment.

Learners also benefit from a wide range of purposeful visits, such as going to a beach, a museum or to the Houses of Parliament. They are encouraged to share their background through the diversity day, when they give presentations, food demonstrations and show examples of festivals from their own countries to raise awareness of different cultures. The course also has an annual celebration event when learners share their stories and what they have learned. Last year, they devised a sketch that was facilitated by a professional writer.

The course includes sessions on information, advice and guidance. The first session takes place following initial applications and results in an action plan for each learner. Learners' aspirations, their objectives and any barriers to learning, and their support needs, are discussed and recorded. Guidance continues flexibly throughout the programme. Learners have formal sessions combined with coffee mornings once a term, to seek their views on the

programme and progression opportunities. External mentors provide support to help them with the more hands-on aspects of job seeking, such as CVs, interview practice and where to look for specific jobs. Learners also have free access to the NARIC system where they can check the UK equivalents of their overseas qualifications.

So what do the learners say?

- 'We have been given a lot of advantages by being able to do so many courses, like driving theory, computer courses, sewing and how to find work.'
- 'The course has helped me to handle everyday situations and become more confident.'
- 'The childcare support, talks by a midwife and the job clubs are really helpful.'
- 'The course has been fun, especially the diversity and celebration events, where we were encouraged to use our own experiences.'
- 'The biggest benefits of the course have been in improving my English which has helped me to talk more confidently, use the telephone and solve my own problems.'

Provider background



Slough Borough Council works with three community-based partners, to offer learning for social and personal development in eleven subject areas to over 2,000 learners each year. The programmes are provided from two main centres and a range of neighbourhood venues. The Council also runs an apprenticeship programme.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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