

ESOL in the post-compulsory learning and skills sector: an evaluation

This survey evaluates the quality of provision of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) offered in the post-compulsory learning and skills sector and reports on the programmes available to learners.

Age group: post-16

Published: October 2008

Reference no: 070229

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Reference no. 070229

© Crown Copyright 2008



Contents

Executive summary	5
Key findings	7
Recommendations	8
Introduction	9
Evaluation: how effective is ESOL provision?	10
Trends in inspection grades	10
The introduction of new qualifications	10
Success rates	11
Skills development	12
Progression	13
Teaching and learning	13
Planning and recording individual learning	16
Positive features of planning individual learning	16
Areas for improvement in planning individual learning	16
General provision to meet the needs and interests of learners	17
Specific provision	18
Embedded learning	18
Employability learning	20
Workplace learning	21
Citizenship	22
Information, advice, guidance and support for learners	23
Partnerships	25
Leadership and management	25
The introduction of fees	26
Quality improvement processes	27
Teacher qualifications	28
Learners' views	29
What learners said they liked about their ESOL learning	29
The experience of learning ESOL	29
Diversity	29
What and how they learnt	29
What they had achieved	30
Their teachers	30
The venues	30
What learners said could be improved	31
The emphasis on individual learning	31

Information about classes	31
Classes with very mixed learner attainment	31
Computer access and use in some places	31
Some accommodation	31
Notes	31
Survey methodology	31
ESOL – Skills for Life levels and accreditation	32
Further information	33
Fees	33
Embedding	33
General	33
Annex	34
Providers visited for the survey	34

Executive summary

This survey evaluates the quality of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) offered in the post-compulsory learning and skills sector in England and reports on the programmes offered. Between September 2007 and March 2008, inspectors visited 14 further education (FE) colleges, eight adult and community learning providers, five independent work-based learning providers, and one learndirect provider. The colleges chosen were mainly those whose ESOL had been graded good or better at their most recent inspection, while the remainder had received at least satisfactory grades. In addition, responses to a survey questionnaire received from 114 colleges and 30 adult and community learning providers were analysed in detail. The college respondents were responsible for 62% of ESOL enrolments funded in colleges by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2006–07, while adult and community learning respondents were responsible for 35% of ESOL enrolments directly funded by the LSC in the adult and community learning sector.

ESOL provision in colleges and adult and community learning has improved steadily and is satisfactory. Between 2001 and 2005, 12 of the 60 ESOL curriculum areas inspected in colleges were less than satisfactory. Only one of the 16 inspected during institutional inspections since then has been judged less than satisfactory. The trend of improvement in adult and community learning has been similar but less marked. However, in both sectors, the proportion of provision that is good or outstanding has not increased and remains too low. In the period to 2008 only around half of the college provision and a fifth of adult and community learning provision was judged by institutional inspections to be good or outstanding.

Questionnaire evidence showed that a large majority of ESOL learners worked towards recognised ESOL Skills for Life qualifications in 2006–07. This represented a major shift from the national position three years earlier, when more than 60% of learners worked towards internally accredited outcomes.¹ Providers successfully and rapidly managed the introduction of these externally accredited qualifications following their launch in late 2004. A particularly positive feature was the greater emphasis on developing learners' speaking skills in response to the listening and speaking qualifications. The national success rate for Skills for Life qualifications was satisfactory at 64% in 2006–07.

Progression to further ESOL or vocational study was good. In the colleges and adult and community learning providers that responded to the questionnaire, over half of all ESOL learners continued their studies on ESOL courses or moved into vocational provision. In the colleges, most of this progression was to further courses at the same college. However, arrangements to follow up the destinations of those who left were not effective enough. For example, those colleges that responded to the

¹ *KPMG review of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)*, Learning and Skills Council, May 2005.

questionnaire did not know where a third of those who started programmes in 2006–07 progressed to in 2007–08.

Inspectors observed 101 learning sessions during their visits to providers. In the most effective sessions learners practised and developed their spoken language skills extensively during whole class, group and pair activities; this was helped by teachers who were skilled in encouraging the learners to contribute often using gesture and mime effectively. Information and learning technology was used widely and effectively in the majority of the good and better learning sessions in colleges. In all sectors visited, the planning of learning sessions to meet group needs was good; but neither the planning and classroom practice to meet individual needs nor the setting of goals in individual learning plans were developed sufficiently. Learners valued highly the individual tutorial time that they received when preparing and reviewing their learning plans; this contributed well to their motivation and engagement.

Evidence from visits and the questionnaire showed that discrete part-time general English courses were the most common type of provision and that these met many learners' needs appropriately and flexibly especially at entry levels 1 and 2.² At entry level 3 and above, around four out of 10 providers offered 'embedded' courses that integrated ESOL and vocational learning aims into a single learning programme.³ Although these were effective in enabling learners to develop their ESOL skills, much of this provision was recent, and the range of vocational subjects was often narrow. Employability provision offered by work-based learning providers and at four of the colleges visited usefully combined the development of job seeking with ESOL learning, but the components were often not integrated well enough. Too few of the learners had opportunities for work experience.

ESOL provision in the workplace was growing, especially where links with employers and trade unions were well established, but the volume was small. The providers were keen to expand this provision, especially through Train to Gain. They found it difficult to persuade employers of the value of offering ESOL learning to their employees, particularly in small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Citizenship learning was well established as part of the ESOL curriculum, and contributed usefully to the promotion of community cohesion. The providers in the survey sample routinely integrated aspects of citizenship into their general ESOL classes, but did not consistently identify the aims and content of citizenship learning with the same thoroughness that they did for language learning.

² See ESOL – Skills for Life levels and accreditation in Notes section.

³ See also the Further information section of this report.

The impact of the introduction of charging fees to certain categories of learners from August 2007 varied in the providers visited.⁴ Where it was best managed, information for learners and staff was generally clear and disseminated well in advance. However, early snapshot data from the LSC suggested a drop in ESOL enrolments of 14% nationally in autumn 2007 compared with the same period in 2006,

Quality improvement processes did not ensure consistently good standards of teaching and learning. Standards within the providers visited often varied. Arrangements to identify and disseminate good practice were not always developed sufficiently. Although the majority of ESOL tutors in providers that responded to the questionnaire had received some professional training in English language teaching, almost a quarter had no subject-specific qualification for the role.

Key findings

- ESOL provision in colleges and adult and community learning providers has improved steadily and is satisfactory. However, while the proportion that is less than satisfactory has reduced since 2005, the proportion that is good or outstanding has not increased and remains too low.
- Those providers visited and that responded to the questionnaire had successfully managed the transition from offering non-accredited learning to externally accredited ESOL Skills for Life qualifications. The national Skills for Life qualification success rate was satisfactory for 2006–07, at 64%.
- Progression to further ESOL or vocational study was good. However, other than in employability training, arrangements to follow up leavers' destinations were not effective.
- In the most effective learning sessions, learners practised and developed their spoken language skills extensively, encouraged by skilled teachers who *often prompted them successfully using gesture and mime rather than by speaking themselves*.
- Planning of teaching and learning to meet group needs was good, but planning and classroom practice to meet individual needs remained insufficiently developed. Where individual tutorial time was part of the process of setting and monitoring progress towards goals on individual learning plans, it was highly valued by learners and contributed well to their motivation and engagement.
- The providers sampled offered a growing number of 'embedded' courses which enabled learners to develop their language skills effectively alongside vocational learning. Much of the provision was introduced recently, and the range of vocational subjects was often narrow.

⁴ From 2007/08, ESOL learning funded by the LSC no longer attracted automatic fee remission. Free tuition was only available to priority groups, primarily the unemployed or those receiving income based benefits. See also the Further information section of this report.

- Employability provision usefully combined the development of job seeking with ESOL learning, but the components were often not integrated well enough. Too few ESOL learners had the opportunity to take part in work experience.
- ESOL provision in the workplace was growing, especially where links with employers and/or trade unions were well established, but the provision was low in the providers visited. They found it difficult to persuade employers of the value of offering ESOL learning to their employees.
- Citizenship learning was well established as part of the ESOL curriculum, contributing usefully to the promotion of community cohesion, but the providers did not consistently identify the aims and content of citizenship learning with the same thoroughness as they did for language learning.
- The impact of charging fees to certain categories of learners from August 2007 varied. Where the introduction of fees was best managed, information for learners and staff was clear and disseminated well in advance.
- Quality improvement processes did not ensure consistently good standards of teaching and learning. Although the majority of ESOL tutors had received at least initial professional training in English language teaching, almost a quarter had no subject specific-qualification for their role.

Recommendations

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills should:

- closely monitor the impact of major changes in ESOL fee policy, including any major changes in client group.

The Learning and Skills Council should:

- develop effective business cases to persuade employers of the value of offering ESOL learning to their employees
- ensure that providers receive timely and clear information on funding arrangements and fees
- ensure that sufficient provision continues to be offered at levels closely matched to local need, particularly at entry levels.

Providers should:

- take action to increase success rates in accredited Skills for Life qualifications
- improve the planning of individual learning and the attention given to individual needs in learning sessions
- develop more effective ways of following up the destinations of leavers

- identify clearly the aims and content of citizenship learning where it is integrated into language learning
- increase the volume and range of 'embedded' provision which integrates ESOL learning with vocational study
- ensure that learners on employability programmes receive adequate work experience
- expand the volume of workplace learning
- improve the effectiveness of their arrangements to monitor and raise the quality of teaching and learning
- increase the proportion of ESOL staff with appropriate specialist training.

Introduction

1. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) forms part of the Government's Skills for Life strategy to meet the literacy, numeracy and language needs of adults. Since the launch of the strategy in 2001, demand for ESOL has grown appreciably. Between 2001 and 2004, Government spending on ESOL tripled, reaching just under £300 million in the year 2006–07, when it accounted for almost a third of the Skills for Life budget of £995 million.⁵ In 2006–07 the Learning and Skills Council funded almost 317,000 ESOL enrolments, of which 77% were in further education colleges, 21% in local authority or other adult and community learning provision and the remainder in private or charitable work-based learning providers.⁶
2. The three main groups of ESOL learners generally identified are: recently arrived migrant workers and their dependants (mainly from European Union states); the settled community (those born or settled in the United Kingdom for more than five years and recently arrived dependents including spouses); and recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers. The profile of learners is changeable; it responds directly to shifts in patterns of migration and settlement. Reliable information on the number and proportions of learners from these identifiable groups is scarce. Data from respondents to the questionnaire showed that in colleges the largest group of learners was recent migrant workers at just over 40% of enrolments and the settled community made up around 30%. In the much smaller adult and community learning provision the settled community was the largest group at around 50% and migrant workers represented 30%. The proportion of refugees and asylum seekers in both settings was just under 15%. This is in sharp contrast to the position at the launch of the Skills for Life strategy in 2001, when recent

⁵ *Skills for Life: progress in improving adult literacy and numeracy*, National Audit Office Report by the comptroller and auditor general | HC 482 Session 2007–2008 | 6 June 2008; www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/07-08/0708482.pdf

⁶ Unpublished LSC data on LSC funded ESOL in 2006–07.

migrant workers made up a very small proportion of ESOL learners. As recently as 2004–05, information from the LSC's individual learner record suggested that migrant workers accounted for only around 4% of ESOL learners.⁷

Evaluation: how effective is ESOL provision?

Trends in inspection grades

3. There has been a steady improvement in the quality of ESOL provision. Between 2001 and 2005, 12 of the 60 ESOL curriculum areas inspected in colleges were less than satisfactory. Since then only one of the 16 inspected has been judged less than satisfactory. Although less marked, there has been a similar trend of improvement in adult and community learning; separate grading for ESOL provision in adult and community learning was introduced in 2004. Between then and August 2005, of 37 ESOL grades awarded, 13 were less than satisfactory. Of the 37 adult and community learning inspections since then, five such provisions were judged to be less than satisfactory. However, not enough provision is good. The proportion that is good or outstanding has not increased. In the institutional inspections before and since 2005, only around half of college provision and a fifth of adult and community learning provision was judged good or outstanding.

The introduction of new qualifications

4. The providers visited and those that responded to the questionnaire had successfully managed the transition from non-accredited to accredited learning programmes; they introduced new national ESOL Skills for Life qualifications rapidly following their launch in late 2004. In colleges that responded, over 70% of learners worked towards ESOL Skills for Life qualifications in 2006–07. This represented a major shift from the position in 2003–04 when, nationally, 60% of learners worked towards non-accredited outcomes. It also represented good progress towards the LSC's expectation that 80% of learners will work towards Skills for Life qualifications. The trend was similar for adult and community learning providers that responded to the questionnaire, although the proportion taking Skills for Life qualifications was lower. Nearly all learners with private training providers who were visited or responded to the questionnaire were working towards Skills for Life qualifications.
5. Skills for Life ESOL qualifications had clear benefits for learners and providers. The qualifications motivated many learners to succeed, while providing them with qualifications which had currency within the learning and skills sector and beyond. A particularly welcome feature observed during provider visits was the

⁷ *More than a language...*, NIACE Committee of Enquiry on English for Speakers of Other Languages, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2006; www.niace.org.uk/projects/esol-enquiry/documents/ESOL-Inquiry-ExecutiveSummary.pdf.

greater emphasis placed by teachers on developing learners' speaking skills in response to the introduction of specific listening and speaking qualifications. The providers had a clear framework of qualifications to offer with outcomes explicitly cross-referenced to national standards on which to base their programme and course planning. Of the providers visited, 13 were piloting or planned to pilot new ESOL for work qualifications which had been introduced in October 2007. It was too soon to judge the success of these initiatives.

Success rates

6. Overall, providers maintained satisfactory outcome rates during the significant shift from mainly internally accredited achievement to Skills for Life qualifications. The test-based qualifications represented a greater challenge to learners, requiring them to demonstrate their skills to a consistent national standard against objective criteria under examination conditions.
7. Over the three-year period to 2006–07, more than two thirds of those who started an ESOL programme completed successfully.⁸ Underlying this was a consistent improvement in both non-accredited outcomes and ESOL Skills for Life accredited outcomes. Between 2004–05 and 2006–07, across the post-compulsory sector as a whole, completion rates in non-accredited ESOL learning rose from 73% to 81%. On the more challenging Skills for Life qualifications they rose from 49% to 64% over the same period. Rates in colleges were slightly higher. A key challenge for ESOL providers nationally is raising these satisfactory levels of success in Skills for Life ESOL qualifications to good.
8. The providers visited acknowledged the importance of high quality teaching and learning in promoting success, but the most effective providers also focused on other strategies to improve or maintain success rates.

Well-conceived actions to improve success rates in Skills for Life qualifications in an FE college

Following the introduction of accredited Skills for Life qualifications, the college identified that success rates on its one- and two-term courses were declining, although they were still above national averages. Managers and advanced practitioners worked with teaching staff to raise their awareness of the importance of examinations and their content and how to prepare learners for them. They did this by:

- ensuring learners understood the qualifications they were working towards, their usefulness and what they involved

⁸ FE qualification level success rate data 2004/05 to 2006/07, LSC;
<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/Data/statistics/success/FEqualificationlevel.htm>

- stressing to learners the importance of regular attendance, completing their courses and actually sitting the examination
- ensuring that learners did not join a course where the examination date occurred after the point the learner planned to leave the college
- identifying learners likely to benefit from working for a non-accredited outcome before progressing to an examination course, and adjusting their programme where necessary
- improving the accuracy of data on the outcomes learners were working towards.

Skills development

9. In the most effective providers visited, learners made substantial gains in their fluency and confidence in speaking English, and in their ability to understand the spoken language. Learners at entry levels 1 and 2 used English confidently to talk in simple terms about themselves and to engage in conversation with others. At more advanced levels they were able to speak and respond appropriately in a wide range of contexts. Learners used English routinely in social and professional settings where previously they struggled or were reliant on others. Job or promotion prospects were improved significantly for many learners who attended general English classes. The classes enabled them to make telephone calls to enquire about employment and participate confidently in job interviews. In their daily lives their improved speaking skills allowed them to make appointments over the telephone, discuss their children's or their own needs with education and healthcare professionals and engage confidently in everyday activities such as shopping. Younger learners (16–18) had high aspirations, with ambitions to enter higher education and subsequently follow careers in professions such as accountancy or law.
10. Learners improved their reading and writing skills at entry levels 1 and 2 in useful practical everyday areas such as reading leaflets and filling in simple forms. At higher levels learners were able to read and produce increasingly complex text. Those following more specific programmes developed contextually related skills. For example, learners following English for academic purposes programmes learned how to write following British academic conventions, while learners in the workplace learnt to read and understand critical health and safety information. In many general English as well as employability programmes learners produced well-written curriculum vitae (CVs), and developed their reading skills effectively through the study of job advertisements.

Good development of learners' skills by an adult and community learning provider

Learners were keen to achieve qualifications and proud to show certificates already achieved. They were clear about what they had gained from attending classes with the provider. In particular, they talked about

general gains in confidence and how they were now able to use English more widely in their daily lives, with their children, and at their children's schools. Learners achieving at a higher level found a new job search skills class particularly useful. One learner described how he had learnt to develop an appropriate curriculum vitae and was now confidently helping friends in his community to produce their own curriculum vitae as well. He clearly saw this as a very significant tool in seeking employment in Britain. The majority of learners showed an interest in gaining employment. All learners were developing independent study skills in class, using dictionaries and the internet to access information, and organising material in study folders.

Progression

11. ESOL learners' progression to further study at the same college or adult and community learning provider was often good. In the colleges and adult and community learning providers that responded to the questionnaire, more than half of all ESOL learners continued their studies on ESOL courses or moved into vocational provision. In colleges, around three quarters of this progression was to further ESOL – with the remainder to vocational provision with or without additional language support. In adult and community learning, progression was mainly to further ESOL.
12. Where learners followed employability training offered by work-based learning providers or colleges, progression into employment was tracked carefully. In the work-based learning providers visited around a quarter of learners gained jobs. Learners had often been out of employment for lengthy periods and had no experience of work in the UK.
13. Arrangements to follow up leavers' destinations were not developed sufficiently. Those providers that responded to the questionnaire were able to identify destinations for fewer than half of leavers. Overall, this meant that the providers in the survey and questionnaire sample did not have progression information for one third of the learners who had studied ESOL with them in 2006–07.

Teaching and learning

14. The majority of teaching and learning sessions observed during visits to providers were good or better. Standards were highest in colleges, where approximately two-thirds were good or better. In sessions observed in adult and community learning provision, approximately six out of 10 were good or better. Sessions in work-based learning providers were generally satisfactory.
15. The main features of good and better sessions were:

- extensive spoken language practice and development encouraged effectively by skilled teachers who made good use of non-verbal prompts such as gesture and mime.
 - careful and detailed planning of group learning and appropriate and well-specified language learning objectives which were linked to clear schemes of work routinely referenced to national standards
 - peer learning and practice of both speaking and writing skills with frequent group and pair work, including peer assessment
 - good use of question and answer techniques to elicit spoken contributions from learners and to check and build learning
 - very effective continuing assessment and feedback about their performance for individual learners during learning activities
 - varied activities effectively developing learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and grammar while retaining their interest and motivation
 - interesting and relevant contextualised paper, audio, visual and information and learning technology learning materials building on learners' experience, especially in sessions with a vocational element
 - routine inclusion of activities and contexts to practise English which drew well on and valued the range of learners' cultures and languages.
16. However two areas for improvement were observed in the majority of sessions:
- too little activity to meet learners' differing needs within the class – insufficient to challenge the most able, or to provide additional support for those who were struggling; this was despite references to meeting different needs or 'differentiation' often appearing on session plans
 - a lack of structured practice or 'drilling' to standardise learners' correct and confident use of spoken language.
17. Less successful sessions were also characterised by:
- overuse of worksheet-based activity where learners mainly filled in gaps in sentences
 - too much teacher use of meta-language such as grammatical terminology particularly at lower levels where learners found it difficult to understand
 - insufficient emphasis on accuracy and correction of written and spoken language
 - an over-reliance on the written word during speaking and listening activities.
18. A particular feature of the most effective sessions was the good integration and use of information and learning technology to foster learning, especially with younger learners.

Three examples of good practice using information and learning technology in observed sessions

1) Effective use of an interactive white board to develop vocabulary in an 'improve your Maths' class for 16–18-year-old ESOL learners in an FE college

On the board was a word list and two symbols representing up and down escalators. The class was split into three groups, each with paper copies of the word list which contained words associated with changes in proportion such as 'rise', 'growth', 'decline' and 'reduce'. After allowing time for the groups to discuss the meanings of the words, the teacher nominated individuals in turn to come to the board. In response to the teacher saying one of the words, the learner touched the relevant word on the screen and 'dragged' it to the appropriate up or down escalator symbol. The learner repeated the word, and where necessary the teacher corrected pronunciation. Learners appeared highly motivated by the activity and responded enthusiastically when nominated.

2) Good use of instant messaging in a general ESOL session in an FE college to motivate learners and foster informal writing skills

Learners used simple instant messaging software which many were already familiar with through experience of similar software on social networking sites. In sending messages to each other, learners developed communicative confidence through a chat room style of correspondence. This acted as an excellent motivational tool for otherwise reluctant writers, encouraging confidence in writing informally while conveying meaning accurately.

3) An ESOL job search session at level 1 at an adult and community learning provider

Learners were developing a covering letter of application based on a local, current, realistic but aspirational job vacancy. The tutor supplied a clear well-designed sample CV from which learners could identify key features to be included in their letter. Learners used the interactive white board to drag and drop wrongly ordered sections of a specimen letter into an appropriate sequence. They compared the format and content of the letter with how it would be written in their own first languages and how cultural conventions varied. They commented critically on each other's drafts. The lesson was characterised by good use of mind-storming, drafting, and correcting to produce a final version.

Planning and recording individual learning

19. In the providers visited there were examples of good practice in planning and recording individual learners' progress and achievement. The inclusion of individual tutorial time as part of this was highly appreciated by learners and contributed effectively to their motivation and engagement in learning. In three colleges visited individual learning plans were used very successfully to track learners' progress towards very clearly set learning goals. However, overall, the setting of learning goals on individual learning plans and the monitoring of learners' progress were not developed sufficiently; these were judgements frequently identified in inspection reports on ESOL and Skills for Life provision generally.

Positive features of planning individual learning

- Teachers often effectively collated and used 'class profiles' which recorded relevant information on individual learners in an easily accessible format.
- Learners were positive towards the individual learning plan process and valued having a plan.
- Learners often received very supportive individual tutorials which they felt helped them to understand the progress they were making.

Areas for improvement in planning individual learning

- Many goals in the individual learning plans did not have specific, measurable outcomes.
- Plans often contained a narrow range of linguistic goals which did not meet learners' broader needs, interests and development of study skills and were expressed in technical language too complex for learners to understand.
- Plans rarely contained medium- and long-term goals which recognised learners' plans or aspirations apart from passing ESOL examinations.
- Goals did not sufficiently reflect the value of language-learning experiences outside the classroom.
- Progress towards the goals in the plan was often not recorded well enough.
- There was too little consideration of learners' individual goals when planning lessons.

Good practice in goal setting in individual learning plans in an FE college

Individual learning plans were a routine part of planning for learners working towards Skills for Life qualifications and non-accredited outcomes. Tutors negotiated goals with learners. Detailed short-term goals were very realistic, relevant and time-bound specific actions for which learners

needed to evidence completion. Examples of goals at ESOL entry level 2 included:

- 'understand and follow eight instructions from the teacher and copy 10 spellings into spelling book' (in the study skills component of a course)
- 'ask and answer 10 questions on what I do every day; practise with classmates and students from other classes' (preparation for Skills for Life speaking and listening examinations).

Other goals built on learners' everyday lives. A goal for a learner wanting to help her six-year-old child with his homework reflected this: 'read a story to your child and write down the questions he asks you about the story and your responses.'

A learner from Afghanistan with a media background was taking part in a college arts and media project. Some of his individual learning plan goals were based on the work he was completing there.

Learners reported that they found the individual learning plans and the goals they contained very helpful in improving their English. They very much appreciated the review process which allowed them to discuss with teachers how much progress they were making and decide their own goals.

General provision to meet the needs and interests of learners

20. Discrete general English courses, graded at different levels, accounted for 90% of provision offered by respondents to the questionnaire. These courses often met learners' varied needs appropriately, particularly at lower levels. Community venues were used well in rural and urban areas to cater for those with poor access to town or city centre sites. Classes were designed to fit around learners' work or caring commitments, and included extensive evening and occasionally weekend sessions. Work-based learning providers offered programmes over 50 weeks a year. Of the respondents to our questionnaire half of the colleges and three quarters of adult and community learning providers offered courses of five or fewer hours each week.
21. Most commonly, courses were aligned appropriately with the language levels of the national standards. The larger providers visited usually offered courses at each level, but smaller providers and community based provision often combined levels particularly at entry level 1 and 2 and level 1 and level 2. Such combinations maintained provision effectively in areas where learner numbers were low. However, this posed significant challenges to teachers in meeting the needs of learners with different attainment levels in individual skills such as speaking and writing.

22. The provision most in demand was at the lower levels, that is, below entry level 3. In 2006–07 it represented more than half of what providers who responded to our questionnaire offered. For learners the acquisition of skills at entry level 2 represented a critical stage in becoming able to communicate independently, and provided the necessary foundation for higher level studies in and beyond ESOL.

Flexible adult and community learning provision across a wide geographical area, using a variety of funding streams

The provider operated in a county which in recent years had experienced a high increase in the number of migrant workers coming to the area to work in agriculture, food production, hospitality and tourism. It offered classes in a wide range of community venues, many of which were in small towns or villages. In most of its locations it was the sole ESOL provider. All provision was part-time, and much of it took place in the evenings. Although the local LSC was unwilling to fund provision below entry level 3 through Skills for Life funding routes, the provider used its personal development and community learning funding stream effectively to fund lower level programmes. Many of the learners following these programmes were recent migrants. Through a small Train to Gain contract, it had recently begun to provide work-specific ESOL classes to 24 migrant workers employed locally by a major national company. Additionally it used funding from the European Social Fund to offer courses to unemployed learners who were predominantly from the settled community. A major concern was the extent to which the provider could rely on continued funding from the different sources to maintain the range of provision.

Specific provision

23. The provision was more diversified at entry level 3 and above. This provision was effective in responding to learners’ needs to improve their English for a specific purpose, rather than as an end in itself. Around 40% of colleges which responded to the questionnaire offered specific purpose provision. The proportion of total provision was modest, at around one fifth of activity.

Embedded learning

24. Embedded provision combined ESOL and vocational learning goals in a single programme, which enabled learners to develop skills in both at the same time. In the most effective classes observed, ESOL and vocational staff worked closely together in designing and teaching courses. Progression routes to higher level vocational programmes were clear and often accompanied by the offer of continuing individual help with language needs through additional language support. However, many of the courses offered by the providers visited were

new and the range of vocational subjects offered was often narrow. The most common subjects were in childcare, social care, hairdressing and business administration. All the colleges visited as part of the survey had such provision, but it was at different stages of development. Only four colleges had very well-established programmes. Three had developed programmes over the past two years, while the remainder and three adult and community learning providers, were piloting provision in one or two vocational areas. Altogether, 42% of the colleges that responded to our questionnaire had embedded provision, but often in two or three subject areas only.

Effective action to integrate ESOL and vocational learning in an FE college

Embedded courses at the college combined ESOL and vocational subjects in areas such as construction, information and communications technology, hair and beauty, and care. In developing the courses the college chose vocational areas popular with ESOL learners. Schemes of work contained very clear objectives for both ESOL and vocational learning. Nearly all courses involved a member of the ESOL team and a vocational staff member working together. Most sessions were taught by one or other of these members of staff, but all included sessions where the tutors worked alongside each other. In these sessions the ESOL tutor provided language support but also learnt more about the vocational subject which helped ensure the vocational relevance of ESOL sessions in the programme. ESOL staff were routinely involved in the initial assessment of learners moving to the embedded vocational programme, working with clear guidelines developed between the ESOL specialists and vocational teams to ensure learners had the right skills to succeed.

Careful consideration was given to matching ESOL and vocational staff and often built on relationships established where the ESOL tutor had provided additional language support to individual ESOL learners in the vocational area. Nevertheless, ESOL staff had to work hard to convince vocational colleagues of the value of the programme. Most of them were persuaded and enjoyed teaching the learners, describing them as 'the best ambassadors' for embedding. ESOL staff received specific training for their role which included the importance of establishing good professional relationships with colleagues and methods of joint planning. An ESOL 'advanced practitioner' provided individual support to staff. Senior managers and governors had also received training in the principles and practice of embedding.

Embedded learning integrating ESOL and early years care in an FE college

Learners had progressed from a foundation level early years/ESOL programme at the college. All were working towards ESOL Skills for Life accreditation, mainly at entry level 3, and a national vocational qualification at level 2 in early years care. There were 13 learners, an ESOL tutor and an early years tutor. The observed section of the session was planned around three clear learning outcomes 'following instructions' (ESOL), 'evaluating a range of floor games for children' (childcare) and 'developing teamwork'. Learners worked effectively in small groups. Each had the equipment and instructions for a different commercially available children's game designed for children to play while seated on the floor. A nominated member of the group read out the instructions, which the others enthusiastically put into practice. Group members cooperated well in helping the reader where vocabulary or language was unfamiliar. Tutors gave additional help where necessary, using question and answer techniques skilfully to guide learners to the correct answer. At the end of the activity a member of each group confidently provided a brief spoken evaluation of the usefulness of their game for young children. The session achieved the planned learning outcomes well.

Employability learning

25. Learners' job-seeking skills were usefully developed alongside ESOL learning within the employability provision run by the work-based learning providers visited and the targeted provision in four colleges. All providers had good experience in running courses for the unemployed. One college had developed well designed specific employability modules comprising session plans and materials for ESOL learners which tutors of discrete courses incorporated effectively into general English programmes. Two work-based learning providers offered the newly launched LSC designed employability skills provision specifically to ESOL learners. These provisions were still at too early a stage for their outcomes to be judged. Three adult and community learning providers also offered well-designed employability programmes. However, in much of the provision the integration of aspects of job seeking with ESOL skill learning was not developed sufficiently; this reduced the opportunities for learners to develop their language skills during job search activity and vice versa. Too few learners had the opportunity to undertake work experience during the programmes. Specific training for ESOL tutors in developing learners' employability skills was very rare.

Innovative employability provision offered by a work-based learning provider

The provision was funded through the European Social Fund to help ESOL learners into work, and subcontracted to a college. Learners followed the programme for up to 18 weeks during which they worked towards Skills for Life listening and speaking skills qualifications, usually at entry level 3. On completing their ESOL programme learners progressed to a national vocational qualification programme at level 1 in customer services and/or further ESOL learning. Most chose to do both. Access to the programme was more flexible than most Welfare to Work provision such as New Deal – learners did not have to have been unemployed for a specific length of time or to be claiming benefits. Outcomes were generally positive. Of 57 leavers, 25 had achieved an ESOL qualification and/or a national vocational qualification. Fifteen had gained jobs. Of the 58 in learning, 24 had already progressed to the national vocational qualification programme. Almost half of the learners had work placements.

Supportive work placements for ESOL learners on employability training with a work-based learning provider

The provider did not usually set up work placements during the programme but sometimes did so at the end for individuals as a form of transition into work. Internal opportunities were offered where learners were recruited and given work experience while on the provider's payroll. This enabled them to develop their skills and gain a UK employer reference. Examples of work placements included working as a receptionist, an administrator, a caretaker, a cleaner, a classroom assistant and as a bilingual interpreter.

Workplace learning

26. Over half the providers visited offered ESOL learning in the workplace, and considered developing this area as a priority. The best developed provision was where links with employers had been established over some years, often in partnership with trades unions. Provision was mainly for employees who worked for large private or public sector organisations and focused primarily on health and safety and communication in the workplace. Typically, learning sessions were scheduled very flexibly to fit in with shift patterns, often outside usual provider working times. However, the volume of workplace-based ESOL in the providers visited remained relatively low. For example, one college visited provided ESOL in 20 workplaces in 2006–07, reaching approximately 200 learners. Although this seemed to represent a fairly sizeable workplace

provision, this was a small proportion of the 3,000 ESOL learners that the college had recruited overall.

27. Of those colleges and other providers that responded to the questionnaire, the proportion that offered learning through Train to Gain was low, but was expected to increase. Ten per cent of those that responded had offered ESOL funded through Train to Gain in 2006–07; 23% planned to provide through this route in 2007–08.
28. The providers visited identified a number of barriers to extending workplace provision. These barriers were most marked in attempts to work with small- and medium-sized enterprises. Most commonly cited were:
 - difficulties in persuading employers of the value of offering ESOL learning to employees
 - logistics and/or costs of releasing employees from work, or establishing viable groups outside work time
 - the relevance of Skills for Life qualifications to the workplace
 - employer resistance to contributing to the cost of ESOL learning
 - the appropriateness of Train to Gain funding for providing ESOL.

Workplace provision offered by a college

The college was providing ESOL in the workplace as short, tailored 30-hour courses for five employers. The work was well established. The college did not anticipate using the new ESOL for Work qualifications unless they were unitised, since the employers they worked with were reluctant to release employees for longer periods, or to pay. The courses catered for learners with needs below entry level 3 so the ESOL for Work levels were not always appropriate.

Citizenship

29. Citizenship learning was well established as part of the ESOL curriculum, and contributed usefully to the promotion of community cohesion. The providers visited and the majority of those that responded to the questionnaire routinely integrated aspects of citizenship with their general ESOL classes. The most common topics were: information about using services; cross-cultural themes, especially those concerning different religions and their festivals; and general aspects of British life and institutions. The providers made extensive and often effective use of the ESOL citizenship materials developed by the National

Institute for Adult and Community Education and LLU+.⁹ However, when integrating citizenship with general English courses, providers did not consistently identify the aims and content of citizenship learning with the same thoroughness as they did for language learning. Where specific projects were run, they were much more successful in systematically identifying and including topics relevant to the learners and the community in which they lived, and promoting active citizenship. Where there was local demand, providers sometimes offered well-planned courses which specifically prepared learners for national citizenship tests. Two of the providers visited reported that attending citizenship classes enabled women in local, settled communities to engage in ESOL learning.

A successful project to promote active citizenship in a local area

A year-long project, which was developed through a partnership between a local college and a borough council, was designed to equip local residents with the knowledge skills and confidence to engage as active citizens in their local borough. This included helping learners understand how to use local services, and play an active role in decision making locally and take care of their neighbourhoods. Wider aims were to help learners understand that they were citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as others, and to help the local authority understand how to meet their needs more effectively. Project activity included visits from councillors and the local police. The 44 learners recruited were from a wide range of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. During the programme they received four hours a week of specifically designed ESOL training contextualised around relevant themes such as health, education and local services. Other activities included learners carrying out surveys within their communities. Results from a questionnaire of learners carried out near the end of the project suggested planned outcomes were achieved. All of the learners could provide good examples of how their English language and their understanding of the council had improved. Attitudes towards the police had improved and were very positive. Of the learners starting the project 32 completed it, exceeding the target of 25.

Information, advice, guidance and support for learners

30. Information, advice, guidance and support for learners were generally good, particularly for learners following full-time or substantial part-time classes. All the providers visited used initial assessments routinely to identify the most appropriate classes for learners. Tutorial support for learners who were following full-time and substantial part-time courses was good and usually included timetabled individual sessions outside class time. Support for learners

⁹ LLU+ is a national consultancy and professional development centre for staff working in the areas of literacy, numeracy, dyslexia, family learning and ESOL based at South Bank University.

following less intensive part-time courses, especially in the evenings, was less well developed, and most commonly took place during class time. All ESOL learners in the survey received a high level of informal help from their tutors. For learners with childcare responsibilities crèche provision offered by the adult and community learning providers visited was often a critical factor in allowing them to attend ESOL classes. This was far less readily available in the colleges visited.

31. Information advice and guidance for ESOL learners offered by the providers visited built effectively on arrangements established for all learners. Cooperation between tutors and information advice and guidance workers to ensure learners knew of internal services and those offered by external agencies was good. Specific measures to support ESOL learners were limited to the good use of bilingual or multilingual staff to interpret, and the occasional translation of key guidance documents. Additional language support was available to individuals in the majority of colleges that responded to the questionnaire.

Good practice in information, advice, support and guidance at a college

- ESOL tutors had between two and four hours of tutorial time weekly for each course, enabling them to offer good levels of support outside timetabled learning sessions to full- and part-time learners.
- An effective tutor support group met once a month to provide supervision of tutors and ensure consistency in dealing with students' issues.
- ESOL classes received a very good programme of visits from student services which ensured learners were clear about help available.
- Additional language support by ESOL staff was widely available for ESOL learners on other college courses.
- A clear attendance policy, which was translated into several of the languages common to ESOL learners at the college helped create an expectation of full attendance.
- A college-based fund to assist asylum seekers studying ESOL with travel costs and equipment costs for vocational courses was well established.
- Information advice and guidance staff offered good and well-informed guidance on progression routes within the college.
- The college provided an extensive range of careers and employment guidance most widely used by 16–18-year-olds.

Partnerships

32. In cities, partnership working was successful between the providers visited, their local authorities and others. Where it was most effective, the choices for learners increased and provision became more accessible.
33. Examples of effective partnership working in the areas visited included:
 - well coordinated progression routes from city councils' first steps provision to ESOL courses at the local college
 - strategic coordination between a college and a local authority in London ensuring that they offered a good range of classes in a wide range of neighbourhoods and avoided unnecessary duplication
 - close cooperation between city councils and two colleges to meet the needs of unaccompanied minors and other young learners with ESOL needs for whom appropriate school provision was rarely available.

Strong partnership working to streamline applications for ESOL places in a city with multiple providers

Membership comprised providers from the FE sector, the local authorities, the private sector and the voluntary and community sector. Funding was through annual core funding from the partner colleges, a city council grant and European Social Fund funding.

The partnership worked collaboratively to meet the increasing demand for ESOL across the county. It acted as the central information point for English language classes, and operated a well-managed central referral system and waiting list for all English language classes in the city. Key features of the work were impartial information and advice, a central client database, a central appointment system, and tracking and follow-up procedures. The partnership functioned effectively as a central resource of expertise and information, helping to build capacity and train staff while successfully supporting collaborative work on ESOL across sectors. This included data sharing and analysis to highlight trends and learner needs, joint provision planning, workforce development and a register of part-time ESOL tutors.

Leadership and management

34. In the most successful provisions visited, senior managers had a clear understanding of ESOL and its place in their organisation. They provided good leadership and support for its development, responding flexibly to local and national priorities. They were acutely aware of the need to raise levels of achievement in Skills for Life ESOL qualifications, and prioritised this in the

guidance they gave ESOL curriculum managers and staff. Senior managers provided clear strategic direction for the introduction of fee charging, and engaged closely with LSCs locally arguing for the appropriate mix of provision they identified as being necessary to meet local needs, particularly at entry levels. They were very clear about the role of ESOL learning in improving the life chances of learners. The managers had a strong sense of responsibility towards fostering community cohesion and a keen awareness of the wide cultural and linguistic diversity of needs they had to meet. At curriculum level, managers were well-informed about ESOL and had the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain and improve standards while developing new provision.

The introduction of fees

35. The introduction of fees for certain categories of learners from August 2007 was generally well managed. Where this was most successful, information for learners and staff was clear and disseminated well in advance of the autumn term, sometimes supported by translation of guidance to learners. Providers varied in their approach to using additional central and local government funding designed to ameliorate the impact of charging fees. The providers visited used the additional funding to subsidise fees or as an opportunity to sustain or develop new provision. Learner support funding was used effectively, but there were examples from the providers visited where its late arrival from the LSC reduced the help it could offer learners.
36. The impact of introducing fees varied greatly among the providers that responded to the questionnaire, and no clear patterns emerged as to regions or types of provision most affected. Approximately half of the colleges that responded reported a reduction in waiting lists and demand, and the remainder reported no change or an increase in demand. However, early snapshot data from the LSC suggested a drop in ESOL enrolment of 14% nationally in autumn 2007 compared with the same period in 2006.
37. Two of the providers visited identified an increased take up by migrant workers of full cost 'international' ESOL courses. These had become relatively less expensive in the context of ESOL fees, and learners viewed the qualifications they led to as having greater international recognition.

Well-managed introduction of fee charging in an adult and community learning provider

The adult and community learning provider worked successfully to introduce charging for some learners while minimising its impact. At the end of the summer term great efforts were made to alert returning learners to the changes and their consequences. The two full-time management staff arranged additional initial assessment and fee assessment sessions centrally to enable learners to proceed to classes without delay. Teaching staff were only marginally involved in the fee

assessment processes. The provider used its learning support fund carefully to make the fee charged more affordable – and thus slightly below their non-ESOL fees. The number of learners joining programmes did not reduce significantly compared with the previous year.

Mixed experience of introducing ESOL fees in an FE college

The college introduced fees, but did not cut provision. It charged fees as required but arranged stepped discounts for those applying with support from college funds. While not necessarily sustainable in the longer term, it mitigated the impact on learners of the major change in fee policy. However, the college believed too much staff time was used in assessing fees for new learners instead of teaching. The college blamed confusion over fee structures, and lack of clear guidance from the LSC and other Government offices. It was frustrated at 'staff acting as second tier immigration officers'. Staff felt asking those enrolling for evidence of income and other related financial matters compromised their role as teachers and their relationships with learners.

Quality improvement processes

38. The impact of quality improvement processes varied in the providers visited. Standards of learning sessions within the same organisation often varied, with good or better teaching taking place alongside teaching that was no better than satisfactory. Observation of teaching and learning sessions to identify standards and areas for improvement was routinely in place, but feedback was sometimes too strongly focused on teaching rather than learning. Some feedback lacked sufficient expert focus on ESOL. However, the providers often used designated expert staff effectively to provide coaching and support to tutors in implementing actions for improvement identified during observations. Arrangements to identify and disseminate good practice were not always developed sufficiently. The least effective observation processes were in work-based learning provision.
39. The providers visited regularly used data on rates of learner retention, achievement and success to identify areas of concern and set targets for improvement. However, there was insufficient consistent practice in analysis among the providers with examples where completion rates for non-accredited outcomes were not reported separately from the success rates for accredited outcomes. Reporting and analysis of unit achievement in 'all modes' qualifications were also inconsistent and impeded clear judgement on success

rates.¹⁰ Data were not always understood well at curriculum level. Curriculum area self-assessment reports, while usually accurate, did not always contain sufficiently clear judgements on which to base development planning.

Effective arrangements to monitor and maintain high standards of teaching and learning in an FE college

The observation of teaching and learning process was carefully tiered and included graded announced and unannounced observations carried out by the college observation team, and peer observations. New teachers were routinely observed and mentored three times in the first term. All observations were followed rapidly by action planning and support for improvement. The impact of interventions was monitored closely.

A strong feature of the system was the depth of knowledge managers had of the strengths and development needs of ESOL teaching staff. The college routinely made good use of peer observation to monitor the effectiveness of action planning and any training provided following a graded observation. The observer was selected carefully for their demonstrable expertise in the identified area for improvement. They also provided further peer support. Peer observers were given very clear briefings on what to observe and share with the observed colleague.

Teacher qualifications

40. In those colleges that responded to our questionnaire, almost three quarters of teachers had a qualification that related to ESOL teaching and learning. Of these, a third had a generic teaching qualification and a subject-specialist qualification in ESOL at level 4 or above. Other teachers had ESOL or English as a foreign language teaching qualifications which often provided a good technical basis for ESOL teaching, but did not necessarily cover the breadth of skills currently needed in the sector. Of most concern was that almost a quarter of teachers appeared to have had no specialist training and at best had only a generic teaching qualification. In adult and community learning respondents, just under two thirds of teachers had an English language teaching qualification.
41. The providers visited had a good understanding of the need for teachers to be professionally qualified. They encouraged and supported staff actively to improve their qualifications. Three providers visited had offered staff holding ESOL teaching qualifications at level 7 the necessary modules of additional training to gain qualified teacher status. All of the colleges and adult and community learning providers visited had arrangements to enable staff to work

¹⁰ For explanation of 'all modes' qualifications and accredited and non-accredited outcomes see 'ESOL – Skills for Life levels and accreditation' in Notes section.

towards subject-specialist qualifications. Two of those visited reported difficulty in finding training places for their staff.

42. The majority of the teaching force was part-time. In those colleges that responded to our questionnaire more than 60% were part-time and mainly directly employed. The proportion was higher in adult and community learning respondents at almost 90%. The providers visited found it difficult to ensure consistently good opportunities for continuing professional development and the sharing of good practice. They were increasingly consolidating hourly paid teaching contracts into more substantial salaried roles to overcome this.

Learners' views

43. Inspectors met learners individually and in groups at all of the providers visited. The comments below provide a snapshot reflecting the views learners expressed during those visits.

What learners said they liked about their ESOL learning

The experience of learning ESOL

- 'Working together in groups is very helpful.'
- 'My class makes learning English easy.'
- 'It is much better to learn English in a class than in the street.'
- 'They used the results of my (initial assessment) test very well to put me in the right class.'

Diversity

- 'I like meeting people from different countries and learning.'
- 'There is no racism in the college unlike some of the others in the city.'

What and how they learnt

- 'What we are learning we can use in our lives.'
- 'We are learning English grammar and the customs of the British.'
- 'We learn useful topics like health.'
- 'We get good pronunciation practice.'
- 'I like the fact we work on the four skills in an integrated way.'
- 'We get good speaking practice.'
- 'I like using computers in class and in the library.'
- 'I like my work placement – the work is good, I am getting experience of work and talking to people.'

- 'I'm very proud of myself, I am learning how to communicate at work.'
- 'The course helps me look for jobs and improve my English.'
- 'I have a mentor who gives me very useful help with my grammar and vocabulary.'
- 'I didn't think speaking Chinese was allowed in an English class, but it was so useful now and again to check I understood what was expected.'

What they had achieved

- 'I can go shopping without having to be helped.'
- 'My writing has improved – three months ago I couldn't write a letter, now I can.'
- 'I had a job interview recently and felt confident – in the past (before coming to college) it was scary and I didn't know how to explain what I wanted to.'
- 'I am more confident when I speak to people like doctors or when I have a problem.'
- 'I can speak on the phone without difficulties.'
- 'My friends notice how much my English has improved.'

Their teachers

- 'When I talk to my teacher at tutorials he knows what I need.'
- 'Our teacher is very helpful and very patient.'
- 'If you don't understand the teachers explain.'
- 'My teacher knows a lot about construction and teaches us health and safety at the same time as English' (learner on an embedded ESOL and construction course).
- 'The teacher helps us look for jobs' (employability class).
- 'I want to practise as a doctor and my teacher is very helpful in finding the information I need to do this' (doctor before coming to the UK).

The venues

- 'The security in the college is very good – I feel safe here' (unlike outside).
- 'The time and place of the class are very good' (evening community class in a small town).

What learners said could be improved

The emphasis on individual learning

- 'We don't get enough individual attention.'
- 'We all do the same things in classes, and sometimes some of us finish early.'

Information about classes

- 'It was difficult to find out about classes, the information available was very poor.'

Classes with very mixed learner attainment

- 'I don't like being in a group with mixed levels.'
- 'The day is too long and the levels are too mixed.'
- 'That session was too easy – I have covered this work so many times before.'

Computer access and use in some places

- 'We don't have a computer to use in job search classes.'
- 'I like using computers but the time is too short' (half an hour a week).
- 'The work on the computers is just like doing more worksheets.'

Some accommodation

- 'Access to the building (through an industrial estate) is poor.'
- 'The room is too small for the number of learners.'

The number of hours they study

- 'Nine hours a week is not enough time to learn.'
- 'I find the summer holidays so long – I've forgotten everything by the time classes start again.'

Notes

Survey methodology

Between September 2007 and March 2008, a team of five HMIs and one Additional Inspector visited 28 providers. The providers comprised 14 colleges, eight adult and community learning providers, five independent work-based learning providers, and one learndirect provider. The sample was designed to include rural and urban areas where ESOL provision is found. Colleges were mainly chosen where their ESOL

provision had been graded good or better at their most recent inspection, while other providers had received at least satisfactory grades. During visits inspectors interviewed learners, teaching staff, managers and partners, including three employers where workplace ESOL was provided. Inspectors observed 101 learning sessions, including two on employers' premises. Sessions were selected which featured aspects of provision prioritised in the survey, such as citizenship or employability training.

Questionnaires were sent to all 392 general further education colleges and sixth form colleges and all 238 adult and community learning providers. Not all providers who received questionnaires had LSC funding specifically for ESOL provision, especially in the adult and community learning sector. LSC data for 2006–07 showed that 316 colleges and 79 adult and community learning providers received ESOL-specific funding. Questionnaires were also sent to 25 private and charitable work-based learning providers that were receiving LSC funding for ESOL in 2006–07.

Responses were received from 140 colleges, 30 adult and community learning providers, and four work-based learning providers. Responses from 114 colleges were analysed in particular detail. These colleges were among the 200 providing the highest volume of LSC-funded ESOL provision in 2006–07. According to LSC data, the 114 were responsible for 152,591 ESOL enrolments in that year, which represents 62% of the total 248,106 college ESOL enrolments.

All the adult and community learning questionnaires returned were analysed in detail. Of these, 22 were from the 79 adult and community learning providers that LSC records show had received funding specifically for ESOL enrolments in 2006–07. These providers were responsible for 21,735 enrolments of the 62,793 the LSC recorded for adult and community learning. This represents 35% of enrolments. The eight other providers whose data were analysed were responsible for a further 1,932 learners according to their own figures.

Inspectors researched inspection grade data contained in reports published by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) between 2001 and 2008. They drew on findings from these and from a short review of individual learning plans which ALI and Ofsted jointly carried out in 2006. They analysed data from the LSC on ESOL enrolments, and published LSC data on qualification success rates.

ESOL – Skills for Life levels and accreditation

ESOL is part of Skills for Life which is the national strategy for literacy, numeracy and language launched in 2001. ESOL learning goals are aligned to the national standards for adult literacy, which are extended and developed for ESOL learning in the national adult ESOL core curriculum. The curriculum defines levels of attainment in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing at five different levels – entry 1, 2 and 3, and level 1 and level 2.

Government-funded ESOL learners have been required to work towards the national standards since 2001. Externally recognised ESOL qualifications at these levels were introduced between the middle and end of 2004. These Skills for Life qualifications are available at all levels of the national standards. They exist in two forms. The first is a discrete 'speaking and listening' qualification. The second is an 'all modes' qualification consisting of three separate units: a speaking and listening unit, a reading unit, and a writing unit. Learners can take units at different levels, thus recognising different attainment levels in different skills. The full award is at the level of the lowest unit taken.

Before the introduction of Skills for Life qualifications, most learners were funded for working towards non-accredited outcomes (learning goals aligned to national standards on an individual learning plan drawn up by the provider). Learners can still be funded to work towards these. However, the LSC has an expectation that providers will achieve a balance of 80% accredited / 20% non-accredited outcomes for Skills for Life generally. Additionally, a minority of learners were funded for working towards 'legacy' qualifications developed before the introduction of national standards but subsequently cross-referenced to them. These ceased to be eligible for funding in 2005.

Further information

Fees

Changes to ESOL fee policies can be found on page 47 of *Our statement of priorities: better skills, better jobs, better lives: the Learning and Skills Council's priorities and key actions for 2008/09 to 2010/11*, 2007;
www.readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-statementofpriorities-nov07.pdf

Embedding

Casey et al, *You wouldn't expect a maths teacher to teach plastering... Embedding literacy, language and numeracy in post-16 vocational programmes – the impact on learning and achievement*, National Research and Development centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, 2007;
www.nrdc.org.uk/search.asp?q=Casey+et+al%2CYou+wouldn%92t+expect+a+mat+hs+teacher+to+teach+plastering%85+Embedding+literacy%2C+language+and+nu+meracy+in+post-16+vocational+programmes+%96+the+impact+on+learning+and+achievement&submitted=-1&x=14&y=3

General

More than a language..., NIACE Committee of Inquiry on English for Speakers of Other Languages, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2006;
www.niace.org.uk/projects/esol-enquiry/documents/ESOL-Inquiry-ExecutiveSummary.pdf

Annex

Providers visited for the survey

A4e Ltd
BEC Limited
Bournville College of Further Education
City and Islington College
City of Bristol College
Coventry City Council
Croydon London Borough Council
Derby College
Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College
Enfield College
Leeds Thomas Danby
Leicester College
Liverpool Community College
Manchester College of Arts and Technology
Metropole College Ltd
Newcastle College
Norfolk County Council
Peterborough Regional College
Skills Training UK
Somerset County Council
Tbg Learning Ltd
The Chinese Centre
The College Of North East London
Tower Hamlets College
Westminster City Council
Women's Technology Training Limited
Workers' Educational Association
Work Solutions.