



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2017-0195, 23 October 2017

# English language teaching for refugees

David Foster  
Andrew Mackley

## Summary

This House of Commons Library Debate Pack briefing has been prepared in anticipation of the debate entitled "English language teaching for refugees". This debate is sponsored by Dame Caroline Spelman MP and will take place at Westminster Hall on Tuesday 24th October at 4.30pm, lasting for 90 minutes. It contains background information, parliamentary material, as well as press articles and notices which Members may find useful in preparation for this debate.

The House of Commons Library has previously published a briefing paper on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for learners aged 19 and over in England, including current provision and funding, past funding changes, and recent reports. It is entitled "[Adult ESOL in England](#)" and was published in February 2017.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

## Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	ESOL qualifications	2
1.2	ESOL funding & participation in England	2
	Funding and participation levels	2
1.3	DCLG Community-based English language programmes	3
1.4	ESOL funding for Syrian refugees	3
1.5	Controlling migration fund	4
1.6	ESOL in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	4
	Scotland	4
	Wales	5
	Northern Ireland	5
1.7	Reports	6
	Casey Review into opportunity and integration	6
	Refugee Action, <i>Let Refugees Learn</i>	6
	APPG on Refugees, <i>Refugees Welcome?</i> , April 2017	7
<b>2.</b>	<b>Parliamentary material</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1	Written Parliamentary Questions	8
2.2	Oral Parliamentary Questions	16
2.3	Debates	16
<b>3.</b>	<b>Press articles</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Press notices</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Further reading</b>	<b>20</b>

# 1. Background

## 1.1 ESOL qualifications

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is the term used for English language courses taken by people whose first language is not English and who need English to communicate in daily life. ESOL qualifications may be taken at five levels: Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3 are basic level courses and Level 1 and 2 courses are equivalent to GCSEs. Often more informal ESOL classes are also provided by a range of other organisations, such as community groups, charities and faith groups. These classes are often be delivered by volunteers.

Further information on ESOL is available in Library Briefing, [Adult ESOL in England](#).

## 1.2 ESOL funding & participation in England

Government-funded adult ESOL in England is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) through the Adult Education Budget in the same way as other further education courses.

The ESFA fully funds ESOL learning delivered in the classroom up to and including Level 2 for eligible learners aged 19 and over who are unemployed and in receipt of certain benefits. All other eligible classroom-based adult ESOL learning is co-funded, meaning that the ESFA pays some of the costs and the course provider may pass on the remainder to the learner. There is no funding provided for ESOL provided in the workplace.

### Box 1: Refugees and residence requirements

Ordinarily, non-EEA citizens are only eligible for their further education learning to be funded by the ESFA if they have been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least three years prior to the start of their course. Refugees, and their husbands, wives, civil partners and children, are exempt from this three-year residency rule, however. Asylum seekers can also be eligible for funding if they have lived in the UK for six months or longer while their claim is being considered.

Providers may at their discretion decide to also fully fund eligible ESOL learners who are in receipt of state benefits and have earnings below a set threshold.<sup>1</sup>

### Funding and participation levels

As funding for adult ESOL courses is demand-led, there are no future budgets set for their level of funding.

Data provided in response to parliamentary questions shows that, other than in 2012-13, levels of funding fell in each year between 2009-10 and 2015-16. The overall reduction up to 2015-16 was 60% in real terms.

### Estimated ESOL funding and participation, England

	£ million	
	cash	Participation
2009-10	203	178,600
2010-11	169	163,600
2011-12	117	139,400
2012-13	128	146,200
2013-14	120	139,200
2014-15	104	131,100
2015-16	90	110,600

Sources: PQ 5923, 11 January 2017; PQ106972, 16 October 2017; PQHL5156, 11 February 2016.

<sup>1</sup> Education and Skills Funding Agency, [Adult education budget: funding and performance management rules](#), 2017-18, August 2017, pp7-8.

The total number of people (i.e. not just refugees) starting ESOL courses between 2009-10 and 2015-16 followed a similar trend to funding, falling by 38% over the period.

### 1.3 DCLG Community-based English language programmes

In addition to ESOL provision funded through the ESFA, between 2013-14 and 2015-16, £8.45 million was allocated by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to six projects delivering community-based English language provision.<sup>2</sup> The projects were aimed at engaging isolated adults with poor or no English, for whom traditional ESOL courses may not be suitable (for example, because they are held in further education colleges without childcare facilities).<sup>3</sup>

In January 2016, the Government announced that a new £20 million fund to teach English to isolated women would “build on and extend the English language fund run by DCLG” and would be “targeted to specific communities based on Louise Casey’s...review into segregation in England.” In July 2016, the Government stated that as “a first step” in rolling out the programme, £3 million would be allocated to the six providers of the community-based English language programme to allow them to provide tuition up to the end of March 2017. The Government added that it would “be issuing a new prospectus, inviting applicants to run the bulk of the new programmes from 2017.”<sup>4</sup>

### 1.4 ESOL funding for Syrian refugees

In September 2016, the Government announced £10 million of funding to boost English language tuition for those arriving anywhere in the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). A news story published on Gov.uk stated that:

...the additional funding for English language training will mean all adults arriving through the scheme anywhere in the UK will receive an extra 12 hours a week of tuition, for up to 6 months. This is in addition to the language support already provided by local authorities, which is accessed by refugees within a month of their arrival and will assist families to integrate into their new communities more quickly and make it easier for them to seek and obtain work.<sup>5</sup>

In response to a parliamentary question, the Minister, Robert Goodwill, stated that the funding “is provided to help refugees learn English and integrate into British society.”<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> [PQ 60891](#), 2 February 2017.

<sup>3</sup> [New £6 million competition fund for English language learning](#), DCLG, 15 January 2013.

<sup>4</sup> [PQ 42570](#), 20 July 2016.

<sup>5</sup> [First anniversary of government commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees](#), Home Office, 7 September 2016.

<sup>6</sup> [PQ 49968](#), 31 October 2016.

## 1.5 Controlling migration fund

The Controlling Migration Fund includes a local services fund worth £100 million (£25 million in each of the four years from 2016-17 to 2019-20), which councils can bid for funding from.

The [prospectus](#) explaining how local authorities can access the fund makes clear that proposals for funding should demonstrate how they will benefit the resident community in the first instance. It also notes, however, that “legitimate migrants may be the focus of some projects, for example English language support.”<sup>7</sup> In response to a parliamentary question, the Minister, Robert Goodwill, additionally stated that local authorities had been encouraged to consider whether the fund could be used to “help with any short-term pressures as a result of recent arrivals of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.”<sup>8</sup>

## 1.6 ESOL in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

### Scotland

In 2007, the Scottish Government published an [Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland](#). This was updated in February 2015 to cover the period to 2020: [Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland’s ESOL Strategy 2015 – 2020](#).

Refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted a form of leave to remain, such as Humanitarian Protection, do not have to pay fees for ESOL courses in Scotland. They may also be eligible for help towards their living costs, for example from colleges’ discretionary funding and from the childcare fund.<sup>9</sup> Asylum seekers who are waiting for a decision on their application are also eligible for free ESOL courses, with no waiting period, and may be eligible for support towards travel and study costs.<sup>10</sup>

ESOL provision in Scotland is also offered by a range of other providers, including community-based settings, voluntary organisations, and in the workplace.<sup>11</sup>

In 2015-16, £1.46 million was allocated to Community Planning Partnerships to support the delivery of ESOL programmes in line with the national ESOL strategy.<sup>12</sup> An impact report on the use of this funding was published by Education Scotland and is available at: [English for Speakers of Other Languages \(ESOL\) – Summary Report 2015-2016](#).

---

<sup>7</sup> [Controlling Migration Fund: prospectus](#), DCLG and Home Office, last updated 3 April 2017.

<sup>8</sup> [PQ67787](#), 21 March 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Funding Council, [SFC/GDI/04/2017 - FE Discretionary Fund 2017-18](#); Scottish Funding Council, [2017-18 National policy: childcare funds for further and higher education students in Scotland’s colleges](#).

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Funding Council, [Support for Asylum Seekers in Further and higher Education](#).

<sup>11</sup> [English for Speakers of Other Languages \(ESOL\)](#), Education Scotland.

<sup>12</sup> Education Scotland, [English for Speakers of Other Languages \(ESOL\): Impact Report 2015-2016](#).

## Holistic Integration Service

The Holistic Integration Service (HIS) was a partnership between a number of organisations, led by the Scottish Refugee Council, which offered 12 months of support to new refugees in Scotland. The service ran over a three year period from 2013 to 2016.

Under the HIS, following an English language assessment, people with lower level English language skills were offered “Survival English” courses at Workers’ Educational Association Scotland. Those with higher level skills were able to join ESOL classes at Glasgow Clyde College, set up through a “dedicated referral pathway.”<sup>13</sup>

Further information on the HIS is available in a [lessons-learned](#) report on the third year of the programme.

## Wales

The ESOL strategy for Wales, [English for Speakers of Other Languages \(ESOL\) policy for Wales](#), was published in June 2014.

Information on the access and support for refugees and asylum seekers to undertake ESOL in Wales was provided in response to a question in the Welsh Assembly in January 2017:

Officials are working closely with colleagues across the sector to ensure refugees and asylum seekers have access to appropriate ESOL courses.

The Welsh Government published its ESOL Policy for Wales in 2014. The policy was developed with the full participation of the sector, under the steer and guidance of the ESOL Advisory Board. In the policy, ESOL is given equal status as Essential Skills, and we commit to funding ESOL in the same way as we fund Essential Skills in Wales.

The Welsh Government does not differentiate according to a learner's residential status. All learners, including Refugees and Asylum Seekers are eligible for support.

With regard to the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme (SRP) specifically, officials are working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Wales Migration Partnership (WMP) to coordinate this additional provision across Wales. This aims to support Local Authorities to deliver ESOL; and to ensure the additional provision compliments the mainstream provision available to allow learners to access provision at all levels.<sup>14</sup>

## Northern Ireland

Prior to February 2016, ESOL classes were free for asylum seekers and those Syrian refugees resettled in Northern Ireland under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS), but not for other refugees.<sup>15</sup>

Following an announcement in January 2016 by the Northern Irish Minister of the Department of Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry, the entitlement to free ESOL classes was extended to all

<sup>13</sup> Scottish Refugee Council, [Rights, Resilience, and Refugee Integration](#), June 2016.

<sup>14</sup> [WAQ71852](#), 17 January 2017.

<sup>15</sup> For information, see: [Stormont u-turn sees free English classes for all refugees](#), *The Irish News*, 16 January 2016; [Update from NICRAS](#).

refugees.<sup>16</sup> In announcing the change, the Minister was reported as stating that “analysis indicates that demand for provision is relatively small so any additional costs will be affordable within the department's budget.”<sup>17</sup>

## 1.7 Reports

### Casey Review into opportunity and integration

In December 2016, Louise Casey published the [report of her review into opportunity and integration](#).

The report argued that language proficiency issues in some communities were particularly worrying because poor English language skills “have been shown to create a number of disadvantages” and stand out “strongly as a barrier to progress” in relation to integration and economic success.<sup>18</sup>

The report also noted that 27% of ESOL learners go on to further learning and stated that “there is a clear link between the level of English spoken and the level of qualifications obtained, and between levels of English and employment rates and labour market capabilities.”<sup>19</sup>

#### Recommendations and response

The report recommended that central government should support a new programme to help improve community cohesion, which would provide targeted support for projects that would build more resilient communities. While the report stated that the Government should agree a final list of project criteria, it stated that they should include the promotion of English language.<sup>20</sup>

In response to a parliamentary question in October 2017, the Minister, Marcus Jones, stated that since the publication of the Casey Review the Government had been “reviewing the available evidence on the main causes of poor integration” and “in the coming months...will bring forward plans for tackling these issues through a new integration strategy.”<sup>21</sup>

### Refugee Action, *Let Refugees Learn*

In May 2016, Refugee Action published [Let Refugees Learn](#) as part of a larger campaign.

The report argued that refugees “have a great determination and desire to learn English” but are finding it harder to access ESOL classes because of funding reductions that have “resulted in shortages of provision, waiting lists, and other barriers to participation, particularly for women.” The prospects for high quality provision are additionally

---

<sup>16</sup> Department for Employment and Learning, [Circular FE12/15](#), 9 November 2015.

<sup>17</sup> [Refugees in Northern Ireland offered free English lessons](#), *BBC News*, 15 January 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Dame Louise Casey, [The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration](#), December 2016, pp94-9.

<sup>19</sup> As above, p97.

<sup>20</sup> As above, p167.

<sup>21</sup> [PQ 106973](#), 16 October 2017.

undermined, the report contended, by the fragmentation of ESOL provision between multiple government departments and by the lack of an ESOL strategy for England.<sup>22</sup>

The report's recommendations included:

- A fund should be created to specifically support refugees learn English that would enable all refugees to have free ESOL classes for their first two years in England.
- An ESOL strategy for England should be published, which should set national targets for ESOL provision and attainment.
- Equal access to ESOL classes should be ensured, particularly for women, by, for example, making sure learners have access to childcare facilities.
- Asylum seekers should be given with the right to access free English language learning from the point when they make their asylum claim.<sup>23</sup>

### **APPG on Refugees, *Refugees Welcome?*, April 2017**

In April 2017, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees published a report, [Refugees Welcome?](#), looking at how government policies supported refugees in the UK.

The report stated that English language was key to successful integration, which allows refugees to “rebuild their lives and make full use of their talents and abilities to take part in and contribute to British society.”<sup>24</sup>

The report raised concerns about the support provided to refugees in learning English. In particular, it stated, a shortage of ESOL classes “prevents refugees from being able to access other areas of support, from gaining employment and from taking part in community activities.” It added that reductions to ESOL funding has “led to longer waiting lists, a decline in teaching hours and a lack of classes that meet the needs of refugees.”<sup>25</sup>

The report recommended that the Government should create an ESOL strategy for England, which should include increased funding and support for voluntary groups providing additional language support alongside ESOL classes.<sup>26</sup>

A [short debate](#) on the report was held in the House of Lords on 19 July 2017.

---

<sup>22</sup> Refugee Action, [Let Refugees Learn](#), May 2016, pp1-4.

<sup>23</sup> As above.

<sup>24</sup> All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees, [Refugees Welcome?](#), April 2017, pp6-7.

<sup>25</sup> All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees, [Refugees Welcome?](#), April 2017, pp6-7.

<sup>26</sup> As above, p30.

## 2. Parliamentary material

### 2.1 Written Parliamentary Questions

- [Opportunity and Integration Review](#)

**Asked by:** Marsden, Gordon | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish the Government response to the Casey Review.

**Answering member:** Mr Marcus Jones | **Party:** Conservative Party  
| **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

On 5 December 2016, Dame Louise Casey published her independent review of how to boost opportunity and integration in isolated and deprived communities. Since then my Department has been reviewing the available evidence on the main causes of poor integration. In the coming months we will bring forward plans for tackling these issues through a new integration strategy.

16 Oct 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 106973

**Date tabled:** 10 Oct 2017 | **Date for answer:** 16 Oct 2017 | **Date answered:** 16 Oct 2017

- [English Language: Education](#)

**Asked by:** Marsden, Gordon | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many learners were enrolled on ESOL courses between the ages of (a) 19 to 25, (b) 26 to 30, (c) 31 to 45, (d) 45 to 54 and (e) over 55 in the years (i) 2009-10, (ii) 2012-13, (iii) 2014-15, (iv) 2015-16 and (v) 2016-17.

**Answering member:** Mr Robert Goodwill | **Party:** Conservative Party  
| **Department:** Department for Education

The table below provides participation on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses by age band in the 2012/13, 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 academic years. All figures use full, final year data except for 2016/17 figures which are provisional.

Figures for the 2009/10 academic year are not available.

Year	Age Band					Total
	19 to 25	26 to 30	31 to 45	46 to 54	Over 55	
2012/13	26,040	28,950	66,280	17,320	7,660	146,200
2014/15	21,350	24,330	60,140	16,670	8,580	131,100
2015/16	18,460	20,860	51,620	12,930	6,720	110,600



2016/17 (P)	18,690	21,050	54,570	13,660	6,460	114,400
----------------	--------	--------	--------	--------	-------	---------

---

(P) notes that the data are provisional

All totals are rounded to the nearest hundred

16 Oct 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 106972

**Date tabled:** 10 Oct 2017 | **Date for answer:** 16 Oct 2017 | **Date answered:** 16 Oct 2017

- [Asylum](#)

**Asked by:** Brock, Deidre | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to match-fund the costs to local authorities of refugees and asylum seekers with central government funding.

**Answering member:** Mr Robert Goodwill | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Home Office

The Government has committed £129 million to assist with local authority costs over years two-five of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme. This is in addition to the first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs, which are funded by central government using the [Official Development Assistance](#) budget. The grant to local authorities is not ring fenced, and can be used for example towards support for costs such as counselling, social care and other needs. Funding payments (per individual refugee) can be pooled and managed across all the refugees a local authority takes in.

For unaccompanied asylum seeking children, local authorities receive a daily rate towards the costs of care. Last year the Government significantly increased the funding it provides to local authorities caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) by 28% for those aged 16 and 17 and by 20% for those aged under 16. These rates are based on the information provided to the Home Office by local authorities about their actual expenditure in looking after UASC. We will be conducting a review of these rates in the coming months.

Refugees and asylum seekers also have access to health and education services, which are funded through the normal per capita funding routes. In addition, local authorities are also able to apply to the £140m Controlling Migration Fund which was announced by the Home Secretary in October 2016. This fund is intended to cover a broad range of costs associated with migration and local authorities have been encouraged to consider whether the fund could help with any short-term pressures as a result of recent arrivals of UASC.

21 Mar 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 67787

**Date tabled:** 14 Mar 2017 | **Date for answer:** 16 Mar 2017 | **Date answered:** 21 Mar 2017

- [Refugees: English Language](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Hylton | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to increase the £10 million allotted to teaching English to Syrian refugees in Britain; and whether they will extend the scope of the programme to include resettled refugees of all origins.

**Answering member:** Baroness Williams of Trafford | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Home Office

The £10 million funding being rolled out to provide additional ESOL lessons to Syrians on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme is also intended to help those who arrive in the UK under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement (VCR) scheme which is for children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. English language tuition also forms part of the support package provided to beneficiaries of the Gateway Protection Programme.

Other adults who are granted refugee status or humanitarian protection become eligible for government skills funding as any other UK resident and are not subject to the normal 3 year qualifying period.

24 Jan 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL4506

**Date tabled:** 10 Jan 2017 | **Date for answer:** 24 Jan 2017 | **Date answered:** 24 Jan 2017

- [English Language: Education](#)

**Asked by:** Brown, Lyn | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much Government funding has been made available for lessons in English for speakers of other languages in each of the last 10 years.

**Answering member:** Robert Halfon | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

I would refer you to my response to PQ59503 in which I provide the information that the Honourable Lady requested. The table below shows estimated funding for adult skills budget English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision from 2009/10 onwards, and also includes funding by the Department for Communities and Local Government. We do not hold data before 2009/10.

Funding for ESOL is allocated by the Skills Funding Agency as part of a provider's adult skills budget. In addition, there are a number of ESOL courses funded through the Agency's community learning budget, but we do not collect data which enables us to provide a breakdown of the expenditure on these. SFA-funded providers which deliver ESOL include Further Education colleges, local authorities and a few other providers

From 2013/14 the Department for Communities and Local Government has directly funded six projects to engage isolated adults with poor or no English who had not previously accessed mainstream training.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>DfE ACADEMIC YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING* (Adult Skills Budget)</b>	<b>DCLG FINANCIAL YEAR FUNDING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROJECTS</b>
<b>2009/10</b>	<b>£203m</b>	
<b>2010/11</b>	<b>£169m</b>	
<b>2011/12</b>	<b>£117m</b>	
<b>2012/13</b>	<b>£128m</b>	<b>£0.12m</b>
<b>2013/14</b>	<b>£120m</b>	<b>£2.14m</b>
<b>2014/15</b>	<b>£104m</b>	<b>£3.66m</b>
<b>2015/16</b>	<b>£90</b>	<b>£2.53m</b>

\*(Formerly the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) – funding values are estimated using data from the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). Estimated funding provides an indication of the level of government funding and should not be treated as actual spend.

02 Feb 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 60891

**Date tabled:** 19 Jan 2017 | **Date for answer:** 23 Jan 2017 | **Date answered:** 02 Feb 2017

- [Literacy](#)

**Asked by:** Baroness Rebuck | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the finding in the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2014–15 that the ability to gain literacy and numeracy skills is a fundamental right of all adults, what steps they are taking to ensure that the one in six of the population with poor literacy skills have opportunities to gain at least entry level literacy skills.

**Answering member:** Lord Nash | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

This Government understands the importance of strong literacy skills and makes English provision a priority for support within the adult skills system. We fully fund, through a statutory entitlement, all adults to achieve their first English GCSE at grade C or above as well as other qualifications which help them get to that level. We also support English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, in addition to DCLG's community-based programmes and investment in Syrian refugees' English Language training through the Syrian resettlement programme.

This provision is available for a wide range of learners including:

- Prisoners, through the Offender Learning and Skills Service;
- Learners in the community, including through Family English, Maths and Language;
- People who need ESOL;
- Trainees as part of their traineeship;
- Apprentices as part of their apprenticeship;
- Jobseekers.

To enable these learners to improve their literacy skills, we have embedded English at the heart of all our major programmes. This means:

- Learners who did not achieve a good GCSE pass in English by the age of 16 are now required to continue to study the subject post-16;
- Since 2014/15, the English requirement for Intermediate Apprenticeships has been stronger, with all apprentices who have already achieved level 1 English having to work towards level 2;
- Since 2014/15, young people undertaking a traineeship have been required to study English unless they already have level 2 qualifications in the subjects;

We have reformed GCSEs to ensure they are more stretching and provide greater assurance of core literacy skills than the old GCSEs. In line with the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee recommendation, we recognise that some people are not ready to take GCSE so we are also improving the rigour and relevance of English Functional Skills qualifications, which are taken by many students and apprentices aged 16 and over. We have commissioned the Education and Training Foundation to revise the National Literacy (and Numeracy) Standards and reform Functional Skills with the new qualifications being delivered from September 2018.

To ensure high quality provision is delivered, we have invested over £30m over the past 3 years to improve the quality of the English (and maths) workforce in further education, driving forward improvements in governance and leadership.

To ensure prisoners have the opportunity to improve their literacy skills, Government accepted in principle the recommendations of the review led by Dame Sally Coates on prison education which will include developing a new curriculum for the teaching of basic literacy in prisons.

Lastly, we are undertaking a range of research to better understand where Government investment in English has the greatest impact and delivers value for money. As recommended by the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee in their 14/15 report, Government is using behavioural insights to identify how to motivate adults to improve their English and encourage learners to keep studying once enrolled on a course. I am pleased to report that very positive trial results will be published shortly by the Behavioural Insights Team. This report includes trial findings working with the Army as a significant provider of workplace literacy training.

**Date tabled:** 09 Sep 2016 | **Date for answer:** 23 Sep 2016 | **Date answered:** 19 Sep 2016

- [Refugees: Syria](#)

**Asked by:** Burrowes, Mr David | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the £10 million package announced on 4 September 2016 for resettled Syrian refugees, how many hours of additional English language teaching per refugee that funding will provide.

**Answering member:** Mr Robert Goodwill | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Home Office

The ESOL funding is provided to help refugees learn English and integrate into British society.

Although it is expected that standards of English will improve, there is currently no standard set attainment level, as ability levels will differ. The ESOL courses should be at least 12 hours a week, for a 3 – 6 month period.

31 Oct 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 49968

**Date tabled:** 24 Oct 2016 | **Date for answer:** 27 Oct 2016 | **Date answered:** 31 Oct 2016

**Statistics:** yes | **Subject:** Finance; English language; Refugees; Syria; Resettlement

- [Refugees: Syria](#)

**Asked by:** Hussain, Imran | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of changes to the funding of English for speakers of other languages services on the ability of local authorities to provide access to English language classes to resettled Syrian refugees.

**Answering member:** Mr Robert Goodwill | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Home Office

Learning English is a key factor in integration and is vital for gaining access to the employment market. Our experience is that most Syrians resettled under the programme are keen to learn English.

English language tuition is already provided as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme (VPRS) and will be available for adults entering the UK under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement scheme (VCRS). The recently announced additional £10 million of funding will increase the amount of training available for Syrian refugees resettled in the UK.

We will be working with local authorities to ensure that the funding is taken up in the most effective way, including providing funding for regional English Speakers of other languages (ESOL) co-ordinators to promote best practice, map provision, support authorities to commission services and coordinate volunteers. Many people across the country have also offered their time and support to help refugees improve English and integrate better into their community.

13 Oct 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 46887

**Date tabled:** 07 Oct 2016 | **Date for answer:** 11 Oct 2016 | **Date answered:** 13 Oct 2016

- [Refugees: English Language](#)

**Asked by:** Debbonaire, Thangam | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that English classes are provided for refugees as soon as possible after refugee status has been granted.

**Answering member:** Mike Penning | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Home Office

We are working towards achieving more integrated communities and creating the conditions for everyone to live and work successfully alongside each other.

Those who are granted refugee status are given access to the labour market, mainstream benefits and housing assistance from their local authority. There are therefore no plans to allow refugees to stay in asylum support accommodation.

The Home Office offers integration loans to recognised refugees. The loan is designed to help refugees integrate into UK society by offering financial support towards housing costs, employment and training.

The Home Office also funds strategic migration partnerships which provide coordination and support services for those organisations working with migrants and refugees in local communities.

Earlier this year the Government announced that £20 million of additional funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses would be introduced in October 2016. This funding will reach the most isolated communities in the UK.

18 Jul 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 42667

**Date tabled:** 13 Jul 2016 | **Date for answer:** 18 Jul 2016 | **Date answered:** 18 Jul 2016

**Subject:** English language; Refugees

- [Refugees: Syria](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Roberts of Llandudno | **Party:** Liberal Democrats

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the process of resettling 20,000 refugees by 2020 fulfils the criteria of the UNHCR Integration Programme outlined in its 2013 report *The Integration of Resettled Refugees*, including provisions for pre-departure information, initial reception, orientation and documentation, social support, employment support, language training, education, healthcare, housing and income support.

**Answering member:** Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Home Office

The UK has worked closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on both the development and delivery of its Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

Through the International Organisation for Migration the UK offers cultural orientation pre-departure to refugees being resettled to the UK. Upon arrival, local authorities are funded to provide refugees with a 12 month support package tailored to their individual needs which includes; accommodation, support in addressing any medical and social care needs, integration assistance and English language tuition.

25 Apr 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL7796

**Date tabled:** 20 Apr 2016 | **Date for answer:** 05 May 2016 | **Date answered:** 25 Apr 2016

- [Refugees: Middle East](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Hylton | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government what special education programmes are being provided for those Iraqis and Syrians who have reached the UK since 2012, broken down into those for (1) children, (2) young people, and (3) adults.

**Answering member:** Lord Bates | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Home Office

Asylum seekers and those granted refugee status or humanitarian protection have access to free state schooling. Those granted refugee status have immediate access to student support for higher education courses.

Local authorities in England are responsible for providing additional educational support, such as English language training.

Where schools need to provide additional support for English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils the funding arrangements enable local authorities to allocate a proportion of their funding to schools on the basis of the number of pupils in each school who have EAL and who have been in the school system for a maximum of three years.

24 Feb 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL5930

**Date tabled:** 04 Feb 2016 | **Date for answer:** 18 Feb 2016 | **Date answered:** 24 Feb 2016

## 2.2 Oral Parliamentary Questions

- [Asylum Seekers](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB) | **Party:** Crossbench

My Lords, in its report Let Refugees Learn, Refugee Action states that, “more than any other factor”, English language is a “key driver” towards the “successful integration” of refugees. With long waiting lists and a shortage of teaching hours, does the Minister agree that we need a national strategy for the teaching of English and will she say what has been done since the Prime Minister rightly said in September that the Government would provide more language support?

**Answered by:** Baroness Williams of Trafford | **Party:** Conservative Party

I totally agree with the noble Lord. A person who comes to this country unable to speak the language has difficulties with everything from making a doctor’s appointment to inquiring about their children’s education in school. The additional language funding that I spoke about earlier will mean that all adults arriving through the scheme anywhere in the UK will receive an extra 12 hours a week of tuition for up to six months.

01 Nov 2016 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Lords | House of Lords chamber | 776 c540

**Date answered:** 01 Nov 2016

## 2.3 Debates

- [Refugees](#) (HL Deb 19 July 2017 cc1688-1704)



### 3. Press articles

[Refugee loneliness: The deaf Syrian father learning British Sign Language to combat isolation](#)

**The Independent, 11 October 2017**

[Bloom time: the London floristry scheme helping refugee women](#)

**The Guardian, 21 September 2017**

[Volunteering for Refugees MOOC opens](#)

**The PIE News, 6 September 2017**

[Language barrier leaves refugees facing struggle to rebuild their lives](#)

**The Guardian, 16 November 2016**

[Syrian surgeon's career on hold after failed language test](#)

**BBC News, 2 July 2017**

[Learning English, making dumplings](#)

**The Observer, 11 June 2017**

[Refugees welcome? How Britain and Sweden compare on education for migrants](#)

**The Independent, 6 June 2017**

[How This Free University Course For Syrian Refugees Is Integrating Them Into Britain](#)

**The Huffington Post, 14 May 2017**

[Experts Reveal What Politicians Need To Do To Help Migrants Integrate Into British Life](#)

**The Huffington Post, 11 May 2017**

[Education leaders call for co-ordinated national ESOL strategy](#)

**FE Week, 3 February 2017**

[Syrian-refugee victims of torture and violence need specialist support with resettling in Britain](#)

**International Business Times, 16 January 2017**

[Migrants told to learn English upon entering UK face three-year wait for lessons](#)

**The Independent, 9 January 2017**

[Theresa May faces calls to implement regional immigration policy](#)

**The Guardian, 5 January 2017**

[Let's stop pretending we need to force immigrants to learn English](#)

**The New Statesman, 5 January 2017**

[How schools are helping refugee children to succeed](#)

**The Guardian, 12 December 2016**

[Caroline Spelman: We would all benefit from ensuring refugees have access to English lessons](#)

**Conservative Home, 10 December 2016**

[Scotland welcomes 1,000th Syrian refugee](#)

**The Guardian, 1 September 2016**

[Refugees in Northern Ireland offered free English lessons](#)

**BBC News, 15 January 2016**

## 4. Press notices

[Progress made towards national ESOL strategy but more needs to be done](#)

**NATECLA, 16 October 2017**

[New research: English language provision 'not fit for purpose' as refugees wait up to three years to start lessons](#)

**Refugee Action, 6 October 2017**

[Business leaders call for more funding for refugees to learn English](#)

**Refugee Action, 9 June 2017**

[Refugees forced to wait up to two years for English lessons](#)

**Refugee Action, 2 March 2017**

[Concerns about TFL English language requirement for minicab drivers](#)

**NATECLA, 1 December 2016**

[NATECLA response to £10m Syrian refugee funding Sept 2016](#)

**NATECLA, 8 September 2016**

## 5. Further reading

- Commons Library Briefing CBP-7905, [Adult ESOL in England](#), 22 February 2017
- All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees, [Refugees Welcome?](#), April 2017
- Dame Louise Casey, [The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration](#), December 2016
- Scottish Refugee Council, [Rights, Resilience, and Refugee Integration](#), June 2016.
- Refugee Action, [Let Refugees Learn](#), May 2016

### About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcinfo@parliament.uk](mailto:hcinfo@parliament.uk).

### Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).