

Thousands to benefit from new English language classes

A new £6.5 million English language programme to help local authorities to meet the English language needs of their communities was announced today (6 March 2020) by Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick.

The programme will help people fulfil their potential and increase integration in their local area.

Building on the success of previous community-based programmes, the £6.5 million English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for Integration Fund will fund classes for up to 25 local authorities.

Since 2013 over 100,000 places have been made available to help isolated adults improve their English language proficiency and build their self-confidence through community-based programmes.

The new programme will deliver high-quality language teaching in familiar and accessible community locations including schools, registered childcare settings and places of worship.

It is also designed to improve people's connection to their local area and encourage social relationships between different communities.

Lack of English skills presents a clear barrier to social and economic mobility. For some learners more formal approaches to learning English can be challenging.

The most common difficulties are travel costs, lack of childcare, illiteracy in their first language or a reluctance or lack of confidence to make the first steps towards learning English.

The new programme aims to remove those obstacles and continue to fund classes in familiar community locations.

Communities Minister Rt Hon Robert Jenrick said:

This government is committed to uniting and levelling up our country and that means building a rich and vibrant but integrated society.

Learning English is essential to life and work in this country and people see huge benefits when they can speak our language fluently.

We are making this requirement in our new British immigration system and funding for existing citizens who speak little or no English, providing further funding to help them learn English quickly and in doing so, play a full part in their local community.

Up to £6.5 million is available in 2020 to 2021 to support up to 25 successful local authority proposals for one year. £5 million will be available to support taught sessions to participants at New to ESOL (Pre-Entry – Entry Level 1) by qualified ESOL practitioners; and £1.5 million will be available for social mixing opportunities for the whole ESOL community through clubs and activities.

The fund provides an opportunity for local authorities to tell the department about their area and how they will deliver learning to residents with little or no English language, who may feel disconnected within their local communities. Find [details on the application process and the ESOL for Integration Fund prospectus](#).

The most recent Census (2011) found that 770,000 people that live in England speak little or no English. The demand for English language classes remains high.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has a successful track record of delivering English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), in community-based settings, as a key intervention to support increased social integration. Interventions range from the Community Based English Language Programme in 2013 to the Integrated Communities English Language Programme in 2019 to 2020.

For the last 3 years ESOL social mixing opportunities, such as conversations clubs and activities, have also been supported by the department through the Controlling Migration Fund.

The English language teaching will focus on connecting learners to the places, spaces and people in their local area – helping them in everyday situations such as shopping in the high street, visiting the doctor or attending a parents' evening. The fund will also provide opportunities for English language practice and social mixing through shared interests and activities.

The fund is intended to supplement English language provision already available under the Adult Skills Budget and many of the participants will be expected to progress to more formal ESOL classes as their proficiency and confidence grows.