

Speedy integration for refugees or other new arrivals with no prior knowledge of English: A checklist

Introduction

Refugees and new arrivals are often trying to learn English from scratch and move as quickly as possible into work. This checklist is intended to inform learning providers and other providers of support, including local authorities and voluntary organisations, who are offering English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and/or employability training.

The checklist emerged from discussions with colleagues in Oxford, led by some questions from [Aspire](#):

- **How fast can individuals with no prior knowledge of the English Language learn the minimum number of words to enable them to enter Employment, for example into Entry Level job roles?**
- **What would such a curriculum consist of?**
- **How could it be delivered?**

The starting point taken was that perhaps we needed to reframe or at least add to these questions and to look at the key issues which underlie them. We looked at the learners, who they are and what their aspirations are. We discussed too whether there were any minimum numbers of words needed for working and thought probably not; more important is what enables an employee to work safely. It all depends on the job, the person's aspirations and what prior experience / skills they are bringing to the work.

There are lots of curricula and courses already, and we mentioned that there are some old materials that can readily be adapted. As one example, it is worth checking the Skills for Life curriculum, which had a series called '*English for ...*' covering many different jobs and sectors and are still to be found in both hard copy and on the Excellence Gateway. There were also handy little booklets of lists of words for each job.

There are some similar resources available now - e.g. English for Hairdressers etc. Some of these relate to the more formal Functional Skills curriculum but again can be adapted for the new to English learners. (There are further resources available which are produced by private providers and are potentially more expensive.)

We focused on some of the barriers to employment for refugees, which are well-rehearsed and explored in the literature, including in the [Employability Guide](#).

Perhaps more important even than learning English for enabling progression into work is to think more about initial processes and support - through screening/assessment and helping the learners/refugees to think through what they bring and what they can offer - their aspirations and what needs to be done to help them achieve those aspirations.

Further information about these topics is covered in the Employability Guide which Learning and Work Institute (L&W) prepared for the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM). This publication includes a list of resources. It is also useful to look at the [New to English Resources and reports](#).

Checklist

Topic	NB ESOL opportunities can be embedded into all these scenarios. Interpreter support may also be needed in the early days.
Initial assessment / screening	<p>Rather than just assessing for ESOL levels to enable someone to enter an ESOL class, why not do a broader holistic assessment with the refugee, including a skills audit.</p> <p>See the New to ESOL resources for more information on differentiation and levels if needed.</p>
Skills auditing / skills assessment	<p>Take a broad approach to looking at someone's life and career. There are models for these in the resources list in the Employability Guide).</p> <p>Use professional / appropriate interpreters if need be – this gets better results and enables increased progression.</p>
'Personal development'	<p>A key element of personal development in the adult learning context includes enabling learners to become more confident. In this context though we also need to consider including some 'context development' within the ESOL - including getting to know your neighbourhood or locality and so on. In addition, some support towards early integration and cultural understanding can be built into some pre-ESOL courses. It is strongly advised to offer pre-ESOL and recommend looking at New to English resources which are available on the Excellence Gateway.</p> <p>'Catching confidence' is a good toolkit for supporting personal development learning and capturing its outcomes, but many adult and community learning providers have their own resources for giving feedback on confidence and other personal development.</p>
Career education / Career development, Information, advice and guidance (IAG)	<p>Include Careers Service, JCP work coaches and others and develop holistic approaches to IAG.</p> <p>Use Career development plans / Career action plans (Models can be found in the Employability Guide.)</p> <p>Career planning must be provided ethically, client-centred, with honesty and realism. Works well as a way of introducing how the UK works while also developing self-understanding.</p>

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Recognition of prior experience	Including NARIC for anyone who can prove their prior qualifications. There are other methods for people not experienced in education. RARPA (Recognising and Recording Prior Achievement). is used mainly.
Job advice and job seeking support	Needs careful and patient holistic support - a combination of workshops and one-to-one work can give effective overall support including a picture of the UK labour market, work-place norms, employees' rights, avoiding exploitation as well as how to go about finding and keeping a job.
Understanding self-employment opportunities	Put on short courses and workshops
Building networks / social capital	Refugee community organisations and other community organisations can offer good routes to help develop personal and organisational networks. These are often key in job search.
Good local knowledge of training and education opportunities	Should be part of the IAG but also part of any ESOL classes and other opportunities for support work. If skills training is taken up, try to include opportunities for embedded ESOL / language support.
Digital / IT skills development	Find ways to upskill people in these areas - it is quite positive to embed ESOL in digital learning, as people tend to want to learn and it is an almost essential job skill for most jobs now. It is important for people to learn to use apps for practising and learning English.
Employer codes of practice /partnerships	Some refugee support organisations and learning providers have developed very successful partnerships with employers - sometime using an employer code of practice. Refugee Council website currently has examples of their work with employers as just one example.
Routes to employment	There are apprenticeships, placements, volunteering, mentoring and you may be able to find local additional methods.

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Work-related ESOL	<p>Health and safety / Food hygiene can also be included and ESOL materials are available for these topics already.</p> <p>Some materials for a previous ESOL for Work programme are still available and would only need some minor tweaking to update or tailor to your circumstances. The ESOL Nexus programme (British Council) has already adapted some of these resources.</p>
Workplace champions - like learning reps/learning champions	<p>Part of working closely with employers - introduced as part of an employer code.</p> <p>They can be supported by Trades Unions.</p>
Other approaches to ESOL	<p>Seek to match the learners needs with any available learning opportunities. Help people to see these opportunities and understand them as learning. This could include voluntary work.</p> <p>If there are highly qualified refugees who can speak quite good English, there may be a more appropriate private sector route to speed up their learning, acquire an appropriate IELTS and gain work in their original profession through a conversion course. It may be worth seeking support and funding for this as it can speed up progress and increase confidence.</p>
Other approaches to ESOL	<p>Work-specific ESOL / job-specific ESOL can also be delivered.</p> <p>As above, look at ESOL for Work, the old Skills for Life programme and ESOL for Migrant Workers materials. And, ESOL Nexus as above). These materials covered a range of jobs from cleaners to health care professionals, for example.</p>

Further information and a resource list about ESOL and work is covered in the [Employability Guide](#), 'Progressing resettled refugees into employment', which L&W prepared for SESP. M.