

English For Speakers of Other Languages Frequently Asked Questions

The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) was established in 2001 and is funded by the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to facilitate strategic leadership, advice and coordination on migration. The WSMP is hosted by the [Welsh Local Government Association](#) (WLGA) to reflect the Partnership's All-Wales role around migration.

The ESOL Coordinator at the WSMP promotes access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or Welsh for Speakers of Other Languages (WSOL), and works with a wide range of partners across the public, private and third sector on refugee ESOL and employment issues and shares information and resources in relation to English and Welsh language acquisition.

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What is ESOL?

English for Speakers of Other Languages, or **ESOL**, is the term used to describe the English language lessons that refugees and asylum seekers are encouraged to take. For those arriving under [UK Government's resettlement schemes](#), (i.e. UK Resettlement Scheme UKRS, [Afghan Citizen's Resettlement Scheme ACRS](#) and [Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy ARAP](#)), the expectation is that they will be able to access at least 8 hours' provision per week within a month of arrival.

ESOL differs from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in that the emphasis is very much on the everyday language needs of the learner, rather than business or tourist needs. Refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants for which English is a second language need English skills to ensure effective integration and to access vital services, including NHS, education and for banking. They will also need a confident level of language skill to find employment. Language proficiency is essential for integration.



Where can I find ESOL classes?

ESOL classes are available through every Further Education college in Wales. The [Welsh Government's ESOL Policy](#) means that ESOL is free up to the level of functionality for refugees and asylum seekers.

The amount of ESOL available at any college will depend on the demand locally. Ideally there should be an ESOL class at each level, but this is not always the case. Many students find mixed ability classes either too difficult or too easy.

Classes may be run on a roll-on roll-off basis, with students able to join at any time during the academic year. For some classes, students may have to wait for the start of a new term or new academic year.

[Adult Learning Wales](#) offer ESOL provision across Wales, in person and online. This provision is accredited but is more community based and can feel more comfortable for some. Adult Learning Wales (ALW) can be [contacted](#) to discuss offering a bespoke class for groups of ESOL learners.

There are also several online companies offering varying levels of courses and these can be a useful way of helping a student make quicker progress or providing ESOL while the student waits for the start of term.

[Klik2Learn](#) and [Flash Academy](#) have both been used by WSMP. It can also be worth considering apps such as [Ailem](#), [Duolingo](#), [Babbel](#) or similar. The [British Council](#) also offers online resources.

What is REACH and how can that help ESOL learners?

Regional ESOL Assessment Central Hubs ([REACH](#)) have been established in all four of the long established asylum dispersal areas of Wales; Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham. All students are expected to be assessed at REACH, before being allocated a course. REACH hubs are able to offer a holistic approach to providing ESOL and employment support.

What are the barriers to ESOL and language acquisition?

In some areas, ESOL classes can only be accessed at certain times of the year, so it may be necessary to wait a whole term for the next intake or there is a waiting list as classes are at capacity. In other areas, there may not be enough capacity to offer classes at different levels, and a mixed ability class can be too challenging for lower levels, and more able learners become frustrated at a lack of progress. For many, classroom settings may not be the best way to inspire confidence and motivation, due to having little in the way of previous education.



A lack of childcare is a significant barrier, preventing class attendance.

Lack of transport to classes, or inability to afford travel costs, especially in rural areas, can make getting to a class difficult.

The Third Sector has always been able to offer valuable and additional informal ESOL, but this network of support is not established in all areas of Wales. In Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham, [REACH](#) will have details of alternative ESOL available through the Third Sector. The [Welsh Refugee Council](#) offers some online ESOL, which can be accessed from any part of Wales providing learners have equipment and access to wi-fi.

Is there a way of making quicker progress towards employment?

For many ESOL students, the ultimate goal is employment, and there can be frustration at the amount of time it takes to reach a level of English that makes it possible to apply for employment.

Any opportunity to practise English outside class will help enormously. There may be Third Sector groups locally that can help set up a conversation hub. [The FAN Charity](#) offers safe listening and speaking opportunities online, as well as in person in a growing number of areas.

Volunteering is also a good way of gaining both language confidence and additional skills for CVs. Many charities now offer coaching and mentoring as part of the volunteer placement and will tailor the actual placement to the skills of the volunteer (e.g. ICT roles, window dressing, administrative work etc.). [WCVA](#) also offers good advice on both volunteering and offering volunteer placements.

What is WSOL?

Welsh for Speakers of Other Languages is an introduction to Welsh language, life and culture and courses are provided by Adult Learning Wales. These can lead to further Welsh courses through the national provider, [Learn Welsh](#).

Where else can I find help?

The Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) offers [ESOL courses](#) and ESOL links, as well as [employability support](#).



Job vacancies in Wales can be posted on the [Refugee Employment Network](#) website. Refugees can search here for suitable vacancies, and employers can post vacancies.

[Refuaid](#) can provide support with Language, employment, and education.

[The Ruth Hayman Trust](#) awards grants to support the education and training of adults who have come to settle in the UK, and whose first language is not English and who cannot afford the full fees for their studies. There are five funding rounds per year, with awards of between £300 - £500 given, occasionally more.

The WSMP ESOL and Employment Forum meets monthly and addresses many of these questions.

What are your contact details for further information?

You can email WSMP ESOL Coordinator with any further questions. Please email WSMPComms@wlga.gov.uk and include 'ESOL query' in the subject line.