

**New Approach to ESOL
Monday 8 March 2010, 2pm
Exeter College**

Present:

Name:	Organisation:
Andrew Lightfoot (Chair)	Devon County Council
Caroline Romijn	Exeter College
Claire Henry	Refugee Support Group
Daniel Bailyes	Devon Economic Partnership
Dave Wright	Devon County Council (Hate and Prejudice Crime Prevention Officer)
Eoghan Kelly	Devon County Council (Devon Care Training Co-ordinator)
Gaby Kanarek	A4E (Access 4 Employment)
Irene Chapman	Devon County Council (Adult and Community Learning)
Janet Sinclair	Job Centre Plus
John Demeger	South Devon College
John Tempest	Learning and Skills Council
John Willis	Freelance Consultant
Marise Mackie	JOB Centre Plus (Shadowing Janet Sinclair)

Apologies:

Name:	Organisation:
Amble Skuse	Rural Community Council for Devon
Bob Mycock	Exeter College
Pam Cole	Skills Funding Agency

1. Welcome and Introduction

Andrew thanked those present for attending and thanked Exeter College for hosting this meeting.

Andrew also provided the background to the meeting and his hopes for its outcome. Thus far we have collated information from a number of sources regarding ESOL provision in Devon. The purpose of this meeting would be to reflect on the data and to begin to explore matching-up the provision.

2. South Devon College data

This data can be found on the link below:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/assets/PDFs/ESOL/ESOL%20Stats%20South%20Devon%20College1.xls>

2.1 Data

The information provided by South Devon College includes ESOL data from over a two year period, covering the academic period 08/09 and 09/10, with the sessions offered in three locations.

John Demeger reported that, on an initial impression, the demographic make-up of the learners does not differ markedly from data shared by other sources.

The College are also happy to provide for third sector organisations. However, demand has not proved to be sufficient, with the result that provision is only offered in the three College centres.

2.2 Discussion

John Demeger echoed discussion in previous meetings by reporting that childcare was an issue to be overcome in provision of ESOL. The new fee element also appeared not to be an inhibitor, which reflects Exeter College's experience. A hardship fund is available for those who may nevertheless struggle with paying the fees.

Regarding the ESOL hardship fund, John Tempest reported that the fund, which has been discrete to date, will next year be rolled into the general Learner Support Fund. Although it is in addition to the fund, with the scale maintained at the current level, it is important that providers recognise this so that the funds continue to reach those who most need the help. It also emerged that government allocation of funds is based on out of date figures.

Action: In responding to the government's New Approach to ESOL, it will be raised that current government funding allocations are based on out of date figures, which needs to be corrected.

Secondly, John Tempest told the group that soon Colleges will lose the right not to charge fees. Responding to Janet's question, he made it clear that those in receipt of benefit do not have to pay fees in the first place.

Asked whether South Devon College receives any referrals from Job Centre Plus, it emerged that JCP only refer those on stage 2 unemployment to A4E, with whom they have the only LSC ESF contract.

However, Gaby argued that A4E was not the most suitable solution for everyone. The main issue identified was the issue of those at a pre-entry level – who may not speak any English and may also be illiterate. It is also difficult to identify those in this category who may have learning disabilities. There is currently inadequate provision for these groups.

Action (Andrew): To raise this issue with Liz Wood who works in the learning disability unit.

3. Devon Adult and Community Learning

This data can be found on the link below:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/assets/PDFs/ESOL/DCC%20ESOL%20data%20for%2008.doc>

3.1 Data

Irene reported that provision from Devon ACL covers rural Devon, with delivery organised around eight main hubs in the main market towns. These hubs have the full range of support available.

Not many learners have claimed the hardship fund, and, based on the data, it's clear that ESOL learners tend to be younger, on average, than other learners.

Caroline commented that the range of provision was very interesting to see.

3.2 Discussion

Regarding the teaching staff available, many are trained in EFL as opposed to ESOL. There are issues recruiting ESOL teachers that are trained to a high enough level. John Willis also commented that there is little or no ESOL teacher training available. Furthermore, much of the employment on offer is either temporary, part time, or both – which makes recruitment that much harder.

4. Any other information

Andrew invited the group to suggest any information that we may currently be missing.

John Tempest raised the lack of information at hand on commercial / private provision. Dave suggested that the only way to get hold of such data would be to contact each of the private providers individually and request the information.

Action (Dave): Dave will contact each of the providers to put together as much information as possible about their client groups so that gaps in provision can be assessed.

It was also raised that we lack any information on those who currently do not access any provision. Dave reported that the Devon Community Mapping project will pick up some of this – and events are planned in the Districts that may pick-up more data. However, it is possible to identify many of the barriers to delivery from the information that we have already collated.

Action (Daniel): To collate all of the data received thus far into a brief report on ESOL provision in Devon.

5. Finance

Andrew asked whether, with the hardship fund being useful for a minority, it should be targeted more at priority groups. There was consensus that flexibility ought to remain with the providers without too many rules attached.

On this issue, Caroline commented that there is a big issue regarding Devon's low average income, yet being without a status of deprivation.

Dave also argued that as Devon County Council benefits from the work of this agenda in a number of ways, it ought to contribute financially towards it.

6. Action Points

To bring the meeting to an end, Andrew summarised the main action points that had arisen during the course of the meeting:

1. Dave Wright would conduct / arrange the sample survey of private providers on their ESOL provision;
2. Daniel will draft a report which will summarise our audit of provision and the issues identified;
3. Gaby raised the idea of a touring bus that could be used to promote ESOL classes around Devon. Eoghan drew our attention such a bus (called DORIS) owned by DCC which is due soon for scrap. The contact at DCC is Sam Hill. There may be a possibility of funding from Learn Direct for the operation / maintenance of the bus, while the LSC may be able to fund

any learning that takes place on it. **Gaby and Eoghan to work together on this and report back on progress.**

4. Gaby also expressed the value of a group such as this in drawing people together and improving coordination / collaboration. She suggested that a permanent steering group would be of value. Eoghan pointed to the Devon Learning Network, and will send out invitations via Daniel.
5. There is a need to look into any links with schools that offer English provision for parents of the ESOL client group.
6. Janet was also tasked about investigating the way in which Job Centre Plus makes referrals to improve the suitability of provision for ESOL candidates.

The next meeting will be arranged for some time in the next six weeks.