

**New Approach to ESOL
Tuesday 9 February 2010, 2pm
County Hall, Exeter**

Present:

Name	Organisation
Andrew Lightfoot (Chair)	Devon County Council / Devon Economic Partnership
Bob Mycock	Exeter College
Caroline Romijn	Exeter College
Daniel Bailyes	Devon Economic Partnership
Dave Wright	Devon County Council (Hate and Prejudice Crime Prevention Officer)
Janet Sinclair	Job Centre Plus
John Willis	Freelance Consultant
Katy Kerley	Workforce Development Team Manager
Rosalie Hewett	Petroc

Apologies:

Name	Organisation
Annie Raine	Devon County Council (Adult and Community Learning)
Beverly Allen	TUC
Claire Henry	Refugee Support Group Devon
Ian Hobbs	Devon County Council
Jenny Milligan	Government Office South West
John Demeger	South Devon College
John Tempest	Learning and Skills Council
Margaret Davidson	Devon County Council Adult and Community Learning
Mary Ridgway	South Hams District Council (Devon Affordable Housing Coordinator)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Andrew thanked all those present for attending and apologised for the date alteration, which was due to a clash with a meeting that many in this group would have been attending.

Andrew also thanked Dave in particular for producing the 'Summary of initial data collection from 3rd sector and community sources'. This was a great step forward towards completing the evidence base needed to move the new approach to ESOL agenda forwards, and would form the basis of this meeting.

Introductions were made around the table.

2. Summary of initial data collection from 3rd sector and community sources

2.1 Introduction

To begin the meeting, Andrew invited Dave to run through the summary that he had produced. (To view this summary, please click on the link below which will

take you to the New Approach to ESOL page on the Devon Economy website, which also contains other relevant documents:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/new-approach-to-esol>)

Dave sent messages to each of the BME (black and minority ethnic) voluntary and community groups found in the Devon BME Service Directory. More than half have already responded and are summarised in the report. Dave also thanked the Community Safety Mapping project, which has conducted more than 120 interviews with BME people around Devon since November 2009 and which included questions on ESOL. The report summarises these responses too. Dave has also been in contact with the Community Safety Mapping project to request that in the future even more detailed ESOL information be included.

2.2 Voluntary Sector Classes in Devon

Page two of the report details each of the currently identified community organisations that provide English classes. From their responses, it seems that between 130-140 students regularly attend these classes. Most are provided for free, and good childcare has been identified as a very positive benefit to these groups. Belmont Chapel, for instance, provide childcare organised by volunteers from the Church. Dave also pointed out the system employed in Torbay, where teachers are paid on a self-employed basis with a funding contribution coming from Torbay Council through the provider.

There are also a number of BME groups in Devon who would like to provide their own classes in the future. However, there are several barriers, with the largest being access to teachers.

2.2.1 Discussion of Voluntary Sector Classes in Devon

Caroline pointed out that the voluntary sector can teach many of the groups that currently are ineligible for official provision e.g. the spouses of overseas students. Flexible partnerships with the voluntary sector will work really well.

On the issue of spouses of overseas students, Dave commented that, as a result of an enquiry to Exeter University, there are around 2,500 non-European students currently studying there – many of whom may be on post-graduate courses. Yet there is no English language support for their families.

All are agreed that an effective voluntary sector is crucial to successful delivery of the new approach to ESOL agenda. Greater and improved collaboration will be needed between Local Authorities, providers and the voluntary sector if a more sustainable third sector is to be achieved.

2.3 Issues / Barriers Identified

The remaining information in the report summarises the barriers that have been identified preventing greater use of English classes. These issues included childcare, the timing of classes, costs, eligibility and rurality (including transport).

Please read the summary for further details.

2.3.1 Discussion of the barriers identified in the summary

Caroline and Rosalie commented that, to their surprise, attendance at classes has not been negatively impacted by the introduction of fees. Cost, therefore, may not be the biggest factor, and financial help should therefore only be targeted at those in the minority who may struggle financially. However, Rosalie identified a

potential barrier to this. It can be difficult to identify those in need in a sensitive way. For instance, no-one applied for Petroc's hardship fund. In response, Caroline pointed out that Exeter College do not advertise their fund or offer it to those in work. It is only offered to those not in work and who are suspected of being in need.

Andrew raised the help that could be available from Skills for Life. Caroline reported that Exeter already work closely with Janis (Blacklaw) the Skills for Life Project Manager. However, there does not appear to be much taking place in North Devon. It was suggested that Rosalie take a look at what may be available.

With regard to complex forms that need completing to apply for financial support, Bob reported that Exeter also invite a representative from the Refugee Support Group to help the students.

2.4 Closing Comments

Dave reported that data is still coming in and that the summary provided for today's meeting can be improved upon by the data coming in from the Community Safety Mapping Project.

It also needs to be said that, from the responses gained, most are very happy with provision and classes. However, this ought not to detract from providing solutions to those who continue to struggle.

The next course of action will be to combine this information with the data provided by John Tempest after the last meeting on 11 December 2009 and with national indicators. It also needs to be completed with ACL data.

Dave is also hopeful that this summary be circulated as widely as possible to provoke further responses that can inform delivery of the new approach to ESOL agenda.

3. Round-up

Andrew suggested that the summary go through the Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) for comment.

Action (Andrew): Contact the ESBs re. The above discussion.

Andrew also asked what the provision of English classes was like in more outlying areas such as Seaton. There are no such classes, because of issues over the critical mass needed to sustain groups.

Action (Janet): To gain data from Job Centre Plus regarding areas where English is not primarily the first language.

Action (Katy): To contact Skills for Care to try and capture similar data.

There is also a need to place all information regarding ESOL provision in one place. The Learn Devon website is on the way.

Action (Bob): To find out how many children in schools have English as their second language with further details that may provide greater insight into where ESOL provision needs to be targeted.

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting will focus on evaluating the data collected in order to move forward towards delivery.

It is also hoped that the next meeting will take place within six weeks so as not to lose momentum. A date will be arranged by Daniel via email.