

2nd Interim Evaluation of London's ESOL Transition Fund Pilots

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Introduction

This paper summarises the headline findings of the ESOL Transition Fund (ETF) Pilot at the second interim evaluation point (March 2008).

In total over 60 organisations are involved in delivery across London and there are 21 larger providers of ETF activity. This report draws on information provided by 28 providers. These include:

- 15 large providers that have produced dedicated ETF reports
- 4 large providers have included some feedback on their ETF pilots in reports on their Employability Demonstration Pilots
- 9 smaller providers that have produced dedicated ETF reports

A full list of providers responding is shown on page 19.

This evaluation builds on that produced in February 2008 and is essentially qualitative. Providers are required to report quantitative data through the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) Individual Learner Record (ILR) management information system. Although some quantitative data has been given in a few evaluation reports, it is not consistent enough to draw sound conclusions. A quantitative report will be produced by the LSC in December.

It should be noted that the findings in this report draw from the 46% of ETF pilot providers that have produced evaluations. Whilst this provides valuable insights into the ETF pilot as a whole, findings should be taken in this context and with the health warning that information provided in reports varies significantly in terms of detail.

The report explores key findings under the following headings:

- Re-shaping the offer (pages 2-3)
- Targeting key groups (page 3)
- Driving up the employment focus (pages 4- 6)
- Employability is popular (pages 6-7)
- Delivering in the workplace (pages 8-9)
- Organisational change (pages 10-12)

The report ends with some suggested next steps to maximise the use of evaluation data and feedback (page 12-13). A summary of the key feedback on the ESOL for Work qualification is presented in Appendix 1 (pages 14-18).

Direct quotes from reports are shown in italics and speech marks.

Background

Around two thirds of those reporting on their pilots give indications of measurable change and impact through ETF activity. However, for some there remains little or no indication of change. Some have made great use of the opportunities in terms of delivery and in re-shaping their ESOL offer, but others less so.

The starting points and distance travelled by providers are highly relevant, a sense of which can be gleaned from the reports. For example, some that have been involved in the Employability Demonstration Pilots are more advanced in developing employment focused work and are using this experience on the ETF pilot. At the same time whilst some non-EDP providers are just at the stage of “starting to get tutors into the idea of employability and raising their awareness”, others that had already begun to consider employability more broadly report well developed employment focused provision that is making great use of the ETF opportunities.

Re-shaping the offer

In a number of providers, the ETF Pilot is helping to re-shape the offer for individuals and employers. Key areas of evidence include:

- **Embedding employability skills** within the ESOL curriculum. Some providers report that employability is now embedded in all their courses: for others it is partial and others are only beginning the process.

“Teaching staff on the project are embedding employability into their classroom delivery by changing the context from generic, to work place specific, whilst mapping this to the core ESOL curriculum.”

“The impact has been to embed employability across all ESOL classes, not just the ones funded through the ESOL Transitional Support Funding.”

“Courses have been redesigned to better fit learners for employment....more employment focused.”

“ETP Embedding has developed methodology and curriculum in specific areas (Care, Childcare, Catering, Basic Skills, ICT, Science, Hairdressing)”

- Developing and delivering **ESOL embedded vocational skills provision**.

“All 6 pilot courses will be fully embedded and delivered in partnership with vocational teams where necessary. Course paperwork is currently being upgraded to reflect this. In addition, we have reviewed the qualification offer and from September 2008, students will also work towards a qualification in their chosen vocational path.”

- Developing schemes of work, **resources and learning materials**, some on-line, to support the employment focus through “a greater amount of work-related learning”
- Integrating ESOL courses with **wider employability support** such as offering job search or more intensive support from IAG services.

“An Employment Support Worker has started the process of promoting employment opportunities for

those students ready for the employment market, targeting specifically those on JSA. This is through class visits, followed by drop-in workshops, followed by 1:1 support.”

“Learners meet job search advisors and are encouraged to register for ongoing job search support.”

- **Developing improved progression routes for people with ESOL needs.**

“Students will progress to vocationally contextualised programmes and employability related courses at Entry Level 3 in: Business, Childcare, Health and Social Care, Multiskills, IT, Customer Service or Leisure and Tourism.”

“The Curriculum Manager for ESOL Plus works closely with Vocational Curriculum Managers to ensure that there are clear pathways to mainstream programmes.”

Targeting key groups

Many respondents clearly understand and have taken on board the goals of the ETF pilots and prevailing employability agenda, and are **targeting key groups**. It appears that the majority of individuals being supported have **poor levels of English language** and many are **unemployed or economically inactive**. There is also a significant employed cohort, typically working in **lower level jobs and with poor language skills**.

- *“Targeted engagement in pre-employment pathways for JSAs and excluded groups with ESOL needs seeking employment.”*
- *“Some of the students attending these courses were referred via job centres through the “Opportunities Provider” relationship established with Job Centre Plus.”*
- *“Targeting those who are socially excluded but have potential to become economically active”*
- *“This provision is aimed at students aged 19 and over, who are actively seeking to move into further training or into basic employment.”*

Some providers are using the opportunity of the ETF to develop more **personalised learning** for individuals, by **segmenting** their ESOL cohorts to reflect their different goals, needs and pace.

- *“ESOL Programme Managers have revised the ESOL Application and Initial Assessment forms to address employment background and needs so that learners can be more effectively selected from the waiting list and placed on appropriate programmes.”*

Opportunities to become involved in community activities and volunteering are important milestones for those people for whom the route into sustainable employment may be longer. Some providers are continuing to make efforts to target these people through delivery at community groups, children’s

centres and schools.

- *“Increased choice of provision at community venues allows increased engagement by learners reluctant to learn at main college campus.”*
- *“The ESOL Outreach worker has further developed contacts with “hard to reach” groups through Housing Associations, Refugee organisations and other providers. ETP provision has extended Employability initiatives to these groups”*

Links with **community groups** are also being used to help develop programmes and pathways that can attract those farthest from the labour market.

- *“We have worked closely with the Refugee Forum to develop ESOL for Work materials in line with the new qualifications.”*

Driving up the employment focus

Individual Employment Plans are becoming a frequently used method of encouraging a work-focused approach for people with ESOL needs, either alongside Individual Learning Plans or by working towards integrated learning/employment plans. Providers are at different stages of this but clearly many see this as an important way of encouraging a stronger emphasis on employment goals.

- *“All learners have individual learning plans and individual employability plans are currently being developed from these.”*
- *“The current ESOL ILP is being reviewed to ensure that employability information can be captured.”*
- *“Most recently an Individual Employability Plan has been developed for all participants to supplement information collected at enrolment. This is in the process of being distributed.”*
- *“Learners goals are clearly expressed on an individual plan (ideally called employability, rather than ‘learning’ plan).*
- *“The ESOL Senior Practitioner has devised an Individual Employment Plan integrated with the Individual Learning Plan and this is being trialled.”*
- *“Much more emphasis on employability is made in tutorial, and systems continue to develop for the provision to act as routeway-broker for the learner, making use of the Individual Employability Plan and intervention by the specialist ESOL Careers Adviser.”*

The effectiveness of plans was commented on specifically:

- *“Completing Individual Employment Plans has helped learners focus on skills already acquired as well as new actions they need to take to achieve their employment goal.”*
- *“Creation of Individual Learning and Employment Plan (ILEP) which plans learner’s progression route from ESOL into vocational learning and work gives learners an employability path and brings focus to vocational/employment outcome. This is also being piloted by our partners to be rolled out across entire ESOL provision in 08/09.”*

Work experience for people with ESOL needs is also becoming a more common feature. Whilst it is clearly a critical element of employability programmes and is particularly important for those not familiar with the UK labour market, it is challenging for people with poor language skills. Some organisations are clearly still ambivalent about the practicality of work experience.

Some providers are addressing this through 'work shadowing' or visits to observe work places. One provider is arranging this within its own organisation, recognising that the college itself is a significant employer in the area with a range of jobs being delivered on site e.g. caretaking, administration, finance catering. Others are seeking to develop opportunities with social enterprises and community organisations.

- *"In order to make work placement activities worthwhile and also to give learners with low language and literacy level the opportunityour strategy has been to approach social enterprises, many of whom have a remit to support the community and to offer work placements".*
- *"The Volunteer Centre came to give an initial talk to more than 30 ESOL students. This was followed up with individual interviews and has led to learners being given placements."*
- *"Five of the employers have expressed specific interest in meeting ESOL learners and discussing opportunities with them. The BDC was very impressed with learners attending the mock interview and has offered to repeat the occasion regularly and has offered a specific placement for 1 learner in May. ETP staff attended an LBI Worklessness breakfast that resulted in 2 employees agreeing to regular visits, placements, training."*

The overall importance of developing and **strengthening links with employers** was commented on by a number of respondents with some reports of success.

- *"Through the experience and work outlined the ESOL for Work team in college has built a capacity to deliver ESOL in the workplace. We now have a much greater understanding of both how to ascertain the needs of employers and how to meet those needs effectively."*
- *"The ESOL project has helped the college to develop and strengthen partnerships with a wider range of employers and employment agencies which has been slow to develop in the past particularly in respect of ESOL learners....."*
- *"As with the EDP the (ETF) pilots are changing employer perception of working with the FE sector and see that FE is a valuable and integral player in addressing the Skills agenda."*

Employability at the lower levels

Developing employability programmes that address the needs of people with poor English language skills more effectively is a continuing challenge noted by many.

- *"We need to gain a better understanding of how this (the work focused curriculum) would fit into lower entry level provision and what the balance between soft and hard skills needs to be."*

Some respondents particularly expressed concern about the **quality of work** that would be available to individuals and the opportunities for them to continue learning, as well as the importance of being **'realistic'** with them in terms of their prospects.

- *"Linked to this is how we manage learner expectations – some have never worked and really lack confidence or have different cultural expectations about work."*
- *"There are also the issues of not setting learners up to fail with expectations or situations, which are too difficult for them to achieve."*
- *"Some students do want low-paid, low-skilled work such as working in a dry cleaners or cleaning and these jobs may be possible with low levels of English, however they are the employers who may be less likely to provide further training".*
- *"Fees for ESOL could impact on students' ability to progress because if they get jobs it is initially in low paid work but often above the threshold to draw down fee remission"*

Feedback also highlighted concerns about assuming that all those with poor ESOL skills could move directly into work. It was felt that there needs to be greater recognition of the barriers that some individuals face and the length of time that it may take for them to move into jobs. A number of providers stressed the need to understand the progression routes required by these individuals – and that they will vary according to needs, circumstances and goals.

- *"E1 and E2 learners' need to be focusing on improving language skills in the context of employability to look at appropriate ESOL/ vocational progression routes rather than progression into work."*
- *"The concept of interviews, letters and cvs are new to many. It is a step by step process into which many students fit on different rungs. They do not conform to a one size fits all by any means."*
- *"Individuals face a number of barriers which affect the speed with which they are able to reach their goals. Housing and health issues and having to deal with the home office takes up individuals' time from college and in some cases have a negative impact on them reaching their goal."*
- *"Many students have never worked in their adult lives"*

However, it must be noted that there is some paradox to reservations about the feasibility, and for some the desirability, of having ESOL focused provision for learners with lower level ESOL given that many of the *employed* learners being supported are indeed at Entry Level 1 and Entry Level 2.

There remains a key challenge for providers and agencies in fully recognising personalised pathways – that one person with Entry 1 ESOL may wish to get a job as a priority, and to learn the language whilst working, and that another person with the same skills set may want to learn more of the language and perhaps get a vocational qualification before they get a job. The challenge is to make the system flexible and integrated enough to provide an effective service for both, and for the employers too!

Employability is popular

There is evidence that, where it has happened, the strengthening of the employment focus appears is **appreciated by individuals**.

- *“The learners have already clearly identified that gaining employability skills is their top priority. Students’ feedback is discussed in staff team meetings and, as a result, schemes of work are being adapted to incorporate employability skills.”*
- *“individual learners are now better able to consider and articulate career options. These include: progression onto childcare programmes, interest in professional careers, and the confidence to move from cleaning work to jobs in the catering and retail services sector.”*
- *“Learners on the E1 and E2 programmes are more focused on employability as a purpose for learning English. Their awareness of this and their confidence has increased, which has been noticed through a focus group.”*
- *“9 students on the embedded Science have better attendance and punctuality than their parallel native speaker group and have higher achievement because they now have confidence to go for merits and distinctions.”*

More than one provider candidly reflected some surprise at the extent of how much this shift has been welcomed by individuals.

- *“Previously it would not have been unusual to hear tutors say “these learners don’t want/aren’t allowed to work”. However now that employment is being discussed in the classroom as part of the course, the feedback from tutors is quite the opposite and there is great surprise in some cases that there is the level of interest that there appears to be.”*

There is also an understanding that employment focused ESOL provision, even at the lower ESOL levels, gives out a strong message to students that they could be people who ‘could get jobs and progress in work’, when previously they may not have thought that about themselves. In this way the ETF pilots appear to be helping to **stimulate demand and interest in employment related learning** and services.

- *“Many of those on the ESOL Job Skills courses had not thought they could get work because of their English level when they were initially offered the course. Thus the provision has been effective in encouraging them to set themselves employment goals and showing them sources of information and support.”*

Some providers have strengthened this with strong **marketing** of the provision in the community. For example one provider listed a key activity for the future as *“Developing marketing strategy for ESOL Employability over 2 years”*

A few providers reported that their experience is that some people ‘only want ESOL’ and were not interested in employment. This is reflected in poor take up on some provision. One provider offering Skills for Life speaking and listening modules with an employability qualification reported *“We have had no take up for the offered programme and are seeking an alternative method for delivery.* Another providing a course leading to the ESOL for Work qualification at Level 1 reported that *“It has been*

problematic recruiting for this course....the reasons for this resistance to work-focused learning are complex". Whilst this represents a small minority of the reports submitted, it is not possible to know how extensive this experience is amongst the ETF providers who have *not* submitted reports.

Delivering in the workplace

A number of providers are clearly working hard to drive up **ESOL delivery in the workplace**. The examples below provide a flavour of the range of experience, much of which is positive and demonstrates substantial benefits. Additional information is also presented in the appendix on the ESOL for Work qualification.

- *"Learners in employment are getting access to bespoke ESOL classes with the schemes of work designed in conjunction with the employers. Their feedback is overwhelmingly positive, citing access to classes organised with the support of their employers, which would not have been possible otherwise due to changing shift patterns and family commitments. We know because of the request for more classes"*
- *"Through facilitating English language programmes, employers have reported an improvement in staff efficiency and productivity; and experienced a valuable increase in customer service skills – an essential output for business in the hospitality sector."*
- *"Learners in employment are now able to express some of the work-related difficulties they have to contend with and are in a much better position to benefit from work-based training schemes."*
- *"Employees on courses have remarked that they are more conscious of their own skills and of issues of Health and Safety, team work, rights and responsibilities within the context of work. One learner remarked that she now sees the importance of spelling and being able to write well in order to get and keep a good job whereas before she believed that to speak English well was all that was needed. All learners are enthusiastic about future training and more confident and feel valued. "*
- *"90% of these learners (on work place courses) had no previous ESOL qualifications."*
- *"While learner attendance of the ESOL for Work qualification has been problematic at times, this flexible training in the workplace has given a significant number of employees, who might not otherwise access learning, the opportunity to improve their English language skills; and increase their employability and future career prospects. Also employees have expressed increased motivation and job satisfaction as they feel they are being invested in by their employer."*

Two providers noted their useful partnership with **trades unions** and the role of union learning representatives, and this may be an area to explore more fully at the final evaluation point.

Whilst it is important to note the rich and positive feedback on working with employers, a third of the reports give little or no specific mention of employers, and a small number report that *"employer engagement is still not developed"*. It is undoubtedly difficult work.

- *"Inevitably, the day to day pressures of running a restaurant or department will take priority over English classes and consequently impact on learner attendance and achievement."*

'Employee release' and 'the future cost to employers of provision' were typically noted in the challenges for 2008/9.

Train to Gain

Train to Gain is a vital aspect of workplace delivery. Encouragingly several providers reported on progress on this or plans for development. Three are holding briefings and workshops for their ESOL staff on Train to Gain and one noted that the key challenge for 2008/9 was *“Linking and dovetailing the work of ETF into Train to Gain”*. Other examples of progress are:

- *“A full-time ESOL staff member has now developed the delivery of Skills for Life in the workplace under the Train to Gain contracts and introduced the delivery of ESOL for Work qualifications to employers.”*
- *“The college is reviewing a 2-3 year marketing strategy for SfL Employability and currently the Marketing Unit are developing a corporate set of ESOL publicity materials to address employer engagement and employability activities linking to Train to Gain.”*
- *“We (ESOL team) have taken part in a college consultation about how Train to Gain should be organised and are working to become more responsive to needs and more accessible”.*
- *“A number of large (employers)..... have taken advantage of upskilling staff in literacy and numeracy under Train to Gain. This training has been equally popular with staff and employers.”*

As well as the opportunities there are concerns expressed about the challenges of supporting ESOL provision through Train to Gain, largely relating to the issues of qualifications and learning hours.

- *“Is it reasonable to expect employees to achieve proper progression through ESOL for Work/Skills for Life given that Train to Gain funding may very significantly reduce the guided learning hours available to students in workplaces?”*
- *“We welcome funding for E1 & E2 T2G, but have concerns over the qualifications requiredthere is a spread of need but also a high level of demand at E1. It is critical that a pragmatic approach is taken to ensure ‘appropriate’ qualifications are available through E1 & E2 T2G.”*
- *“Train to Gain is now available for Skills for Life qualifications at E1 and E2 as well as for ESOL for Work qualifications (since March 12th 2008), but may not be the best funding medium due to its restricted number of delivery hours. In the future, this needs to be investigated to support learners progressing from college classes into the workplace. It also needs to be clear to T2G brokers that SfL is now available to deliver as a stand alone qualification.”*

Despite the concerns about the practicalities, several of the reports clearly reflect an understanding of the importance for individuals to continue their ESOL learning whilst in work and a commitment to try and ensure that this happens.

- *“The most fundamental of the challenges is that of getting ESOL E2 students into sustainable employment which will provide them with on-going development of their language and literacy skills.”*

Organisational change

As with developing employer engagement, there are many very positive reports of providers making sustainable changes in **organisation, structure and approach**, although there remains a significant minority where this is not the case. Where positive change is reported, this indicates the potential for the ETF pilots to have longer term impact.

Some examples include:

<p>Organisational structure and senior level buy in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The realignment of the School of ESOL to fully develop ESOL learners’ employability skills. This has involved a restructuring; staff training; the development of ‘Employability Packs’ for each course across the full programme; and a major development and growth in workplace Skills for Life”.</i> • <i>“The team delivering on the ETF are taking a key role in the colleges new Core Change Team, set up with the remit of fast tracking cross college responsiveness to employers’ needs.”</i> • <i>“ETP embedding has raised awareness at senior levels with a Blueprint for embedded provision and outline of Progression routes and has led curriculum change within “discrete” ESOL.”</i>
<p>Developing links with vocational areas and employer facing teams and other agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Much more internal and integrated dialogue, planning and team teaching, between vocational and ESOL department.”</i> • <i>“ETF has enabled the college to develop a new ESOL Employer Engagement section alongside discrete ESOL, and to recruit a dedicated ESOL experienced Business Advisor in the business development unit, who is working closely with the ESOL team to provide links to the work of the pilot with Train to Gain.”</i> • <i>“Across college, we are building a more integrated approach to engaging employers through formal and informal meetings with the college’s marketing teams, and through the opportunity to share our experience of working with employers with other departments. This will enable us to develop better embedded SfL delivery with other course provision. We are also linking with job centres so that they provide us with information about local available jobs and refer their clients as appropriate to courses.”</i> • <i>“The School of English Language Teaching has strong links with Employer Services and is a member of the Employer Responsiveness group. Progress on the Developing Work-Related Curriculum project is reported to this group, too providing additional opportunities to spread and share good practice with other College staff. The new Employer Responsiveness Standard gained by the College is part of this approach.”</i> • <i>“Our programmes now listed as opportunity on JC plus website alongside Train 2 Gain and other employability offers.”</i> • <i>“ETP Embedding has worked through “host” Departments, Skills for Life Strategy Group, Deputies group of CMT and SMT to raise awareness of progression issues and requirements for effective embedding. Much use has been made of the VLE to supplement the language development needs of ESOL learners on other courses. Dissemination of the embedded course list led to greater awareness and increased referrals from “discrete” ESOL courses e.g 10 internal referrals to the February start of Start Your Own Business with ESOL”</i>

<p>Staff development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Broadening co-ordinator and manager remits to include ESOL and employability planning.”</i> • <i>“Two members of the team, including one Course team Leader are teaching both at college and in the workplace and will be able to identify key features in the workplace to add to the Schemes of Work.”</i> • <i>“Many of the ESOL teaching staff had little or no experience of what are, or, how to deliver employability skills. A common concern initially was of additional responsibilities and time commitment to engage with employers, thus taking them away from the teaching of ESOL to a tight exam timeframe. The establishment of communication routes through Team Leaders, coupled with information dissemination session with staff involved, relieved some of the anxieties and concerns previously held.”</i> <p>Most providers specifically report some form of continuing professional development to support the development of work-focused ESOL. Some examples are given here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“New ESOL tutors have been employed who will be working with specific industry sectors to make their training more relevant to vocational needs. CPD is being delivered for 40 ESOL trainers to ensure that they are equipped to embed the vocational subject within their ESOL teaching.”</i> • <i>“11 separate Staff Development sessions on Employability Skills have been scheduled for this academic year, as part of Professional Development Days and the in-house Training Schedule, for ESOL lecturers e.g. ‘What are Employability Skills’, ‘How to Teach Soft Skills’ and ‘ESOL Learners and Interviews’.”</i>
<p>Softer aspects of culture change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There has been a shift in emphasis in the way tutors talk to learners about their future in tutorials. Work experience and work-shadowing now underlies a lot of our planning, especially at E3 and above.”</i> • <i>“There is an exciting cultural change, a new urgency and attention to employability for both staff and learners. Within the School of ESOL, staff who teach in the workplace are very enthusiastic about the work and the opportunities. This enthusiasm has communicated itself to other members of staff, who are also keen to get involved.”</i> • <i>“Much more emphasis on employability is made in tutorial, and systems continue to develop for the provision to act as routeway-broker for the learner, making use of the Individual Employability Plan and intervention by the specialist ESOL Careers Adviser. EDP and ETP have been instrumental in pushing forward the Employability agenda and cross college structures are now in place to coordinate both Employer engagement and employability. One key activity of this group is firming up the specifications of a CRM to provide a good and consistent “face” to employers”</i>

There are a number of reports that show **commitment to continued change** beyond the end of the pilot, including:

- *“Work to map key employability skills to Skills for Life provision has taken place with our partners, and they are piloting this with E3 and L1 learners. This will be rolled out across entire ESOL provision in 08/09.”*
- *“Much work has also gone into developing a vocationally-linked ESOL curriculum for 08/09.”*
- *“The materials and schemes of work resulting from these projects will be shared with staff in the course of the summer term, and published on the college intranet in readiness for 2008-09.”*
- Ensuring ...*“that all ESOL staff understand the changes and are prepared to deliver the new embedded employability skills from September 2008”.*
- *“Curriculum development, staff development and developing the model of embedding, to enable the service to support a more work-focused curriculum in future years.”*

Taking the evaluation results forward

As with the Employability Demonstration Pilots, it is not just the colleges that need to focus on mainstreaming the change and outputs created by the pilots. Whilst not part of the evaluation reports produced by colleges, it is recognised that if the significant learning points raised by the pilots are to have lasting impact, this must be supported by mainstreaming within the LSC (and other agencies where appropriate).

In order to get the maximum impact from this evaluation point, it is recommended that the results of the evaluation are considered and taken forward in the following ways. Different actions suggested for the various aspects of evaluation information are outlined below. These are not intended as an exhaustive list, but to provide a starting point for more effective use of evaluation information.

For overall findings from **across** the pilots:

- Feed into development of Integrated Employment and Skills Trial development, including sharing with regional partners
- Use at the regional Employability Group meetings to stimulate ideas and actions for pan-region development, including how to use evaluation information in the mainstream review, planning and procurement processes of the LSC
- Use in staff development sessions to help identify how LSC staff can facilitate the dissemination and mainstreaming of successful pilot approaches into the development of the provider base

Information from individual evaluation reports:

- Feed the combined reports from ETF pilots in a sub-region into **sub-regional planning** of employability development, including Skills for Jobs, Employability Skills programme and 'learner responsiveness' funded provision. Similarly for Train to Gain and Apprenticeships.
- Use the information from individual reports in discussions with colleges about their mainstream provision and about tendered for provision including Skills for Jobs, the Employability Skills Programme, Train to Gain etc.
- Feed in relevant information from individual reports into the planning and allocations discussions.

The results from this evaluation, and consideration of that we are now in the final stage of pilot delivery, should also be used to inform the key questions that are reported on at the June evaluation point.

Appendix 1: Specific feedback on the ESOL for Work qualification

Introduction

This summary identifies the ESOL Transition Fund (ETF) pilots' experiences of the new ESOL for Work qualifications, as reported in their second interim evaluation reports submitted in April 2008. It draws on comments made by 15 providers. Other providers have stated that they are delivering the qualification and will report on it at the next evaluation point.

Different stages of involvement

- Amongst the providers making reference to the ESOL for Work qualification, it appears that the ESOL Transition Fund (ETF) has **provided an opportunity** for them to prepare for and start to introduce this new qualification. Providers are clearly at **different stages of involvement** in the qualifications ranging from those who are actually delivering it, to those who are making preparations to introduce it in the future.

"We have begun to pilot the new ESOL for Work examinations (both at E3 & L1), having already assessed 20 students on one course."

"Currently offering ESOL Skills for Life but a second course for this client will take place in 2008 delivering ESOL for Work accreditation, together with pilots in different sectors."

"It is anticipated that at least a quarter of this cohort will have made sufficient progress to enrol successfully onto the new ESOL for Work qualification by July '08."

"We are offering Cambridge Entry 3 ESOL for Work Reading and Listening, Writing and Speaking for the first time this year and Schemes of Work have been designed to cover the syllabus..... The college will be able to provide more detailed feedback on the qualification once the students who will take the examination in June have received their results."

- Whilst there is a hint of a trend that providers with established linkages with employers are making faster progress, this is not exclusively so and there is at least one Adult Education Service that has ESOL for Work qualifications up and running.

"In addition to the classes in the Community, there is a class twice a week for L1 students working towards L2 ESOL qualifications and the new Trinity ESOL for Work certificate at L1."

- Reports on **preparatory activities** and plans to begin to deliver the qualifications included things such as:

"All staff have now been trained in the content of the new ESOL for Work qualifications, approval to run has been sought from the awarding body and a pilot course is starting next week."

"The Course Team Leader will be attending the briefing for piloting new materials"

"Completing relevant Internal Verification training for staff in ESOL for Work examinations"

Other activities mentioned were: - looking at the different options for accreditation; preparing schemes of work and materials; and discussing the qualifications with employers.

Some early positive experience but more development needed

- To date there appears to have been some positive experience with indications that this could be a **useful qualification**.

“The learners we have on ESOL for Work give very positive feedback about the syllabus and its relevance to their needs.”

“It is a generic qualification but it does address ‘for whom’ and ‘for what’ as there is an analysis of different jobs which empowers the students.”

“Feedback from JC+ staff has been extremely positive to the concept and content of the courses. A number of JC+ staff has said that this course is ‘exactly’ what many of their clients need.”

“While learner attendance of the ESOL for Work qualification has been problematic at times, this flexible training in the workplace has given a significant number of employees, who might not otherwise access learning, the opportunity to improve their English language skills; and increase their employability and future career prospects. Also employees have expressed increased motivation and job satisfaction as they feel they are being invested in by their employer.”

- There were some positive responses from **employers** recorded in the reports. One hospitality sector employer was reported as noting:

‘Many of our employees need more work-focussed ESOL training.....These new ESOL for Work qualifications really fit the bill, particularly as they provide language practice on topics needed at work, such as dealing with clients, meetings, and report writing.’

- One college also noted that when the accreditation option used allowed for the courses to be **customised** to the specific needs of an employer this worked well.

“We will use the OCNW ESOL for Work qualification as it can be used to design bespoke courses. The employers and learners are pleased to be able to use the companies’ materials as learning tools and the schemes of work are built around these. The schemes of work have been sent to the employers to check the content prior to delivery, which has been much appreciated.”

- That said, there were also thoughts expressed that there is still **much work to be done** with employers on ‘selling’ the qualification: - *“Overall, there needs to be more education of the employers around the purpose and value of these qualifications”*. One provider noted that a key employer they worked with had *“still to come on board”* for the new qualification and another noted that *“Feedback from learners, staff and ‘the few employers we have managed to get involved has been extremely positive.”* Some of the responses on the key challenges for 2008/9 included ‘persuading employers of the benefits of the ESOL for Work qualifications’.

- One provider reported a high drop out rate on the ESOL for Work qualifications. This appeared to relate to some of the ongoing challenges of delivering in the workplace and engaging employers, but also the value placed on accreditation by employers.

“Another important consideration is that employers with whom we are working are not actively

seeking their staff to gain a nationally recognised qualification; but are seeking short, flexible and immediate training solutions tailored to meet their business needs. This again affects employer support needed to secure learner achievement; and ensuring staff complete the programme of study and sit the exam at the end.”

- One provider appears to have had success in marketing the qualifications to **Job Centre Plus** –
“Two (ESOL for Work) courses started in January, one evening, one day-time (6.5 hrs per week). Some of the students attending these courses were referred via job centres through the “Opportunities Provider” relationship established with Job Centre Plus.”

However another provider noted that, *“Disappointingly, JC+ staff will not refer their clients to the course, because of the course fees.”*

- In addition to achieving the delivery of the qualifications themselves, there appears to be a way in which work on introducing the qualifications are making some **contribution to the sharpening of the employability focus** of providers’ ESOL provision, embedding the experience and supporting the ETF goals as a whole.

“In addition one member of staff has been able to be seconded to develop the ESOL for Work qualification and to liaise with other teams on integrating ESOL into vocational areas.”

“The team has worked closely to ensure that there is flexibility of programme delivery which gives learners following traditional ESOL programmes the opportunity to undertake ESOL for Work qualifications. “

“By piloting ESOL for Work in modules on our existing part-time and full-time courses, including offering the exams, we have enabled more than 20 staff to be involved in teaching to ESOL for Work. Our work contributed to the college’s recent successful application for Training Quality Standard recognition.

“This year’s focus on employability has also influenced our programme planning for 08/09.... There will be courses offered with the ESOL for Work qualification, and the materials currently being developed for the job skills courses will support next year’s ESOL for work courses.”

“There have been changes to the ESOL Curriculum as a result of adding the preparation form work Courses and delivering the ESOL for work qualifications. Staff awareness of the importance on employability has also been raised by the promotion of these courses and qualifications”.

“An increasing bank of materials is now being used to deliver ESOL for Work qualifications and further embed work-related learning onto all ESOL courses. This is enabling staff to better prepare students for progression and the world of work.”

Some challenges

Notwithstanding the positive comments, providers also noted to varying degrees some of the challenges they face in introducing the ESOL for Work qualifications, which have prompted more than one to have to revert *“where necessary to offering alternative packages of training based on Skills for Life qualifications”*. The main challenges include:

- **the level at which the ESOL for Work qualification is currently available** at (Entry Level 3 and Level 1). Whilst the plans are for qualifications at lower levels to be introduced in the future, the timetable is not a good fit with that of the ETF, and with many ETF learners at Entry Level 1 or Entry Level 2, this means that *“there currently is a limit on the amount of piloting of the qualification that can take place”*.

“ESOL for Work is addressing the needs of individuals who are already in work (usually low-paid/unskilled) who wish to find a better job. Because it is only available at E3/L1 it does not address the areas of greatest need, which must be met by Skills for Life ESOL with employability mapped.”

“Only one group is actually taking NCFE Level 1 due to the current nature of our students which are predominantly at Entry 1 and 2.”

That said, the qualification at the existing Entry 3 and Level 1, already seem to be providing a progression route and a pathway stage for some learners.

“It is anticipated that at least a quarter of this cohort will have made sufficient progress to enrol successfully onto the new ESOL for Work qualification by July '08.

“It gives them a target to work for”

“Only some of the Community Classes are at a high enough level to deliver the ESOL for Work qualification but E2 students are working towards it.”

- **the challenges of reconciling the learning hours likely to be available for work place learning** (noted in a few reports generally as around 30 – 40) to the 110 hour plus requirement of the qualification. This may indicate a need for some unitisation of the qualification and was commented on in relative depth.

“The hours to do speaking and listening are reasonable but not for reading and writing, in terms of getting the qualifications.”

“One issue is the amount of time that it is likely to take employees to achieve an ESOL for Work qualification as it is currently configured. A partial solution to this problem may be to unitise ESOL for Work, and thereby enable employees to take a specific model.”

“The GLH (guided learning hours) recommended/required (150) means it is still not appealing for employers to deliver in-house. Learners who are accessing it are those who are very motivated and willing to use their own time to learn”

- **the lack of units which makes it difficult to be flexible**, mentioning that one employer wanted classes to focus solely on speaking and listening skills, whilst another wants the emphasis to be heavily on writing skills – *“Both would likely welcome the opportunity for their staff to get partial accreditation in these particular skills.”*
- **lack of clarity and delays on the eligibility of the qualification for Train to Gain support** was reported as a challenge, with at least one provider going ahead and registering learners for Skills for Life qualifications because of this.

- **the lower funding rate for ESOL for Work qualifications, fees and eligibility.**

“Unfortunately a significant number of learners who enrolled at the beginning of the project were withdrawn once it became apparent normal LSC funding criteria applied to ESOL for Work. This is because a significant number of employees in this sector are overseas and working on student visas etc”

“Disappointingly, JC+ staff will not refer their clients to the course, because of the course fees”.

This was noted by several colleges as one of the key challenges in rolling out the pilot in 2008/09.

Appendix 2: Organisations reporting on their ETF pilots

Barnet College*

Blackfriars Settlement

Brent Adult & Community Education Service*

City and Islington College*

College of North East London*

College of North West London*

Croydon College

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

Greenwich Community College*

Hackney Community College*

Hammersmith & Fulham Adult Education Service*

Harrow College*

Hillingdon Adult Education Service

Hounslow Adult and Community Education Service

Kensington & Chelsea Adult Education Service

Lambeth College

Lewisham College*

Merton College*

Newham College of Further Education

South Thames College

Southwark Adult Learning Service

Southwark College

Stanmore College*

Tower Hamlets College

Uxbridge College*

Waltham Forest College*

Westminster Adult Education Service*

West Thames College

Those asterisked also gave specific feedback on the ESOL for Work qualification.