



# Estyn

*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

## English for Speakers of Other Languages: The impact of increased demand

June 2008



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
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- ▲ offender learning; and
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- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Main findings</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ESOL learners</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Inspection findings</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Sufficiency of provision</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Conclusions about learner achievement</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>ESOL in the workplace</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Support for learners</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Fees</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Staffing</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Strategic planning</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Appendix 1: The Estyn Common Inspection Framework</b>	
<b>Appendix 2: Glossary</b>	



## Introduction

- 1 Wales, along with Scotland and England, is experiencing significant increases in the numbers of migrant workers entering employment. This is due in large part to the enlargement of the European Union (EU) in May 2004. However, this is not the only reason. Migrant workers come to Wales from non EU countries, for example, from China, the Philippines and South Asia. There are also an estimated 10,000 refugees settled in Wales and another 2,280 asylum seekers applying for leave to remain in Wales (The Welsh Assembly Government, June 2007).
- 2 In May 2004, another eight countries from Eastern Europe joined the European Union. These are often referred to as the 'eight accession' countries or the EU8. Between May 2004 and December 2006, just over 14,000 migrant workers from the EU8 registered in Wales with the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). There are also four dispersal areas for the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) in Wales. These are in Wrexham, Cardiff, Swansea and Newport.
- 3 The ability to speak, read and write English is vital in helping individuals settle in Wales and to perform confidently in the workplace, at home and in their communities. This report evaluates the extent to which the recent rapid increase in learners in <sup>1</sup>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) has impacted on the learning experience of all ESOL learners. The report explores the ability of providers to respond to these changes and support learners to make good progress and achieve well. It also makes recommendations in order to ensure that learners have access to good learning opportunities in the future.
- 4 The report focuses on those institutions that are funded to deliver discrete ESOL provision. The evidence for this report is drawn from a number of sources:
  - inspection reports and other relevant documentation and data;
  - visits to providers;
  - visits to workplace provision and meetings with employers;
  - interviews with ESOL learners; and
  - meetings with other agencies such as trade union representatives.

The sample of visits includes all four dispersal areas, franchised and directly delivered provision, rural areas and areas with high numbers of Welsh speakers. The workplace visits are to companies that have signed the Employer Pledge. The Employer Pledge is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Basic Skills Strategy and aims to improve Basic Skills in the workplace.

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<sup>1</sup> Intelligence and Marketing Insight: Non British Learners

- 5 At the time of writing, there is no evidence of providers offering Welsh to ESOL learners. However, inspectors met a few long-settled ESOL learners who have joined Welsh for Adults classes. This is because they live in a Welsh-speaking area and their children attend bilingual schools or because Welsh is spoken in work.
- 6 There is a glossary in Appendix 2 at the end of the report, to explain key terms in the text.

## Background

### The context in Wales

- 8 ESOL learners in Wales are a very diverse group. Their English language skills and competence vary greatly. Their reasons for wanting to learn English are just as varied. They access ESOL classes in further education colleges, adult community-based learning provision, in the workplace and in a small amount of voluntary sector provision; these are referred to as 'providers' in the rest of the text. ESOL learners include those who have arrived in Wales more recently in order to live and work as well as those from more settled communities.
- 9 Data from the Lifelong Learning Record Wales (LLWR) shows an overall increase of 22% in the number of ESOL learners between 2004/05 and 2006/07. In 2005/2006, nearly a third of learners were in Cardiff and another quarter in Swansea, Newport and Wrexham together. During the period 2004 to 2006, several providers in more rural areas and with relatively small programmes reported substantial increases in ESOL learners.
- 10 Between May 2004 and March 2007 there were 16,220 registrations recorded on the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) (The Welsh Assembly Government, June 2007)<sup>2</sup>. Four local authorities accounted for over half of these applications: these were Carmarthenshire, Wrexham, Newport and Cardiff. About 65% of the registrations are from Poland, with a further 15% from Slovakia. In this group, 60% of the migrant workers registered with the WRS were male and the majority did not have any dependents.
- 11 Records also show that by the end of March 2007, there were over 9,000 migrant workers registered with the Work Permit Scheme (WPS) in Wales. These individuals came from over 100 different countries outside of the European Economic Activity (EEA) zone. (Insight, May 2007.)<sup>3</sup> Nearly a quarter of this group were from India, another 23% from the Philippines, 7.5% from China and 6% from Southern Africa. Up to March 2007, local authorities with the largest numbers were Cardiff (2,133), Swansea (857) and Flintshire (550).

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<sup>2</sup> *Intelligence and Marketing Insight: Non British Learners*

<sup>3</sup> *From Statistics on Migrant Workers in Wales*

## Main findings

- 12 For most providers, the demand for ESOL is outstripping supply. Most providers have waiting lists and these lists vary widely across Wales. This means that learners, depending on where they live, do not have equal access to ESOL classes when they need them. Two of the largest providers close their waiting lists at a certain time in the year, so it is not possible to determine how much demand exceeds supply. A few learners have to wait up to nine months before they can join a class. Too few providers have measures in place to offer individuals some provision whilst they wait to join a class.
- 13 Providers' ability to respond effectively to learners' needs is influenced by funding constraints, limited staffing capacity and limited information about the numbers of migrant workers in their areas and their employment patterns.
- 14 Most providers are aware of groups in their communities who are not accessing ESOL provision. This particularly applies to Asian women, Muslim women and mothers with young children.
- 15 The amount of time that part-time learners can study for each week varies widely. The hours per week range from no more than four hours to up to fourteen hours. Part-time learners often want to study for longer each week in order to improve their English more quickly but are unable to do so.
- 16 Providers balance offering learning opportunities to as many learners as possible, with their desire to provide a good quality learning experience for those already on courses. Many providers are no longer offering 'roll-on roll-off' programmes and a number operate termly enrolments in order to improve completion and attainment rates. A few providers are seeing their learners' attainment rates gradually improve as a result of termly enrolments and more frequent accreditation opportunities.
- 17 ESOL inspection findings show a decline in the quality of teaching and assessment between 2004/05 and 2006/07. This trend corresponds with a time when ESOL numbers are rapidly increasing, including in areas that do not have well-established ESOL provision. At the same time, over half of providers report difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff and there are not enough opportunities for staff to gain specialist ESOL teaching qualifications.
- 18 2004-2007 inspection evidence shows that learners' progress in the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) is too variable. In the majority of inspections, attendance and completion rates are poor to adequate. Learners do not always have timely access to suitable accreditation. Across all inspections, attainment rates are often better than completion rates.
- 19 Just over half of providers visited record overall attainment rates of over 70% for 2006-2007. This is encouraging. The last verifiable national comparator for ESOL is less than 50% (2002-2003).

- 20 Overall, providers plan their curriculum well and generally take good account of local and national priorities. However, there are not enough opportunities for learners to take part in ESOL family learning and there is not enough ESOL in the workplace. All providers respond well to the requirements of citizenship and the needs of those learners taking the Life in the UK test.
- 21 There is too much variability in the fees charged to learners across Wales. Learners have to pay varying amounts for ESOL courses depending on where they live and their residential status. Occasionally, providers do not apply residency rules correctly for EU learners. It is difficult to determine how many potential learners are discouraged from enrolling because they cannot afford the fees.

## Recommendations

- 22 In order to make sure that ESOL learners have the best possible learning experiences:

**The Welsh Assembly Government should:**

- R1 urgently review the funding arrangements for ESOL so that providers are better able to plan for and respond to, increases in demand;
- R2 establish ways in which information about employment patterns can be gathered and shared by employers and providers in order to plan ESOL provision more effectively;
- R3 set targets to increase the amount of ESOL delivered in the workplace and ensure greater commitment from employers;
- R4 review the guidance on residency requirements so that providers are clear about how to apply these when enrolling learners;
- R5 urgently consider ways to improve training opportunities for ESOL teachers; and
- R6 strengthen arrangements whereby providers can share good practice and support each other regionally and nationally; and

**providers should:**

- R7 ensure that all learners undertake effective initial assessment, are enrolled at the right level and have clear individual targets set out in individual learning plans;
- R8 improve attendance, completion and attainment rates so that more learners achieve full accreditation across all four skills;
- R9 ensure that all learners have timely access to suitable accreditation so that their achievement is fully captured;
- R10 extend the use of computer-based learning in order to reach out to and retain more learners;
- R11 explore, with relevant partners, alternative ways of delivering ESOL so that more learners in under-represented groups can attend classes; and
- R12 review support arrangements for ESOL learners so that they can access more specialised support where necessary.

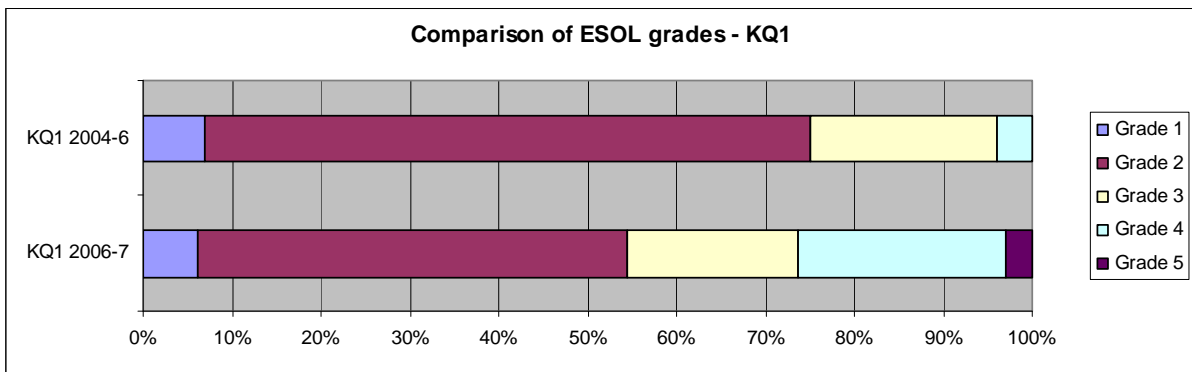
## ESOL learners

- 23 The recent, rapid increase in learners in ESOL is due largely to individuals from the EU8 countries coming to Wales for work. However, there are other significant groups of learners attending ESOL provision including migrant workers registered on the Work Permit Scheme, refugees, asylum seekers and those from settled communities such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and China.
- 24 Learners come from many countries. Large ESOL providers (with over 100 learners a week) have learners from up to 60 different countries. These providers tend to be in areas with more settled communities that attract non EU migrant workers as well as EU migrant workers.
- 25 Six out of ten providers identify what proportion of their ESOL learners are migrant workers. In these cases, the proportion of migrant workers ranges from 23% to 70% of learners. Of these, between 19% and 75% are from Eastern Europe and the largest single group is from Poland. Those providers with the highest percentages of migrant workers are mainly small and more rural providers. However, one provider in a dispersal area has 70% of learners from this group. The areas where migrant workers locate for employment are not necessarily the areas where ESOL provision is available.
- 26 There is no effective mechanism for tracking patterns amongst migrant workers so that providers and employers can plan ESOL programmes to suit local needs. Employers recruit employees directly from Eastern Europe or engage agencies to do this on their behalf. Many learners in Wales are working in the care sector, food processing, manufacturing and public transport.
- 27 Providers in dispersal areas do not always separately record the proportion of their learners who are refugees. The numbers of asylum seekers vary widely across the four dispersal areas. For one provider in North Wales, 1% to 2% of their learners are asylum seekers, whilst the other three record 21%, 33% and 41% of their learners being in this category. Personal circumstances often mean that asylum seekers are unable to attend regularly and complete their courses. They also move out of the area and then return. This affects their progress and achievement and providers' overall outcomes.
- 28 Nine out of ten providers are aware of groups in their communities who are not accessing ESOL provision, despite efforts to recruit them. Over half of these identify Asian women as an under-represented group; in two cases particularly Bangladeshi women. However, Asian men from these same communities do attend classes. Other groups cited are mothers with young families, Muslim women, Filipino women working as nurses, Iraqis who are not asylum seekers and who would therefore have to pay for classes, and the Czech Roma community.
- 29 Evidence suggests that in a minority of cases there is a decline in enrolments from more settled groups in the community. Occasionally providers express concern that the sudden increase in Eastern European learners can affect the diversity of a group and possibly deter less confident learners from other backgrounds. This is

particularly the case if Eastern European learners are the largest group in the class. Learners from Eastern Europe can be younger and better educated and have better English language skills than those from more settled communities. They also tend to arrive as a 'ready-made' group.

## Inspection findings

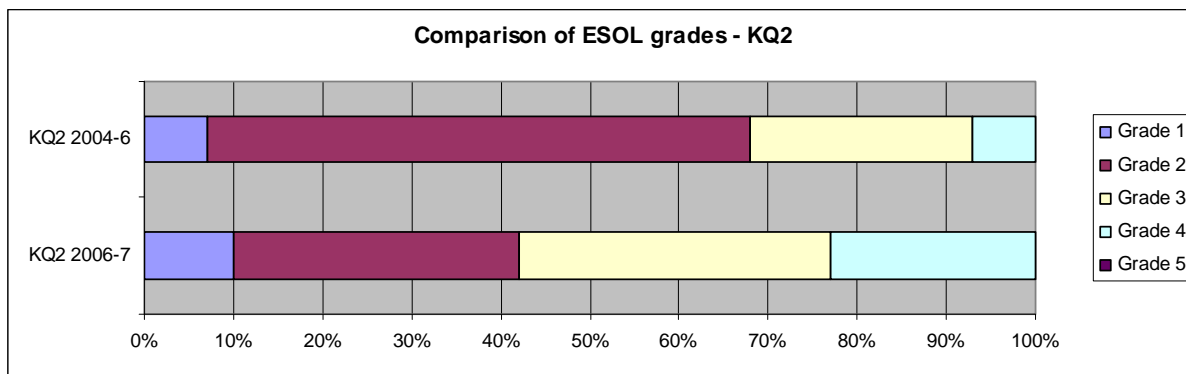
- 30 ESOL is inspected as part of adult community-based learning (ACL) inspections. ACL inspections began in 2004 and until May 2006, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and ESOL were awarded one overall grade. This is because ESOL provision in the areas inspected was not large enough to be graded separately. During the period 2004-2006, in all but one of the seven inspections, ABE and ESOL received a Grade 2 for Key Question 1<sup>4</sup> (achievement, progress and attainment). The remaining grade is a Grade 3.
- 31 In 2006-2007 ACL inspections, ESOL provision is graded separately. In this period Estyn undertook four inspections of ESOL and the grades awarded were two Grade 2s, one Grade 3 and one Grade 4 for Key Question 1. Whilst it is not reliable to directly compare 2004-2006 ESOL grades with those of 2006-2007, it is possible to analyse the grades awarded for ESOL observations. The following chart compares KQ1 observation grades between these two periods. This is based on a comparable number of observations, (28 in 2004-2006 and 31 in 2006-2007).



During 2006-2007, the number of observations below Grade 2 increased from 25% to 45%. In 2006-2007, 26% of observations are below the quality threshold compared to 4% in 2004-2006. This indicates a significant decline in standards achieved since the start of ACL inspections. This corresponds to a time when numbers of learners are increasing in many parts of Wales, including those which do not have well-established ESOL programmes. At the same time there were, and continue to be, limited training opportunities for teachers who do not have specific ESOL teaching qualifications.

- 32 In the period 2006-2007, evidence shows that there was also a decline in the effectiveness of teaching and assessment. For Key Question 2 (teaching and assessment), the increase in observation grades below the quality threshold is less than for KQ1. In the period 2004-2006 it was 7%, increasing to 23% in 2006-2007. However, there is a greater increase in the proportion of grades below Grade 2: from 32% in 2004-2006 to 58% in 2006-2007.

<sup>4</sup> For Estyn common Inspection framework key questions and grade descriptors – see Appendix 1



- 33 Inspection evidence indicates varying reasons for this overall downward trend during 2004-2007, as well as identifying good practice. In the good provision learners make good progress in all four language skills, they work towards clear goal's which are regularly monitored, and attainment is generally good. Other good features highlighted in most reports for this period include high levels of motivation shown by learners and a willingness to support each other in class, and often out of class. They show respect for each other's culture and points of view. Many learners have good opportunities to experience Welsh culture and learn about living and working in Wales. This is particularly important as learners can more easily settle into their community and places of work.
- 34 2004-2007 inspection evidence shows that learners' progress in reading, writing, listening and speaking is too variable. In only half of providers do learners make good progress in all four skills. In two reports, learners only make good progress in speaking and listening. In another two, their progress is no more than adequate. In all inspections, only a minority of learners develop good independent learning skills. The use of individual learning plans to set goals and monitor progress is good for just over half of learners.
- 35 Attendance and completion rates are judged as adequate to poor in the majority of inspections. Many employed learners work shifts and cannot attend regularly. Asylum seekers are a transient group of learners. In only two providers do learners consistently tell tutors if they are going to be absent.
- 36 In individual provision, attainment rates are often better than completion rates. In only half of inspections are they at or above National Comparators. All learners can gain qualifications, but in one case they are ABE qualifications and not ESOL qualifications. In one provider, the majority of learners did not gain a qualification. In another, accreditation is only available twice a year, so learners who move to another area are less likely to achieve a qualification.
- 37 In 2006-2007, inspection reports frequently state that a minority of learners are working at inappropriate levels. This is the result of poor initial assessment, inadequate staffing in response to recent increases in enrolments, or because teachers are unable to teach learners at different levels in the same class. These issues are not highlighted so much in earlier reports.

## Sufficiency of provision

- 38 Providers' ability to respond effectively to learners' needs is influenced by funding constraints, limited staffing capacity and limited information about the number of migrant workers and employment patterns in their areas.
- 39 Seven out of ten providers report a considerable increase in the number of ESOL learners between 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. In the case of one rural provider, numbers increased by 131% in this period. Two of the providers saw their numbers more than double in this period. Between 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, numbers of learners are more settled for just under half of providers. However, in this same period, two smaller providers report a 70% and 77% increase, a larger provider shows a 28% increase and three others show smaller increases of 6% to 8%.
- 40 Depending on where they live, ESOL learners can access learning for very different amounts of time and thus have very different learning experiences. Just under half of providers visited offer full-time as well as part-time courses. In two cases learners in part-time provision are eager to enrol on a full-time programme but it is full. All providers, except one, offer daytime as well as evening provision. Two of the smaller providers offer weekend provision in community-based venues.
- 41 Part-time learners often want to study for longer each week in order to improve their English more quickly but are unable to do so. Over two thirds of providers prescribe the amount of time part-time learners can attend each week. These range from no more than four hours a week to 14 hours a week. Where providers have several locations in their area, this is influenced by the necessary geographical spread of classes and the limited number of teaching staff available.
- 42 Providers balance offering learning opportunities to as many learners as possible with their desire to provide a good quality learning experience for those already on courses. An increasing number of providers no longer offer 'roll-on roll-off' programmes, because these programmes do not provide learners with a good quality learning experience. In order to improve completion and attainment rates, a number of providers operate termly enrolments. In these cases, learners must demonstrate previous good attendance before they are able to re-enrol.
- 43 Over the last two years, most providers have had to introduce waiting lists to better manage the increasing number of enquiries and enrolments. Two of the largest providers close their waiting lists at a certain time in the year, so it is not possible to determine how much demand exceeds supply. Others allocate places on a half-termly basis, or when they become available. Some learners have to wait up to nine months before they can join a class. Often, women who want a crèche place, where this is offered, have to wait unacceptably long periods before they can join a class.
- 44 A small minority of providers add to their ESOL budget by 'eating into' their ABE budget. This reduces the support and provision for ABE learners. There are still a few examples of ESOL learners joining ABE classes. Half of providers say this happens but in a controlled way, for example, where learners are long term residents

and their levels of spoken English are suitable to join a group of learners wanting to improve their writing skills. Three providers use close monitoring to ensure this does not happen. In more rural and isolated areas, providers find it more difficult to have separate groups because of low group numbers.

- 45 Most providers visited are delivering ESOL in the workplace. This is discussed later in the report.
- 46 Providers face the constant challenge of making learning opportunities flexible enough to accommodate learners' needs and circumstances. Half of providers recruit learners from valley or rural areas and limited transport is the most significant barrier to learners attending classes. Learners on shift-work find it difficult to attend classes regularly. For over half of providers, this group of learners represents a significant proportion of their enrolments. In other areas where there are larger numbers of asylum seekers, the situation is similar. Providers deal with this in different ways, such as allowing learners to enrol for several classes even though they may not attend all of them all of the time. One further education (FE) provider runs extra twilight classes to address this problem.
- 47 A minority of providers make good use of a computer-based learning package called ELLIS (English language learning information system). This is of particular benefit to those learners who cannot attend regularly. ELLIS is offered by Learndirect, which is a government-funded organisation set up to increase on-line adult learning opportunities. There is scope to develop this way of learning as a means of reaching more learners.
- 48 Too few providers have measures in place to offer individuals some provision whilst they wait to join a class. One offers an induction course spread over several weeks. Another two make good use ELLIS for this purpose.

## Conclusions about learner achievement

- 49 Just over half of providers record overall attainment rates of over 70% for 2006-2007. This is encouraging. The last verifiable national comparator for overall ESOL attainment was less than 50% (2002-2003). One large provider believes there is room for improvement in their learners' outcomes and another two are seeing attainment rates gradually improve since introducing termly enrolments and more frequent accreditation opportunities. In a few cases, outreach tutors are not consistently recording learners' achievements, particularly in outreach centres.
- 50 In meetings with learners, they give examples of how their English is improving. Responses range from very specific examples of improved grammar or more formal English to being able to speak more confidently to teachers and to employers and use the telephone. All learners are positive about the support they receive from tutors. Almost all feel they are studying at the right level and agree that ESOL classes are equipping them to live and work in their local communities. Occasionally the level of work is too easy.

## Curriculum

- 51 Overall, providers plan their ESOL curriculum well in order to cater for the very wide range of needs, circumstances and aspirations presented by learners. They generally take good account of local and national priorities as well as the ESOL core curriculum. For the majority of providers, the ESOL core curriculum is a central feature in curriculum planning. A few recognise that they need to develop this further.
- 52 In all cases, qualifications strongly influence curriculum planning but are not providers' sole concern. The majority of providers offer learners the chance to gain some form of accreditation three times a year. This means that if they move out of the area, they are more likely to leave with a qualification. However, the rates at which learners gain full accreditation for all four language skills vary too much.
- 53 Not all learners have the same opportunities to gain the nationally recognised Skills for Life qualifications. Six out of 10 providers offer Skills for Life qualifications across all levels of the core curriculum (Entry Level to Level 2), with various awarding bodies. Most of these also offer open college network (OCN) units. Two providers only offer OCN qualifications. Three offer qualifications at pre-entry level, which cater for those learners who are not literate in their first language. Smaller providers find it difficult to offer ESOL at the higher levels.
- 54 There are not enough opportunities for learners to take part in ESOL family learning. This is a concern, given that mothers with young families are under-represented in many areas. In 2007-2008, just under half of providers are running ESOL family learning. Another two providers are keen to run courses but learners are reluctant to join; both are targeting Polish parents in local Catholic schools. Two providers have a number of ESOL learners in family learning groups, but these are not dedicated ESOL provision. Providers are using innovative ways of attracting parents with young children. For example, one offers ESOL in pregnancy classes and then encourages learners to join language and play classes when their children are born.
- 55 Learning experiences for those in mixed level groups are not as good as for those in same-level groups, unless tutors make skilful use of differentiation. Whilst most providers aim to offer same-level groups, it is not always possible. It is generally easier for the larger providers to arrange classes for learners all at one level because of density of numbers. Smaller providers in rural areas are more likely to have mixed level groups and ESOL learners attend ABE classes when nothing else is within reach.
- 56 Providers generally have good arrangements for the embedding of the Welsh culture into the ESOL curriculum. In half of providers this is particularly strong. In the best examples they make good use of local museums, historic sites, exhibitions and visits to theatres. There are also examples of local councillors and other occasional speakers visiting classes. Learners clearly benefit from these activities, which help them to learn more about their local environment as well as Welsh culture.
- 57 There are good examples of providers working with partners to target particular groups in the community. This is particularly the case for learners, such as Muslim women, who can only attend women only groups. However, half of providers feel that Asian women and Muslim women are under-represented in their classes.

- 58 All providers are responding well to the requirements of citizenship and the need for some learners to undertake the Life in the UK test. In just over half of providers this is well-embedded, whilst others are still developing this aspect. One large provider is able to run extra classes for those in the local Chinese community who need to take the test, and another is planning to do so.
- 59 A few of the providers visited are registered as Life in the UK test centres. One is considering the future of this service as it takes up a significant amount of time and administrative support. The numbers of learners applying for or requesting information about citizenship vary greatly across centres.

## ESOL in the workplace

- 60 The development of ESOL provision in the workplace is vital if employees are to operate effectively in work, understand the culture of their organisation and gain the skills and knowledge necessary to work confidently and progress personally. It makes an important contribution to ensuring that people settling and working in Wales feel included.
- 61 There is not enough ESOL provision in the workplace. Employers are not obliged to provide ESOL courses for their workers. This is one of the reasons why many providers are struggling to cope with large increases in learners in their core provision. There is the only provision available to migrant workers settling in the area. However, there are good examples of employers working well with trades unions and local providers to deliver courses on site.
- 62 All providers visited are delivering, or have delivered, ESOL in the workplace. They deliver courses in a range of sectors such as residential care, food processing, warehousing and distribution, hospitals, holiday parks and civil engineering. Most providers are engaged in recruiting new employers and encouraging them to sign up to the Employer Pledge. The Employer Pledge is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Basic Skills Strategy. It demonstrates the employer's commitment to developing their workforce. They receive funding to help them do this.
- 63 Workplace ESOL requires skilled and experienced teaching staff who are often in short supply. It can involve delivering classes late at night and at the weekend. Of the five workplace visits, four companies are involved in food processing and the fifth is a care home for the elderly. Most have had ESOL provision for over two years. All employers visited are working towards the Employer Pledge. Employers cite several reasons for running ESOL courses. These include implementing health and safety, complying with food hygiene regulations and reading instructions on machines and labels on products. They also identify the importance of being able to communicate effectively with colleagues and managers. Courses address specific work needs but also support learners in the wider environment.
- 64 Learners are very positive about the benefits of being able to learn English at work. This is generally reflected in their enthusiasm and good attendance at classes. The provision is accessible it fits in with learners' work times and puts less strain on their family and other domestic commitments. However, there are varying incentives for employees. Some are able to attend in paid time whilst others are not. In two companies, learners are not working towards a recognised qualification.
- 65 Employers are equally positive about the benefits of ESOL in the workplace. They are able to give examples of workers who have gained promotion to section or line leader. In one case, the employees started as agency workers. In another example, a cleaner now acts as a translator for other Polish workers and others on the shop floor act as communicators.
- 66 All employers stated that they retain staff who attend classes. This is contrary to some employers' fears that, once an employee's English improves, they will move to

another job. One employer reports a reduced turnover in staff. Other benefits include improvements in health and safety, better use made of employees' skills and a better understanding of elderly residents' needs.

## Support for learners

- 67 Many ESOL learners, because of their personal circumstances, need a lot of support. Apart from academic matters, the main areas learners need help with are form filling, health issues, employment, housing, family difficulties, schools and generally finding their way round public services. ESOL tutors are often the only people a learner feels able to turn to. This is particularly the case if the issues are very personal and the learner does not have enough English to make effective use of other local support services. This means the tutor taking time out of lessons or staying after the lesson. There is the added risk of tutors giving learners the wrong information.
- 68 Providers have different arrangements to deal with learners' support needs. Those learners on full-time courses, where funding is more generous, benefit from regular timetabled tutorials. Tutorial support for part-time learners is patchy. One provider instructs tutors not to give more personal support and refers learners to relevant agencies. Tutors include certain topics in lessons where this is useful to the whole class. One larger provider has a dedicated tutor so that learners can book an appointment. In another example, tutors use the first ten minutes of a lesson for support matters.
- 69 Learners have varying levels of advice and guidance before enrolling for classes. Most providers have robust arrangements for interview, initial assessment and induction. They use a range of initial assessment materials based on the ESOL core curriculum. Occasionally, tutors do not use a consistent approach to initial assessment. In a few cases, providers use inappropriate initial assessment materials that do not link to the core curriculum. This means that learners are more likely to enrol at the wrong level and not have clear targets.
- 70 Learners receive helpful pre-entry guidance which includes information about courses, qualifications, fees and expectations regarding attendance. A few providers issue learners with a simple booklet. One provider runs a short induction course. In one area, the local Multi Agency Diversity Forum provides newcomers to the area with a 'welcome pack', which is available in twelve different languages. This includes useful information on all local public services, bus timetables and maps.
- 71 There are not enough childcare facilities for many learners. Again, this is a particular concern in areas where mothers with young children are not attending classes. Fewer than half of providers are able to offer crèche places and the level of provision varies. In one case, learners have to pay. Two providers reimburse learners once they have childcare arrangements in place. Two others have very limited facilities and another large provider has recently closed their crèche.
- 72 Most providers have links with other organisations that can offer specific support to learners. However, these links vary in strength. Partner organisations include the police, race equality organisations and local associations for ethnic minority groups. In an example of good practice, the Migrant Workers Advisory Service holds a weekly surgery on the ESOL premises.

## Fees

- 73 Provision is not always free for ESOL learners and fees vary considerably across Wales. Just over half of providers offer free provision to all who meet residency requirements, including examinations fees. The remainder charge varying amounts for both courses and examinations using different sets of criteria. In all cases, provision is free for asylum seekers. Several providers offer incentives such as reduced examination fees, provided attendance is good.
- 74 It is difficult to determine how many potential learners are discouraged from joining a course because they cannot afford it. The highest fees are £20 a term including examination fees, but classes are free for those on benefit. The lowest fees are just over £6 a term: learners have their first speaking and listening qualification free but must pay for any more. Another provider, charging £10 a term, pays 50% of European Union (EU) learners' examination fees provided their attendance is at least 75%.
- 75 In one case, where ESOL classes are free for all learners who meet residents' criteria, the provider treats EU learners (deemed by funding rules to be resident) as English as a Foreign Language learners. This means that they have to pay the usual community education fees. This suggests that not all providers are clear about who is eligible to access funded provision and who is not.

## Staffing

- 76 Over half of providers state that there are not enough ESOL teacher training opportunities available locally. Of those who have access to local training, most state that they have no dedicated staff development budget for ESOL. Over half of providers report that they have difficulty recruiting suitably qualified staff. Providers in North Wales have fewer difficulties. Two providers employ tutors from Poland who have suitable EFL training and qualifications from their own country. This is a positive development.
- 77 Qualification requirements for teaching staff vary considerably. All providers require staff to have an initial teaching qualification. However, only six require staff to have specialist ESOL teaching qualifications. The number of staff with the new Level 3 qualification is gradually increasing but courses are still limited in number. The new Level 4 qualification is not widely available across Wales and most providers find the cost prohibitive.
- 78 The ESOL National Support Project (NSP), funded through the Welsh Assembly's Basic Skills Strategy, provides valuable support to ESOL providers. This is particularly the case for those who are newer to ESOL. Many providers say tutors benefit from the project's short course, which aims to help practitioners with limited experience. One provider describes the NSP as 'invaluable' as a source of information and guidance. There is a pressing need for providers to have access to this type of support network.

## Strategic planning

- 79 Most providers work well with a range of partners at an operational level to help plan their ESOL provision. However, more formal, longer-term, strategic planning is generally weak. In the main, providers plan in response to demand, but growth is severely limited by capped funding in all institutions. Only two are planning for growth of up to 10% in 2008-2009. Nearly all providers' plans for period 2008-2010 depend on their securing more funds. Several providers are seeking funds from elsewhere, such as convergence funding.
- 80 There is no regional mechanism whereby providers can gain information about likely growth in demand. This makes it difficult for them to respond effectively in order that learners benefit from good quality provision. However, since 2004, at least two of the larger providers have substantially increased the size of their ESOL teaching teams as well as increasing the number of full-time and fractional posts to meet anticipated demand.
- 81 Most providers' plans have an appropriate focus on improving outcomes for learners by strengthening the curriculum and offering a wider range of learning experiences. Plans also include the expansion of ESOL in the workplace, the appointment of an ESOL manager and developing more computer-based learning to accommodate more learners. Providers' plans will be severely hampered if demand for ESOL continues to rise and constraints on funding remain.

## Appendix 1: The Estyn Common Inspection Framework

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

### **Grade descriptors:**

Grade 1 good with outstanding features

Grade 2 good features and no important shortcomings

Grade 3 good features outweigh shortcomings

Grade 4 some good features, but shortcomings in important areas

Grade 5 many important shortcomings

## Appendix 2: Glossary

**Asylum seeker:** an asylum seeker has applied for leave to stay in the UK but has not yet been granted leave to stay by the Home Office.

**Core curriculum:** the ESOL core curriculum sets out the national standards and levels for ESOL learners linked to the qualifications framework.

**Convergence funding:** this is funding from Europe which aims to encourage more regional and strategic partnerships between providers.

**Language and play:** this is a programme designed for parents and their pre-school children. It is part of the Basic Skills Strategy.

**Life in the UK test:** all those wishing to settle in the UK and gain British citizenship are required to take and pass this test.

**Lifelong Learning Record Wales (LLWR):** this is a database managed by the Welsh Assembly's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. It contains records of all post-16 learner enrolments and achievements.

**National Comparators:** these are national averages derived from LLWR. The main national comparators are for enrolment, course completion and qualifications attained.

**Refugee:** a refugee has been given leave to remain in the UK indefinitely.

**Residential status:** in order for a learner to meet residency requirements, the following criteria apply:

- the learner is an EEA citizen or a citizen of Switzerland; or
- the learner is an asylum seeker; or
- the learner has refugee status; or
- the learner is 'settled' in the UK and their passport shows they live in the UK without any immigration control. They also have to show that they are 'ordinarily' resident in the UK/EEA for three years before the ESOL course starts and that their main purpose for living in the UK is **not** for education.

**Skills for Life:** this is a general term used to refer to the ESOL, literacy and numeracy curriculum in England, including qualifications. The term is now used in Wales and it particularly relates to the suite of ESOL qualifications offered by providers in Wales.