
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	18 March 2025
Report By:	Ruth Binks Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/23/2 5/HS
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Subject:	New Approach to ESOL Provision		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ☐ For Decision ☒ For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform the Education and Communities Committee of the new approach to support English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for 2025/26.

1.3 The new approach is a partnership between CLD (Community Learning and Development) and HSCP (Health and Social Care Partnership) to provide a learning offer tailored to the needs of the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Community utilising available resources.

1.4 The revamped approach to ESOL provision empowers Community Learning and Development (CLD) to meet both local and national policy objectives. This initiative emerged from the 2024 CLD Service Review process. CLD's ESOL efforts are guided by "Welcoming our Learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015-2020" and the "Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland 2022-2027".

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Education and Communities Committee take note of the new approach to ESOL provision in Inverclyde for 2025/26, as well as the ongoing challenges.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 "Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015-2020 (with an upcoming update) was created to ensure that all Scottish residents for whom English is not a first language can access high-quality English language provision. This enables them to acquire the necessary language skills to fully participate in Scottish life. The *'Evaluation of Community Learning and Development: Considering the Provision of Local Authorities and Their Partners 2024'* recommends reviewing community-based adult learning, including English for speakers of other languages, to better understand its supply, demand, and contribution to national priorities."
- 3.2 Research indicates that to achieve proficiency sufficient for everyday life an ESOL learner requires 1500 hours of instruction plus 1500 hours of independent and contextualized study. This assumes the learner has a solid educational background in their native language, access to high-quality learning and teaching resources, and a high level of motivation. This effort brings learners to a proficiency level, which is adequate for daily life but does not include professional employment language skills.
- 3.3 To better address the needs of learners, Community Learning and Development (CLD) has historically adjusted both the structure and content of its ESOL provision. In 2023, a survey of ESOL learners revealed a desire for more intensive and levelled ESOL programs.

The revised approach to ESOL provision responds to the nearly 1000% increase in ESOL referrals between 2020 and 2024.

- In 2019/20, 24 new referrals were received, adding to the existing learners, resulting in a total of 68 learners accessing support.
- In 2023/24, over 230 referrals were received, with 181 learners attending the provision throughout the year.

Currently, Community Learning and Development (CLD) offers language provision from A1 to B1 levels (see appendix 1). The learning offer also includes provision for individuals who are not literate in their native language or who did not receive formal education in their home country.

- 3.4 To facilitate effective partnership referrals, Community Learning and Development (CLD) has been leading a group of partners to establish an ESOL pathway. This pathway indicates the specific language level needed to fully or partially engage in various activities or programs. Those New to Scotland often face negative experiences when they are not matched to the appropriate language level required for participation. CLD is collaborating with a range of partners, including West College Scotland, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), The Trust, Barnardo's, Belville Gardens, and Skills Development Scotland (SDS).
- 3.5 A crucial component of the referral pathway is the learning offer by West College Scotland (WCS). Over the past four years, WCS has increased its ESOL provision from zero full-time courses to three. However, due to capacity constraints, the number of learners each year is capped, which places additional pressure on community-based provision. Meeting this demand continues to be challenging, with WCS at full capacity for ESOL provision and an increasing number of referrals. The new approach aims to support more learners in Inverclyde through intensive learning.

4.0 THE NEW APPROACH

- 4.1 The new approach is a collaboration between Community Learning and Development and HSCP to provide a learning offer tailored to the needs of the ESOL community within available resources. With increased funding and staffing rising from 1.65 to 2.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs), along with changes to the delivery model, CLD has been able to develop intensive curriculum-led courses. These courses have boosted weekly learning hours from 2 to 8 hours, and average group sizes have grown from 8 to 16. Accreditation for learners will be a core element of this new model.

- 4.2 Before the rollout of the new approach for 2025/26, a pilot model was implemented, showcasing significant successes and opportunities for enhancing the ESOL learner experience. This was achieved by increasing learning hours and integrating ESOL language lessons with language practice activities, aiming to create a week-long English learning plan for each learner. Appendix one provides examples of the learning offer under the new model.
- 4.3 Funding from the UK Home Office has supported creche costs; however, there are ongoing challenges in sourcing and resourcing central venues that are accessible via public transport and suitable for larger group delivery. The ESOL population also faces barriers to participation, such as trauma, mental and physical health issues, along with regular appointments to address these issues. Additionally, the ESOL population is often transient, and Inverclyde may not be their preferred final residence in the UK.
- 4.4 Travel costs of providing intensive courses have become a challenge with bus costs totalling £11.50 for each individual attending 2 days provision. Currently 35 learners are requesting travel costs support. Discussions are ongoing within the ESOL partnership around travel costs support and criteria for support.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		x
Legal/Risk		x
Human Resources		x
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		x
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		x
Environmental & Sustainability		x
Data Protection		x

5.2 FINANCE

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

5.3 Legal/Risk

None

5.4 Human Resources

None

5.5 Strategic

None

5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
x	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

(c) Children and Young People

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

6.0 Environmental/Sustainability

Summarise any environmental / climate change impacts which relate to this report.

N/A

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

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YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.

x

NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

7.0 Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

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YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

x

NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 ESOL Survey 2023

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 N/A

APPENDIX 1

ESOL COURSES AND QUALIFICATIONS UNDER THE NEW MODEL				
ESOL Course Level	Level Descriptor of ESOL Course	Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework Level	Qualifications embedded within ESOL course	Learning offer under the New Model
B1 Level Intensive 6-8hrs per week 44 weeks per year	Independent User	4	SQA Core Skills Level 4	1 cohort at Port Glasgow Town Hall 1 cohort at Greenock Mid Kirk
A2 Level Intensive 6-8hrs per week 44 weeks per year	Basic User	3	SQA Core Skills Level 3	2 cohorts at Greenock Mid Kirk
A1 Level Intensive 6-8hrs per week 44 weeks per year	Basic User	2	SQA Core Skills Level 2	1 cohort at Greenock Mid Kirk
Pre-A1 Literacies Level 2hrs per week 44 weeks per year	Pre-basic user	1	National 2 ESOL For everyday life	1 cohort at Greenock I-Zone <i>Please note this cohort is made up of learners from the above A1 course as well as learners from weekly sessions who need this support</i>
Weekly Session 2hrs per week 44 weeks per year	Mixed level	2-4 mixed level	SQA Core Skills 2-4	1 cohort at Branchton Centre 1 cohort at 7 ½ John Wood St Centre
ESOL ICT Session 2hrs per week 38 weeks per year	Mixed level	2-4 mixed level	SQA Information and Communication Technology	1 cohort at Central Library

Notes:

Intensive courses are curriculum led and can accommodate up to 20 learners per ESOL course

Weekly sessions are for mixed level ESOL learners and are limited to 8 per course as we utilise an individual learning approach

For more information on the ESOL levels please visit <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions>