

BIS media

Skills Minister John Hayes today pledged to provide more effective, targeted help for people who face barriers to learning the English language skills communities need.

Following the publication today of an equality impact assessment of provision for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training, which he ordered, Minister Hayes announced that BIS will work in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on developing new forms of support for those who need informal, community-based learning of English.

From August this year, national provision of full funding for ESOL courses will be focussed on those actively seeking work on Jobseekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance (Work Related Activity Group). As part of a broader move towards rebalancing the investment in skills between Government, the employer and the learner, other eligible learners or their employers will be expected to make a contribution towards the costs of their ESOL course.

Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, John Hayes said:

“By targeting public funding on those in greatest need, and setting higher standards for providers, our reforms will make ESOL provision work better for learners, employers, and taxpayers.

“We are fully funding ESOL provision for jobseekers to help them to access work, but we will not use the public purse to support free English language training for individuals who have come here to take up work – companies that recruit abroad should take responsibility for that.

“We recognise there is a broader purpose to learning English; it can be crucial for integration and community cohesion. We believe that through this collaboration with the Department for Communities and Local Government we can reach those individuals who need language skills to get on.”

Minister Hayes has asked the Association of Colleges to advise on developing with providers an effective methodology for targeting funds at settled communities in which language barriers inhibit individual opportunity and community cohesion. Given the respective work that Lord Boswell and Baroness Sharp are leading on

Adult Literacy and Colleges in Communities, the Minister has requested that they are involved in this work.

Ministers will also devise means to measure the quality of ESOL provision more effectively, with a new emphasis on progression to further learning and employment. Minister Hayes is committed to discussing measurements of quality with OFSTED.

Communities Minister Andrew Stunell said:

"We want to see a more integrated Britain and English language skills are crucial, allowing us all to get on and play an active part in the economic and social life of our communities.

"A good command of English broadens economic opportunities and helps to promote integration. Without this skill, there is a risk of social exclusion and people being denied the opportunity to realise their full potential."

Key measures announced today include:

- BIS will work in partnership with DCLG on developing new forms of support for those who need informal, community-based learning of English
- Reiterating the offer of fully funded ESOL training for jobseekers to help them gain the language skills they need to get into work.
- For further education colleges and training organisations, a clearer remit to provide good quality English Language provision that employers are willing to pay for.

Over the summer, BIS and the Department for Communities and Local Government will work together to establish criteria for targeted local projects that meet community needs.

The full report, published today, is at:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/equality-impact-assessments>

Notes to editors:

1. As part of the Spending Review process the Government assessed priorities for funding to ensure that public investment is focused where its impact can be maximised i.e. those who would not otherwise have access to training, and where the market failures are strongest. This was identified as adults

with poor levels of literacy and numeracy, young adults without full level 2 or full level 3 qualifications and adults actively seeking or preparing for work.

2. *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth*, published on 16 November 2010 set out the significant investment of £3.9 billion in 2011-12 in post-19 FE and Skills in England. Over the Spending Review period we will support the expansion of Adult Apprenticeships; full subsidy for basic literacy and numeracy qualifications for adults and first full level 2 and first full level 3 qualifications for young adults (19 up to 24). As part of the Government agenda to support unemployed people into work full Government subsidy will be payable for accredited units and full qualifications for people in receipt of Jobseekers' Allowance and Employment Support Allowance (in the Work Related Activity Group) depending on what they need to help them enter and stay in work. The Government will continue to invest in training outside of areas where full subsidy is available, but the costs will be shared between the Government and the learner or employer. An Equality Impact Assessment was published alongside *Skills for Sustainable Growth* and *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth*.
3. Adults in receipt of benefits not conditional on seeking or preparing for work who may have had automatic full fee remission under the previous funding eligibility rules, will now be co-funded (with costs shared between Government and the individual) unless they qualify under other skills entitlements.
4. For ESOL this means:
 - ESOL provision in the workplace will no longer receive public funding on the basis that employers should meet the costs.
 - Unless in receipt of JSA or ESA (WRAG) ESOL learners will be co-funded. 24% of ESOL enrolments in 2009/10 paid the expected fee contribution in full.
5. In January 2011 Minister Hayes announced that he had insisted an equality impact assessment of the impact of changes on ESOL would be carried out and published before summer recess. This commitment was given in Parliament.
6. The assessment followed the Department's equality impact assessment process and has been tailored to reflect the nature of further education and skills policy and its operating procedures. We have drawn on two sources of published analytical information – the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and Labour Force Survey. The ILR is the nationally-recognised source of data on learners in further education in England. The assessment also took account of the information and views offered by a wide range of organisations with an interest, including the views expressed further education representative bodies, learners, providers, and other advocates such as MPs, with whom Minister Hayes has held a number of meetings. In addition, an adjournment debate on 3 May provided further information from Members.
7. BIS's online newsroom contains the latest press notices, speeches, as well as video and images for download. It also features an up to date list of BIS press office contacts. See <http://www.bis.gov.uk/newsroom> for more information.