

Executive Summary

- 1 The Skills Strategy & other cuts results in almost 60% cuts for the majority of ESOL learners (English for Speakers of Other Languages).** This report highlights data for **3,316 Greater Nottingham begin** ESOL clients 1/8/09 to 31/7/10, & **798 learners surveyed** Feb 2011. At the ESOL Parliamentary briefing on Tuesday 29 March, the need for joint work & wide consultation was recognised.
- 2 It is NOT easy to access ESOL.** Migrants face long waiting lists, strict eligibility rules, & fees if they are not on benefits.
- 3 From 2011/12, only adults on “active” benefits & 16 to 18 year olds will get free classes.** All others, including those on low wages & “inactive benefits”, are to “co-fund” 50% of costs; fees will rise by 67% to £3.00 an hour / £900 a year; & the ESOL Hardship Fund will end.
- 4 Many groups are disproportionately disadvantaged by new fees &/or higher fees including:**
 - 1 Black & Ethnic Minority (BME) people including those who need ESOL for Citizenship or ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain)
 - 2 Women
 - 3 Spouses of British Citizens or settled persons
 - 4 People with childcare or dependent care needs
 - 5 People seeking Asylum
 - 6 EU nationals
 - 7 People on very low incomes, including low-waged people & those who get income benefits
 - 8 16 to 18 year olds who may lose EMA
 - 9 Large numbers of people who have not had access to ESOL who represent the “hidden demand”.
- 5 ESOL cuts present wide-reaching & adverse conflict within wider policy contexts:**
 - 1 Business, Innovation & Skills: eg, unspent ESOL allocations; damage to the ESOL infrastructure & Further Education nationally; waste of migrant potential.
 - 2 Department of Work & Pensions: eg, ineffective use of the new Work Programme to deliver ESOL – which will also disrupt the progress of those already studying with Skills Funding Agency providers; the dichotomy with JCP EURES UK objectives to fill skill gaps through EU/EEA migration.
 - 3 Home Office & UKBA: eg, the potential damage to UKBA’s successful strategy to promote language competence & Citizenship; the contradiction of prioritising language to create a “national identity” with reduced access to ESOL.
 - 4 Communities & Local Government: eg, the lack of awareness of ESOL as the tool to create a “free, fair & responsible Big Society”; the naïve notion that ESOL can be passed to the Voluntary sector whose resources are diminished.
 - 5 Other strategy: eg, translation or interpreting costs will increase across local & national public sector services.
- 6 ESOL is fundamental to all spheres of life. Cuts risk huge damage at individual, community & policy levels.** They represent discriminatory practice against BME groups & Women. They threaten the economy, new or established central or local government strategy, & the public purse. Equalities legislation obliges an Equality Impact Assessment & modification to remove or mitigate these effects.