


F4: Learning to Communicate in English

Submitted by 16 members

Mover: Wera Hobhouse MP | Summator: TBA

This motion applies to 

Summary:

This motion is submitted by members of Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary (LD4SOS) and others. It recognises the difficulties experienced by asylum seekers in developing an understanding of both written and spoken English and calls upon the government to develop an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) strategy for England similar to that in the devolved administrations with appropriate funding provided.

It recognises that being able to communicate in English is one of the most crucial elements in enabling asylum seekers and others that are now residing in the UK to contribute to the local community and ultimately gain employment, as so many express the strong desire to do.

ESOL teaching is best done locally and it calls for local authorities to have key responsibilities in the deliverance of such strategies.

Full text of the motion:

Conference notes with concern that:

- i. England does not have a strategy for the teaching of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), unlike Scotland and Wales.
- ii. According to the 2011 Census, at least 726,000 people in the UK do not speak English 'well', and this is likely to be an underestimate.
- iii. Government funding for ESOL has been cut by 60% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2015/16, whilst additional funding for job seekers and ring-fenced funding for community education have both been removed.

- iv. Consequently, enrolment in state-funded ESOL classes has fallen by 43% over the same period.
- v. There is no statutory obligation to support refugees with low levels or no English with free ESOL provision if they are in work, or asylum seekers until they have been in the UK for 6 months, which in turn impedes their ability to independently navigate systems, seek support and integrate.

Conference believes that:

- a. The ability to speak and understand English is important for those living in England as it enables them to engage with their individual freedoms and participate and contribute fully to British society.
- b. The Government and devolved administrations must have a crucial role in funding ESOL provision.
- c. Funding for ESOL classes should be allocated with transparency and based on robust evidence.

Conference calls on the Government to:

1. Establish a national ESOL strategy for England that will include recommendations to improve collaboration between local ESOL providers and to create a national ESOL champion.
2. Require every local education authority to publish a 'Language Needs Assessment' that must identify the need for ESOL provision in the authority's area, identify target groups and outline how it intends to address this need.
3. Require local authorities to maintain an 'ESOL hub' website with information about how to access learning opportunities.
4. Require all state-funded schools (including free schools and academies) to work closely with LAs in developing the Language Needs Assessment.
5. Require all schools to work closely with LAs in understanding the target groups within their school community, and assist LAs in assisting those groups to access ESOL classes.
6. Provide asylum seekers and refugees with low levels of English a minimum of 6 months free ESOL provision from as soon as they have applied for asylum or, have been granted asylum but are in work, so they

can reach a functioning command of English to access the support they need.

7. Incentivise employers to contribute towards the cost of ESOL classes for their employees.
8. Work on a cross-party basis and with awarding organisations and ESOL providers to modernise the ESOL Qualifications and Curriculum Framework.
9. Create 'fast-track' pathways for ESOL learners into employment by promoting partnerships between adult education colleges and businesses in need of language skills, such as export firms.