ESOL for Adults in Wolverhampton
Providers and Provision

Skills Funding Agency Grant funded

- Wolverhampton Adult Education Service (700+)
- City of Wolverhampton College (700+)
- Workers Education Association
  (Wolverhampton City Council Economic Inclusion Team - Employment Support programmes)

Other

- Voluntary sector
  - Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC), Bilston Resource Centre, Aspiring Futures, TLC and others – host some SFA programmes and also deliver their own courses, funded from other grant funding
Rising demand – shortage of provision

AEW response:

• Larger class sizes
• Reduction in hours of study per cohort
• Referral to other providers
• Use of trainee English Language teachers to support those at Entry 2 and Level 1
Profile of AEW ESOL students 15/16

- 60% looking for work
- 23% employed
- 17% economically inactive
- 30% Pre Entry level
- 48% Entry level
- 22% Level 1
Overview of Provision

• Pre-Entry to Level 1
• Day time and evening courses
• Main enrolment points, September and February - infill opportunities rare
• With exception of Pre Entry students, all others complete and achieve external qualifications
• On reaching Level 1, students join vocational or functional skills courses at AEW or another provider or progress to work
Third Sector: RMC perspective

RMC clients arrive as asylum seekers, refugees, EU migrants and other migrants e.g. family reunion, to join British spouse, etc.

Clients arrive in the UK with varying language abilities - from being illiterate in their home language right through to fluency in English.

The majority, however, cannot communicate at the level they require which is one of several reasons why RMC has more than 100 clients a day - they benefit from 40 on-site languages.
RMC clients need English skills to:

• negotiate everyday life and optimise the possibilities of integration
• optimise their health and wellbeing - (ESOL for Health)
• obtain a job
• sustain a job
• master the particular technical language that their profession requires
• study anywhere from school to University
• pass the ‘Life in the UK Test’ to obtain UK Citizenship or indefinite leave to remain - unless you are over 65 or can prove a long term physical or mental condition which prevents you or if you come from an English speaking country such as USA
Issues

• Informal
• Unstructured
• Short-term
• Not sustainable/no funding
• Often only one hour per week
• Not accessible to many clients
• All courses have long waiting lists – RMC has 100 on the waiting list
Issues

• Significant and growing demand
• Competition for finite funding resource
• Quality of some provision
• Referral routes / progression routes not defined
• Staff skills variable
• Status of ESOL as compared with English
• Fees
Strategies in development

- Collation and promotion of information about ESOL activity across Wolverhampton – Virtual Hub

- Improving skills and experience of deliverers

- Negotiating specialisms – voluntary sector focus on engagement and Pre Entry level provision

- Effective communication between network of providers to establish and improve referral

- Increased vocationalisation of ESOL curriculum