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Governance and the Local Integration
of Migrants and Europe's Refugees

English Language Education for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Scotland: Provision and Governance

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Executive Summary

1. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland is distinctive within the UK. The Scottish Government waives ESOL fees for asylum seekers, meaning that ESOL provision is not formally restricted according to immigration status.
2. The ESOL environment in Scotland is currently characterised by complexity. ESOL providers include: colleges, local authorities, ALEOs, the third sector and community organisations. ESOL courses are both accredited and non-accredited, run across a range of competencies, for speakers of other languages of all immigration statuses.
3. Funding for ESOL is channelled through a variety of routes, including through the Scottish Funding Council, the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), local authority Community Learning and Development funds and NGO funders. Funding routes can be variable, but each contains specific requirements for ESOL provision and shapes (a) how courses are delivered and (b) who can attend.
4. Recent changes to the funding pathways for Scottish Funding Council resources has (a) redirected the responsibility for funding distribution from Community Planning Partnerships to colleges and (b) sought to increase oversight for resources by emphasising accredited learning. GLIMER research suggests that these changes may negatively impact learning opportunities and experiences for displaced migrants.
5. Though ESOL delivery receives some direction from the Scottish Government's ESOL Strategy, current governance infrastructures are both strongly localised and subject to centralising forces.
6. Localised approaches are influenced by the immigration pathways of their learners, the dynamics between college and community provision and the local environment. Experiences of ESOL provision in the urban site of Glasgow differs significantly from that in remote and rural areas participating in the Resettlement Scheme.
7. There is currently a disconnect between Scottish Funding Council ESOL resourcing and the requirements of local areas participating in the Resettlement Scheme. As funding for Resettlement ESOL is time-limited, further work needs to be done on how Scottish Government provision can better support ESOL provision for new Resettlement populations in the long term.
8. Elsewhere, GLIMER research found though at delivery level, ESOL providers were aware of the specific barriers to ESOL to which asylum seekers and refugees were vulnerable, this awareness was not as firmly actioned in policy-making processes. As a result, changes to Scottish Funding Council funding pathways did not actively take into account how they might adversely impact displaced migrants.
9. Changes to the funding pathways which emphasised accredited ESOL were likely to affect learners (a) at literacy level or (b) who preferred non-accredited classes. Stakeholders reported that these types of learners were likely to be displaced migrants.



10. GLIMER research finds that it is a positive that the Scottish Government's approach to ESOL is not actively exclusive for asylum seekers and refugees; however, more actively inclusive work needs to be done to better address the specific barriers experienced by displaced migrants of the existing ESOL system.

The research for this report took place between Autumn 2018 and Spring 2019, a time during which ESOL governance in Scotland remained dynamic. The conclusions of the report therefore reflect the conditions in the field at the time. research was conducted.



Recommendations

GLIMER research on ESOL governance for displaced migrants concludes that whilst the Scottish Government’s decision to remove formal barriers to ESOL provision for displaced migrants should be applauded, more actively inclusive work needs to be done to better address the informal barriers experienced by asylum seekers and refugees in the existing ESOL system. Below, we make ten recommendations to encourage this.

| | Recommendation | Why? |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | Address informal barriers to Further Education (FE) ESOL places by introducing a place-sensitive class quota for asylum seekers and refugees | Outside Glasgow City, where an ESOL Register operates, places on Further Education ESOL courses are currently allocated through self-registration systems. Places are often limited and therefore competitive. Some groups of ESOL learners have (a) established community infrastructures and (b) external resourcing, resulting in coordinated, incentivised registration. FE ESOL places therefore are sometimes filled by people with less precarious migration statuses, leading to fewer places available to asylum seekers and refugees. Access to such courses should be based on need and vulnerability, rather than a first come first served system. The introduction of a quota system would allocate places for displaced migrants that is responsive to demand in specific locations, and address the informal social and structural barriers that prevent displaced migrants from accessing FE ESOL. |
| 2. | Introduce place-sensitive, gender sensitive quotas for Further Education ESOL places for displaced migrants | Displaced migrant women may experience additional barriers to accessing ESOL courses than displaced migrant men. Self-registration systems for FE ESOL places confer advantage on people who have (a) higher levels of literacy (b) access to registration resources (c) time and opportunity to register. There is a higher likelihood that displaced migrant women may have higher levels of illiteracy than displaced migrant men, and may therefore be unable to self-register. Displaced migrant women may also be primary caregivers and may therefore not have time, opportunity or resources to self-register for ESOL courses through other means (i.e. through a library). Reserving FE ESOL places specifically for displaced migrant women would recognise and offset these systemic disadvantages. |

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| <p>3.</p> | <p>Clarify SFC guidance relating to accreditation and progression for ESOL learners</p> | <p>Recent revisions to SFC ESOL funding have tied ESOL resourcing for providers to the provision of evidence of progression. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, a learner completing accredited courses. Emphasis on accredited learning may disproportionately impact displaced migrants because they (a) may face barriers to access and (b) may not find it suitable for their specific learning needs. GLIMER participants expressed concern that undue emphasis on accreditation may mean (1) resources are not allocated to other forms of learning and (2) consequently adversely impact provision regularly accessed by displaced migrants.</p> <p>The SFC should seek to issue guidance to stakeholders clarifying its requirements for resourcing, and what it understands as evidence of progression in non-accredited settings.</p> |
| <p>4.</p> | <p>Consider the merits of a National 1/Level 1 descriptor in order to formally track the progression of literacy level ESOL learners OR consider how learner progression through existing National 2/Level 2 literacy level descriptors can be more formally recognised</p> | <p>Under the current SQA framework, ESOL levels and credits begin at Level 2 / National 2. These designations encompass ESOL abilities ranging from 'literacy' to 'starter'. However, ESOL providers reported that for literacy learners that within this level, it is difficult to show progression, because literacy level learners may take more time to progress, may show different forms of progression, may not get beyond National 2, or may take much longer to do so.</p> <p>Though National 2/Level 2 include three 'pre-entry' literacy level descriptors, stakeholders expressed concern that the first point at which learners received formal SQA accreditation was the point at which they progressed from National 2/Level 2. Stakeholders were concerned that if they were unable to formally show progression amongst literacy level learners, their provision would not be recognised or resourced. Stakeholders reported that a high proportion of literacy level learners are displaced migrants, and that issues related to literacy ESOL would disproportionately impact asylum seekers and refugees.</p> |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Increase oversight of how colleges distribute SFC resources to other ESOL providers</p> | <p>Recent revisions to the SFC ESOL funding infrastructure have placed responsibility for the distribution of funds on colleges. However, at the time of research, there was no</p> |

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| | | <p>infrastructure in place to provide oversight of college decisions. Stakeholders expressed concern (a) that college resourcing decisions may not include the more informal types of ESOL provision regularly access by displaced migrants and (b) that the absence of oversight infrastructure may allow this to go unchallenged.</p> |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Resource, or incentivise colleges to resource, CLD ESOL appropriate for refugees in remote and rural Resettlement areas</p> | <p>Community Learning and Development (CLD) ESOL provides alternative ESOL courses to FE provision. It can provide different types of learning environments, result in accredited or non-accredited provision, and take place in a range of venues. As a result, it can be responsive to the needs of specific populations, such as displaced migrants. In some remote and rural areas in which refugees have recently been resettled under the VPRS, college ESOL can be inaccessible due to the distance of colleges from where refugees live, and issues with public transport infrastructure. CLD ESOL is thus additionally important because it can take place in locations accessible to refugees. Under recent revisions to SFC ESOL funding, colleges are responsible for, but not obliged to allocate resources to other providers, including CLD providers. However, at the time of research, CLD provision in remote and rural Resettlement areas was funded by resources provided by the VPRS, resources that are time-limited and tapered. As CLD providers are central to the provision of ESOL to refugees in remote and rural areas, providers and policymakers should develop a precedent for college-led CLD ESOL funding in VPRS areas.</p> |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>Resource or incentivise CLD partnerships to work with at least one organisation with expertise in displaced migration. Provide resourcing or incentives for the development of organisations with refugee expertise in remote and rural Resettlement areas.</p> | <p>CLD provides ESOL to all types of ESOL learners, including asylum seekers and refugees. However, some CLD providers interviewed by GLIMER felt either (a) that they did not have expertise on the specific barriers faced by displaced migrants to ESOL provision or (b) that they were unable to access organisations with refugee expertise for advice. Resourcing to encourage CLD practitioners to (a) develop expertise on displaced migration and ESOL and (b) develop links with organisations with existing expertise would (1) provide support for CLD providers who may be unfamiliar with displaced migration issues and (2) improve access to and experiences of CLD ESOL classes for displaced migrants.</p> |

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| <p>8.</p> | <p>Introduce support for ESOL policymakers in Scottish Government to actively seek feedback from 'hard to reach' groups, and organisations working with displaced migrants.</p> | <p>Discussions with participants involved in ESOL policymaking highlighted existing practices through which ESOL policy is made in collaboration with external stakeholders. However, discussion also highlighted difficulties faced by stakeholders in accessing 'hard to reach' groups, including asylum seekers and refugees, in this kind of work. The absence of already vulnerable groups in policy-making procedures is likely to perpetuate a cycle of under-representation, and result in specific barriers and issues related to displaced migration ESOL provision remaining unaddressed. Resourcing to support policymakers identify and collaborate with groups which are under-represented in current processes may begin to address this.</p> |
| <p>9.</p> | <p>Rework the existing guidance in the current ESOL Strategy to actively recognise how the distinctive environment of displaced migration may impact ESOL access and provision. Actively connect to <i>New Scots</i> policy and policymakers to do this.</p> | <p>The Scottish Government's current ESOL Strategy acknowledges the needs of asylum seekers and refugees by asking practitioners to refer to the <i>New Scots</i> Strategy. Whilst the acknowledgement of the distinctive needs and barriers of displaced migrants related to ESOL is welcome, GLIMER research highlights the need to include more active and formalised guidance for addressing these in future policy.</p> |
| <p>10.</p> | <p>Undertake a comprehensive mapping exercise of ESOL providers and funders in Scotland</p> | <p>Though the development of an ESOL Strategy in Scotland has provided policy coherence in ESOL delivery, there is an absence of analysis about the ESOL landscape as a whole. For adult displaced migration alone, GLIMER research identifies four types of ESOL provision, resourced by at least four types of funders, two of which are external to the Scottish Government and can vary radically geographically (specifically between rural and urban settings). In practice, ESOL provision is often resourced by several funders. At the time of research, there is little information on how these factors interact and shape the ESOL landscape in Scotland. Further auditing and mapping is required in order to understand issues such as the resourcing, capacity and sustainability of existing ESOL provision.</p> |

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I. Introduction

I.1 The Research: language education governance for displaced migrants

Under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, people who have migrated to countries which are dominant in language(s) other than their own have two fundamental rights: (1) to continue speaking and maintaining the language with which they grew up and (2) to acquire the language of the new country. The fourth workpackage (WP4) of the GLIMER Project is primarily concerned with the second of these rights - the process through which a migrant speaker of other languages might acquire a country's dominant language - the systems which European states have developed to support this, and their governance. It is specifically interested in the extent to which existing systems account for the language education of asylum seekers and refugees.

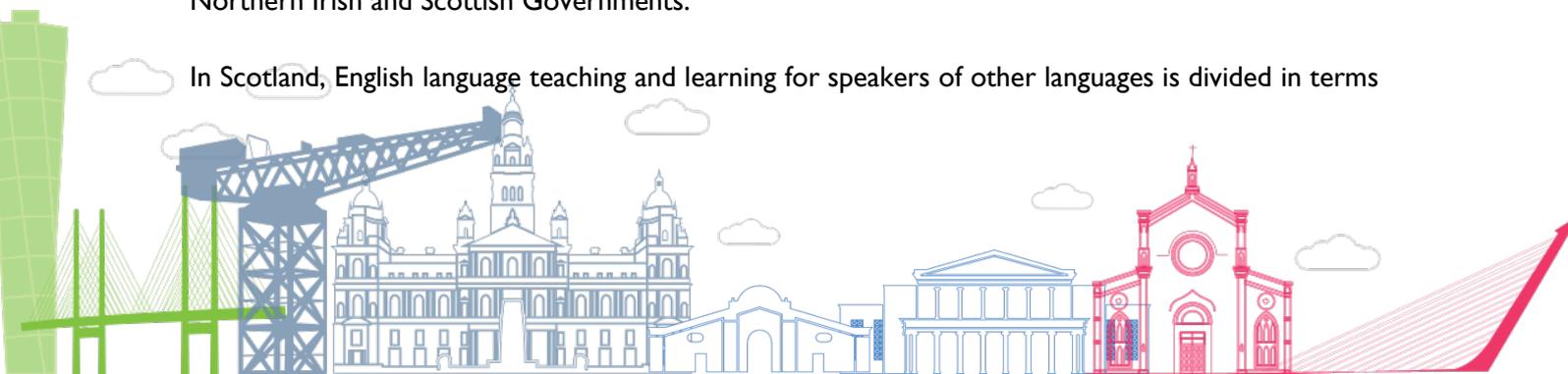
Though the acquisition of the dominant language(s) of a country to which a person has immigrated is enshrined in human rights legislation, it is also a highly politicised topic for European states. As Simpson observes: 'certain sections of the media and some politicians present this right as an obligation and even imply the reluctance of some migrants to learn the language at all' (Simpson 2016: 177). Whilst on the one hand, states have acknowledged that language acquisition is an integral part of migrants navigating public life, gaining employment, accessing education and establishing social connections, the extent to which this drives language policy is inconsistent. Language acquisition has instead been co-opted into a broadly conservative policy area in which it has been used to (a) measure integration (b) regulate claims to citizenship and (c) be of utility to the state.

The governance of migrant language acquisition reflects this. Viewed on the one hand as a technology of the border and subsequently a concern for central government, and on the other as an issue of community development, the governance of language provision therefore fluctuates between the local and the central. In the UK, the devolution of government provides significant levels of variation in (a) language provision for displaced migrants and (b) governance approaches. This report focuses specifically on the Scottish case.

I.2 English for speakers of other languages in Scotland: language provision in flux

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is the term commonly used to refer to the provision of English language education for 'adults who are migrants to English dominant countries' (Simpson 2016: 177). In the UK, ESOL provision has roots in government and community responses to the post-war migration of people from Commonwealth countries, which sought to provide English language support for newly-arrived populations. ESOL delivery has since developed from something that was primarily delivered within community settings to an emphasis on provision in educational settings (see Section 2.1). In terms of policy area, it continues to oscillate between immigration and education but is currently understood to fall under the education brief, a status which sees responsibility for policy and delivery devolved from the Westminster government to the Welsh, Northern Irish and Scottish Governments.

In Scotland, English language teaching and learning for speakers of other languages is divided in terms



of pre- and post-16 education. English as an Additional Language (EAL) is a programme of teaching delivered within primary and secondary settings to pre-16 speakers of other languages, of any immigration status (Anderson et al. 2016). EAL support focuses primarily on English language acquisition, and may include classroom assistance and specialised English language classes for students. It falls under the Scottish Government’s education brief, but resourcing and delivery design is highly localised and is the responsibility of local authorities. As it is delivered in schools, EAL is available to any speakers of other languages in school and of school-age.

ESOL in Scotland is a programme of English language education available to post-16 learners (Scottish Government 2015b). As GLIMER Research is primarily concerned with the governance of language education for displaced migrant adults, this report focuses on the governance of ESOL rather than EAL.

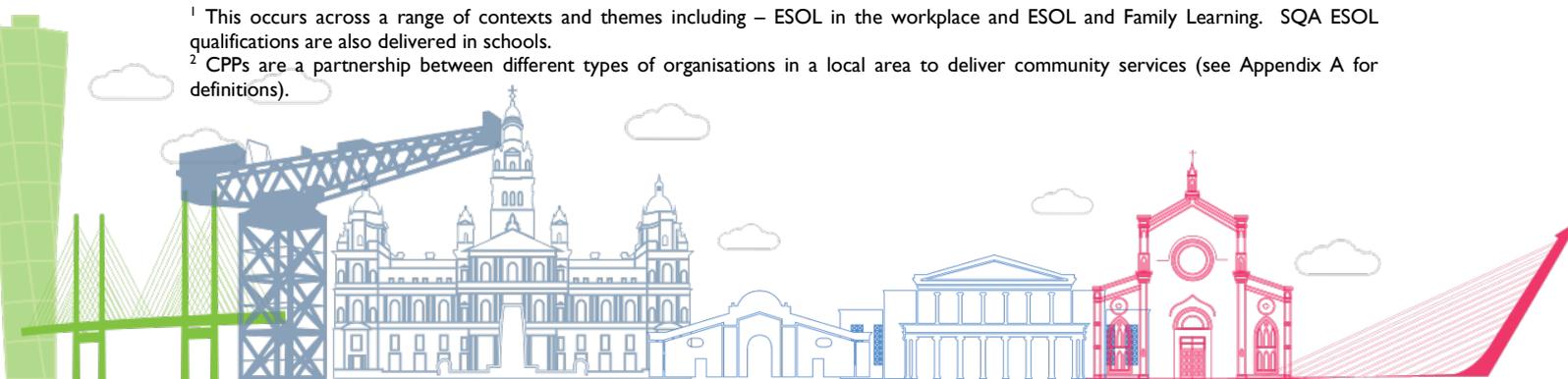
The scope of ESOL provision in Scotland is considerable. It encompasses English language abilities from literacy stage to advanced proficiencies and is delivered both in community and college settings and offers both accredited and non-accredited modes of learning.¹ ESOL learning is undertaken by a huge range of providers – from colleges, to volunteers, to local authority provision, to third sector classes – and attended by diverse learning populations – from EU citizens, to international economic migrants, to refugees and asylum seekers. Since 2007, provision has been overseen by the Scottish Government’s ESOL Strategies (Scottish Government 2007, 2015b), which sought to coordinate delivery and governance. Nonetheless, ESOL infrastructure remains complex, encompassing Further Education stakeholders, localised Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), local authority-led community development initiatives, third sector initiatives and grassroots community activities (see Section 2.2 for details).² Furthermore, in the last year, the infrastructure set out in the renewed 2015 ‘Welcoming Our Learners’ ESOL Strategy has been subject to changes which have (1) altered the funding pathways of Scottish Funding Council resources and (2) increased emphases on accredited ESOL provision. As we discuss below, these changes have implications for ESOL stakeholders and learners across Scotland, with potential to especially adversely impact asylum seekers and refugees. At the time of research, the changes to the ESOL policy infrastructure were subject to discussion and change. The report therefore aims not to provide analysis of a definitive ESOL infrastructure but to reflect on the conditions and their implications in which the research took place.

The first concern of this report is therefore to analyse and critique current ESOL governance infrastructures in Scotland. Despite the presence of an ESOL Strategy for the last decade, and a healthy body of guidance and scholarship on ESOL delivery in Scotland, the governance of ESOL in Scotland is understudied (Brown 2018). This is perhaps in part because the presence of the strategy itself is viewed favourably in contrast to the English context, which has been without an ESOL strategy since 2007 (APPGR 2017; NATECLA 2016, Refugee Action 2016). In the Scottish context therefore, we ask the following:

- How might the governance of ESOL provision in Scotland be characterised? What

¹ This occurs across a range of contexts and themes including – ESOL in the workplace and ESOL and Family Learning. SQA ESOL qualifications are also delivered in schools.

² CPPs are a partnership between different types of organisations in a local area to deliver community services (see Appendix A for definitions).



works? What does not?

- To what extent is ESOL provision shaped by devolved government? By college input? By local government? By community providers?
- What are the impacts of the existing ESOL governance infrastructure for (1) stakeholders and (2) learners?

The second concern of this report is specifically with the governance of ESOL provision for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. Within a UK context, the Scottish approach to ESOL provision for displaced migrants is once again distinct from England (see Section 2 for details). In keeping with its 'integration begins from day one' (Scottish Government 2018) policy, the Scottish Government has sought to provide access to ESOL education for all asylum seekers and refugees in need of it. This has meant that ESOL provision policy in Scotland does not distinguish between the immigration statuses of its learners. Research elsewhere indicates that asylum seekers and refugees experience distinctive barriers to ESOL education (Refugee Action 2016, Shuttleworth 2018), a distinction also confirmed to us in conversation with stakeholders involved in ESOL delivery. In this context, we examine the impact of Scottish policy not to distinguish between immigration statuses upon asylum seekers' and refugees' experiences of ESOL provision.

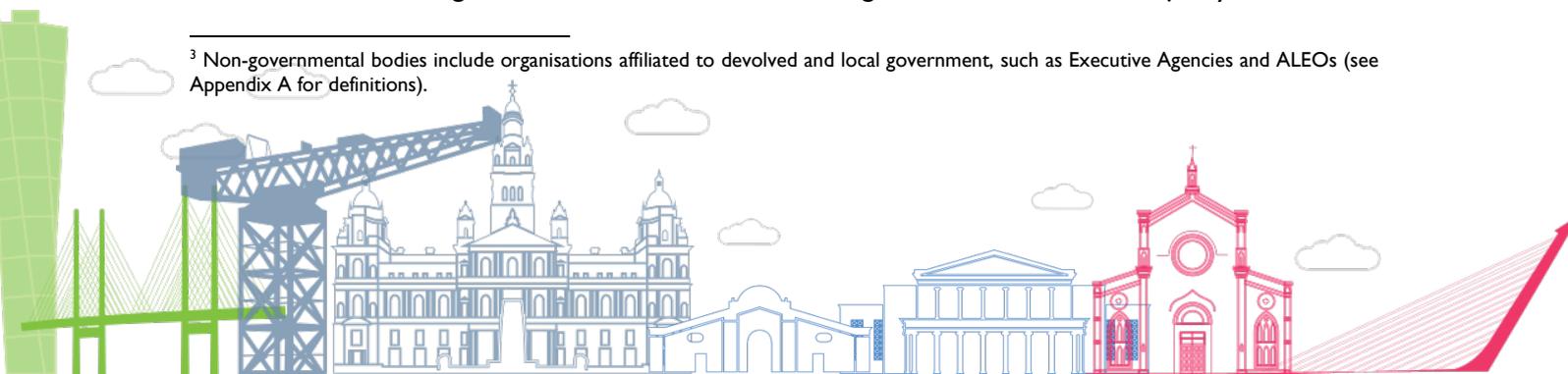
1.3 Data collection and methods

This report is based on qualitative research carried out between October 2018 and April 2019. We conducted interviews with 18 individuals who were either involved in providing ESOL education for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland, policymakers or former practitioners. It also drew on 29 in-depth interviews with stakeholders in Scotland, conducted for GLIMER WP3.

| Participant type | Location | Number of participants |
|--|-----------------|------------------------|
| <i>Devolved Government</i> | Edinburgh | 2 |
| | Glasgow | 1 |
| <i>Local Government</i> | Glasgow | 2 |
| | Aberdeenshire | 1 |
| | Argyll and Bute | 1 |
| <i>Non-governmental bodies³</i> | Glasgow | 3 |
| <i>Education sector</i> | Greater Glasgow | 4 |
| <i>Third sector organisations</i> | Glasgow | 4 |

Participants were recruited through connections made at ESOL events, and through snowballing methods. The research took care to talk to participants across the spectrum of ESOL governance in Scotland, and included representatives from devolved and local government, non-governmental bodies, Further and Higher education, and third sector organisations. Whilst the majority of fieldwork

³ Non-governmental bodies include organisations affiliated to devolved and local government, such as Executive Agencies and ALEOs (see Appendix A for definitions).



took place in the urban site of Glasgow, two rural sites – Argyll and Bute and Aberdeenshire – were also included within the research. This allowed for a comparison between urban and rural ESOL provision, as well as consideration of Resettlement ESOL dynamics in sites across Scotland. Informed consent was gained for all fieldwork undertaken.

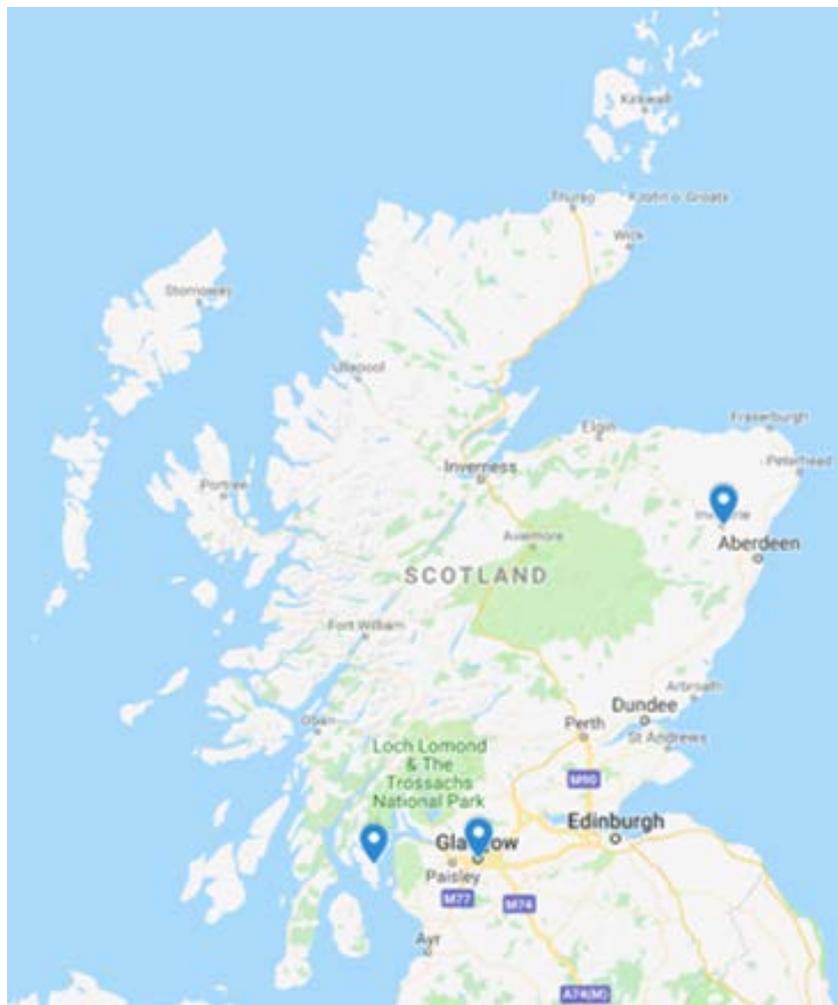


Figure 1: WP4 Scotland fieldwork sites



2. English Language Provision in Scotland: Policy and Governance Context

2.1 ESOL in Scotland: the UK context

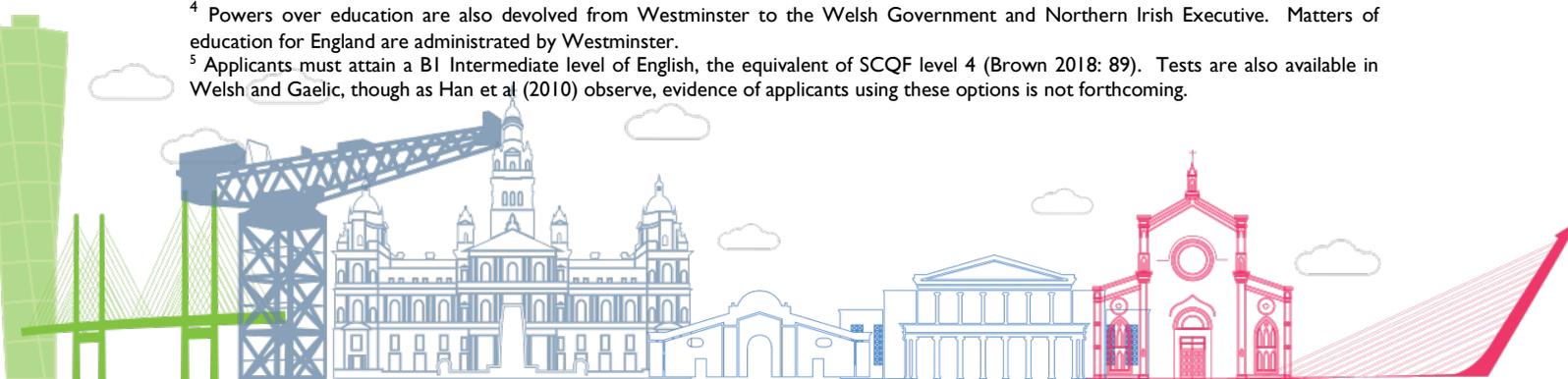
In the UK, the provision of English language education to speakers of other languages falls under the education brief. For ESOL in Scotland, following the Scotland Act 1998, this means that matters relating to governance, delivery and policy are devolved from Westminster to the Scottish Government and are distinct from similar national provisions in the UK.⁴ However, though it is distinctive, ESOL in Scotland (and other UK nations) is not entirely divorced from policy contexts over which the UK Government has reserved power.

The provenance of ESOL in the UK means that English language education for speakers of other languages is tied to migration. The policy and politics of English language provision has therefore historically been associated with the areas both of immigration and education. The first formalised government recognition of English language education followed the Immigration and Asylum Act 1961, which provided resources for newly-arrived citizens of the Commonwealth, including language support, to settle in the UK (Hamilton and Hillier 2009: 2). ‘Section 11’ support was used on an ad hoc basis by community and voluntary groups to set up English classes for newly-arrived populations; however, as funding for Section 11 dwindled over the following decades, Adult Literacy advocates campaigned for ESOL to be recognised and supported under the Education brief. In 1992, the Further and Higher Education Act recognised ESOL as a vocational course that was eligible for government education funding (ibid). Since this period, government funding for ESOL was increasingly provided through a Further Education framework, through local college provision, a pattern also broadly repeated in the Scottish context (Rice et al. 2004: 1).

In policy terms, the transition of ESOL provision from an immigration to an education brief provided an opportunity to provide ESOL teacher training, increase capacity and develop opportunity for educational accreditation for speakers of other languages. However, by the early 2000s, the policy focus had shifted back onto the relationship between English language education, immigration and integration. Concerns in the (then) New Labour government that ‘multiculturalism’ had led to ‘social fragmentation’ (Brown 2018: 88) crystallised in policy that pinpointed poor communication between ethnic groups as the cause of social disintegration (Han, Starkey, and Green 2010: 64). The Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 subsequently introduced an English language testing element to the British Citizenship test (ibid), explicitly linking a migrant’s English language ability to immigration controls.⁵ In policy, English language ability became more overtly linked to ethnic minorities’ (perceived) integration, so that it was seen not only as an enabler of integration, but as a ‘marker’ of integration (Ager and Strang 2008; Phillimore 2011: 31). By the 2010s, the association had become Conservative policy norm, with (then) Prime Minister David Cameron commenting, ‘if you’re not able to speak English then you’re not able to integrate’. It had also become embedded in the Conservative government’s securitisation policies, which saw a lack of English language ability amongst minority – and particularly Muslim – populations not only as a ‘failure’ to integrate, but as a potential security threat linked to

⁴ Powers over education are also devolved from Westminster to the Welsh Government and Northern Irish Executive. Matters of education for England are administrated by Westminster.

⁵ Applicants must attain a B1 Intermediate level of English, the equivalent of SCQF level 4 (Brown 2018: 89). Tests are also available in Welsh and Gaelic, though as Han et al (2010) observe, evidence of applicants using these options is not forthcoming.



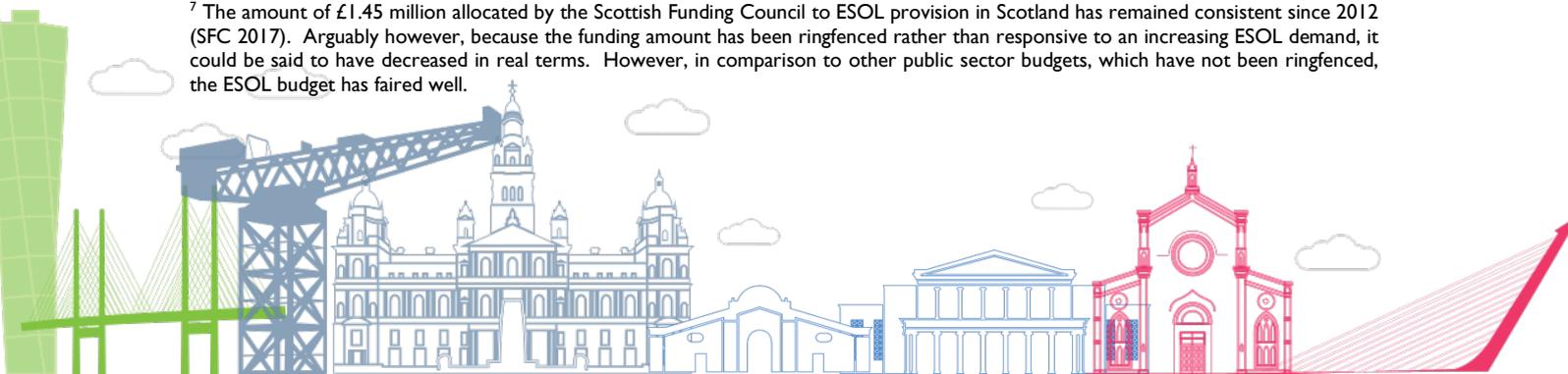
radicalisation and terrorism (Brown 2018: 52; Refugee Action 2016). In 2016, Conservative government policy explicitly linked ESOL and securitisation policy by announcing a £20 million fund for Muslim women to learn English in order to combat radicalisation (Mason and Sherwood 2016).

Though the delivery, governance and policy of ESOL provision is devolved to the Scottish Government, ESOL learners therefore remain subject to the UK Government's reserved powers over immigration, security and the border, whilst ESOL itself can be mobilised as a border-keeper, or a proxy for securitised policies for the reserved UK state. The UK Government is also still able to intervene in ESOL delivery in Scotland by providing resourcing through other reserved pathways. This is the case with the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme – run by the Home Office and, therefore, a reserved matter – for which the UK Government has provided local authorities across the UK (including in Scotland) with additional funds for ESOL delivery, to be allocated at the councils' discretion (Home Office 2017). It is also arguably the case with the 2015 UK Government policy change, which no longer accepts Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) ESOL accreditation as a valid indicator of English language ability (Brown 2018: 89).

Within the confines of devolved policy areas, however, national language environments are markedly distinct. Whilst the policy context for ESOL delivery in England might be described as 'assimilationist' (Han, Starkey, and Green 2010) and monolingual, Scottish approaches to integration place emphasis on a multilingual environment⁶ and a 'multilateral' approach to language learning (Phipps 2018). In keeping with its 'from day one' approach to integration (Scottish Government 2018), the Scottish Government has waived ESOL fees from the Scottish Funding Council for both asylum seekers and refugees. This means that an asylum seeker, refugee or EU migrant have parity of access to provision. This is in marked contrast to the context in England, for which the UK Government (1) prevents asylum seekers from accessing ESOL education until they have resided in the UK for six months and subsequently requires them pay half of their ESOL fees (Doyle and O'Toole 2013: 13), and (2) only waives ESOL fees for refugees on 'active benefits' (Morrice et al 2019). Since 2007, ESOL provision in Scotland has been supported by successive Scottish Government ESOL Strategies, which have provided a framework against which ESOL delivery can (to an extent) be resourced and monitored (discussed further below). This again is in marked contrast to the English environment, which has been characterised by the absence of an ESOL Strategy since 2007 – a situation critiqued by both UK Parliamentary enquiries (APPGR 2017) and the third sector in England (NATECLA 2016). The absence of an ESOL Strategy in England is perhaps also reflected in the unfavourable comparison to the Scottish context in terms of resourcing: where the funding budget for ESOL in England has decreased since 2008 (Morrice et al 2019), the funding amount for ESOL in Scotland has remained consistent since 2012.⁷

⁶ Scotland is a multilingual country, recognising English, Scots and Gaelic and British Sign Language as national languages (Scottish Government 2005, 2015a).

⁷ The amount of £1.45 million allocated by the Scottish Funding Council to ESOL provision in Scotland has remained consistent since 2012 (SFC 2017). Arguably however, because the funding amount has been ringfenced rather than responsive to an increasing ESOL demand, it could be said to have decreased in real terms. However, in comparison to other public sector budgets, which have not been ringfenced, the ESOL budget has fared well.



2.2 Language learning and ESOL in Scotland

Mirroring the historical policy context in England, ESOL provision in Scotland has developed from a solely community-based and voluntary enterprise in the 1960s and 70s to the addition of more formalised provision through Further Education institutions from the 1990s onwards (Rice et al. 2004). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the implementation of the Dispersal Scheme brought a sustained asylum seeking population to Glasgow (Meer, Peace and Hill 2018), and the accession of the A8 members to the EU in 2004 caused further change. In Glasgow – the sole site of Dispersal in Scotland – demand for ESOL grew considerably, resulting in both third and public sector responses. Existing college and community ESOL providers increased their capacity, and new community and third sector ESOL providers appeared in the city. Glasgow City Council also increased its provision of council-run ESOL – a change also mirrored in Edinburgh (Rice et al. 2004). These changes set a precedent for ESOL provision in Scotland today, which might be divided into three strands: (1) ESOL through Further Education courses (2) ESOL through local authority provision (including ‘community’ ESOL courses, and ESOL in post-16 secondary education) and (3) ESOL through ‘community’ settings (including third sector and voluntary courses).

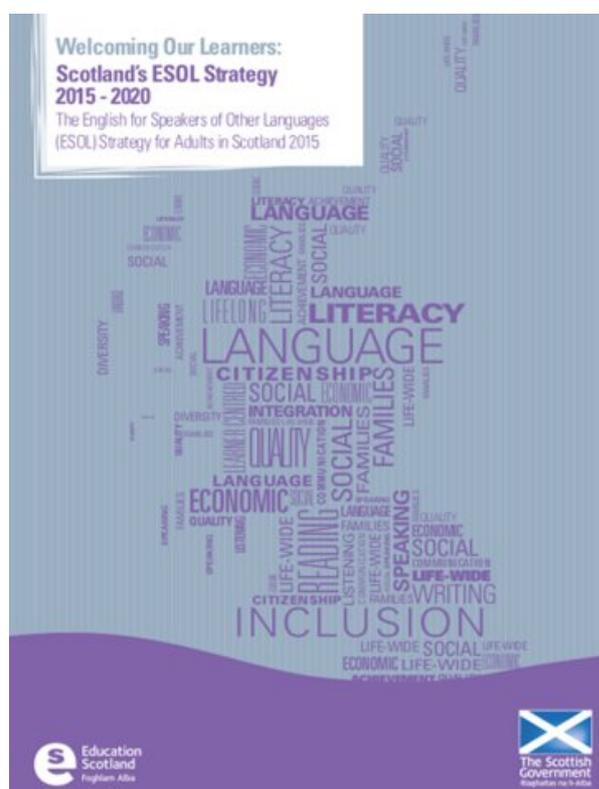
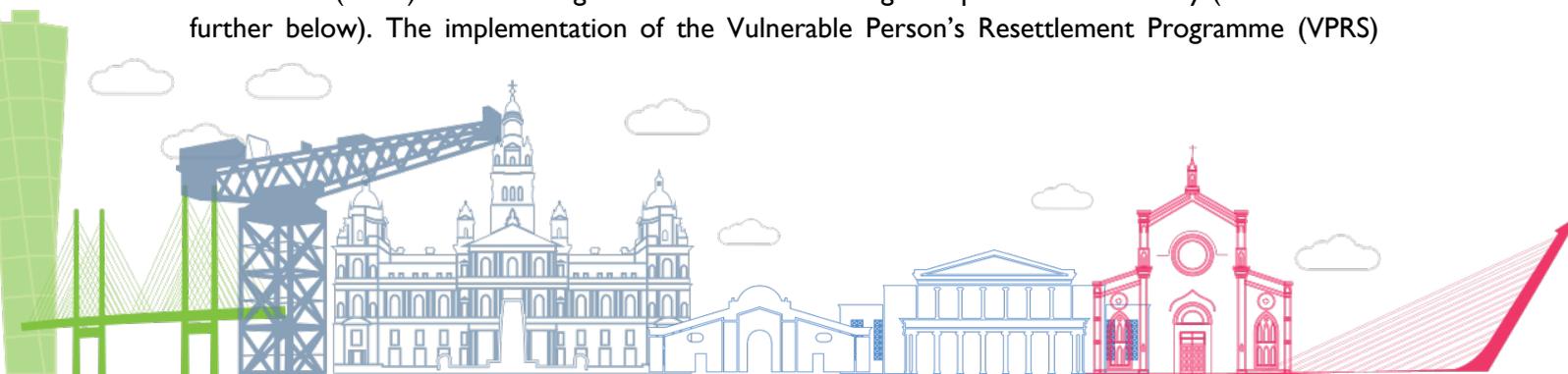


Figure 2: The Scottish Government's (2015) ESOL Strategy

In Glasgow, the changing population and increasing demand for ESOL classes has resulted in a multiplicity of ESOL classes and providers. In 2004, Rice et al (2004) reported that up to 80% of Further Education ESOL students were asylum seekers. The situation has changed dramatically since this time with the arrival of many more EU migrants, particularly those from Central and Eastern Europe. It is now the case that in Scotland's colleges 'the majority of ESOL learners are white and of a European background' (Education Scotland 2014: 18). Provision ranged from College classes, delivered by three city colleges across various campus locations, third sector organisation, faith group and community group provision (ibid). As we discuss later in this report, a similar range of ESOL providers is also evident in other locations across Scotland, though Glasgow remains the most prolific provider. Despite this capacity, demand for ESOL in Glasgow has remained high, and local-level issues relating to accessibility and waiting times have been persistent across the city (Education Scotland 2018b). Local-level coordination of

classes between providers has also been problematic, though work by the Workers Educational Association (WEA) and the Glasgow ESOL Forum has sought to provide some clarity (as we discuss further below). The implementation of the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme (VPRS)



means that local authorities in Scotland outside of Glasgow also now provide ESOL for refugees, with different challenges arising according to demographics and location type (see Section 3).

The Scottish Government's ESOL Strategies have sought to provide some guidance over policy, delivery and resourcing for Scotland's diverse ESOL infrastructure. Both the 2007 and the 2015 Strategies have a notably broad scope and forge connections with other policy areas, including the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy, its Adult Education guidance, Community Planning guidance and the New Scots Strategy. The 2015-2020 *Welcoming Our Learners ESOL Strategy* itself (re)states a commitment to:

all Scottish residents, for whom English is not a first language [to] have the opportunity to access high quality English language provision so that they can acquire the language skills to participate in Scottish life: in the workplace, through further study, within the family, the local community, Scottish society and the economy. These language skills are central to giving people a democratic voice and supporting them to contribute to the society in which they live

(Scottish Government 2015b: 16)

The infrastructure through which both the 2007 and 2015 Strategies have imagined these outcomes is one that is embedded in community planning at regional and local level. The precedent set in both Strategies is for ESOL delivery in local areas to be coordinated through Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). In this model, different types of ESOL providers, including colleges, local authority ESOL and 'community' ESOL formed a partnership, which received resourcing from the Scottish Funding Council, and distributed funds amongst the partners (Scottish Government 2015b). Local government also received funding through local authority block grants for Community Learning and Development (CLD), through which they were expected to form partnerships with local voluntary groups and businesses (CPPs), which were involved in providing community development activities, including ESOL classes. Through CPPs and CLD providers, the 2015 ESOL Strategy model created an infrastructure in which Scottish Government provided guidance (through Education Scotland) and resourcing (through the Scottish Funding Council) for ESOL provision but left the allocation of resources, delivery and coordination to local-level stakeholders. Brown (2018: 98-101) suggests that the Strategy treads a fine governance line: on the one hand, it emphasises a participatory form of governance which involves and 'implicates' stakeholders in ESOL policy; on the other hand, by emphasising the role of stakeholders, it 'de-identifies the government as the agent of action' a trait which might be associated with neoliberal rather than participatory forms of governance.



| | SCQF Level | Scotland SQA ESOL Credit Units | England, Wales and Northern Ireland | Common European Framework of Reference for Languages | IELTS Bands |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------|
| Literacy | | | Pre-Entry | | |
| Starter | Level 2 | National 2 (Access 2) | Pre-Entry | A0 | |
| Beginner | | | Entry 1 | A1 | 3 |
| Elementary | | | | | |
| Pre-Intermediate | Level 3 | National 3 (Access 3) | Entry 2 | A2 | 4 |
| Intermediate | Level 4 | National 4 (Intermediate 1) | Entry 3 Level 1 | B1 | 4-5 |
| Upper Intermediate | Level 5 | National 5 (Intermediate 2) | Level 2 | B2 | 5-6 |
| Advanced | Level 6 | National 6 Higher | Level 3 | C1 | 6-7 |
| Proficient | Level 7 | | | C2 | 7-9 |

Table 1: ESOL Level equivalences

Adapted from Glasgow ESOL Forum (2018a).

There is no formal mapping of Scottish ESOL equivalences, and this table should be taken only as guidance

2.3 Post-2018 Environment

The structure imagined in the 2015 ESOL Strategy remained in place until August 2018, when the Scottish Government announced changes to the funding infrastructure. Following a Ministerial Request and scoping exercises, it was decided that the CPP funding route was problematic because it (a) relied upon time-limited funding and (b) provided the funders (the SFC) with ‘no legislative or governance authority’ (SFC 2017). A GLIMER stakeholder explained,

[The funding] was part of the strategic funds, so it would come from Scottish Government to the Funding Council and be part of strategic funds that would be confirmed every year, and that fund would go out to CPPs via a college. So the college would just kind of channel it through for them. But because, effectively, this funding was coming out of the Funding Council’s budget, the issue was the governance around that piece of funding, there was no accountability behind it. They couldn’t hold CPPs to account because they didn’t have the governance to do that.

(NGB2)

Changes have since been made to the funding route. Rather than going to a CPP, ESOL funds are now channelled directly to colleges, which have responsibility for allocating funds to community partners. The SFC saw this change as an opportunity to (a) provide a sustained funding pathway and (b) formalise a governance infrastructure, with colleges taking the lead:

How I would describe it is that the funding which was previously ring-fenced and was confirmed year-on-year, because of the pot that it was coming out of, that piece of funding has now been folded into – and folded is a terrible word – it’s now part of the core teaching funds that colleges receive from the Funding Council. And those core teaching funds are a constant, it’s not a year-on-year thing, it’s a sustainable pot of funding

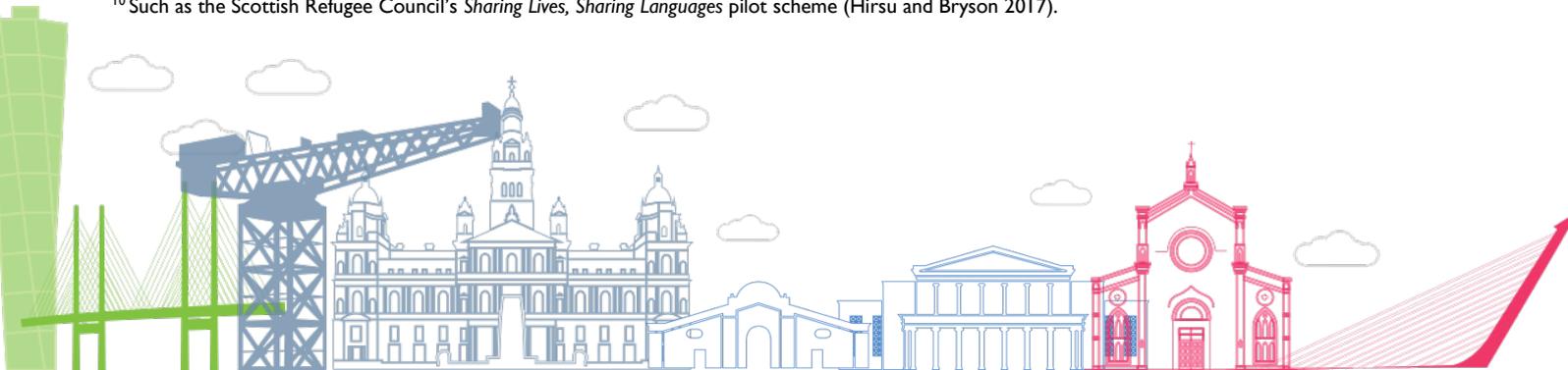
(NGB2)

The changes to the funding pathway also came with other implications. The way in which the new system monitors the allocation of funds is through learners’ progression through the accumulation of credits. The SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) and SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) provide a framework to establish equivalency across different qualifications. It does this by ‘giving each qualification a level and a number of credit points. The level of a qualification shows how difficult the learning is. The credit points show how much learning is involved in achieving that qualification. Each credit point represents an average of 10 hours of learning’.⁸ The SCQF therefore categorises ESOL levels according to (a) levels (representing difficulty) and (b) credits (representing amount of learning involved). ESOL levels start from Level 2 (beginner level), and become credit bearing at Level 2 / National 2) (see *Table 1* above). The outcome of this emphasis has implications for ESOL providers and ESOL delivery. As we describe above, ESOL provision in Scotland is characterised by a mix of accredited and non-accredited ESOL. The former is provided by colleges and some CLD providers,⁹ whilst the latter is provided by some colleges, and community, third sector and CLD providers. Where the former provides a more formalised English language education, the latter provides a range of learning styles, from ESOL courses, to employability classes, language exchange programmes,¹⁰ conversation cafes, and to community-specific requirements. At the time of research, the change in funding structure was newly-implemented and was still subject

⁸ See: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/71387.html>

⁹ Argyll and Bute independently accredit CLD ESOL. Other local authorities in Scotland may also take this approach.

¹⁰ Such as the Scottish Refugee Council’s *Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages* pilot scheme (Hirsu and Bryson 2017).



to amendment. Whilst some stakeholders were ambivalent about the changes, others raised concerns (discussed later in the report).

By placing emphasis on evidence of progression, the new funding structure had the potential to stratify ESOL provision along accredited/non-accredited lines. This subsequently had the potential to especially impact providers delivering ESOL in a non-accredited manner. Guidance from the SFC and Education Scotland stated that within the credit funding model, fundable activity can include courses that don't necessarily lead to a qualification but must show progression (Interview, NGB2). However, at the time of research, stakeholders were unclear whether these providers or styles of provision would be eligible for funding. The changed funding route from CPPs to colleges also raised concerns. CPPs are governed by a board of members, which had a say in ESOL funding allocation. In contrast, colleges are not accountable to community providers and funding allocation is at their discretion. As funding is now linked to accreditation, there was concern that colleges were de-incentivised from drawing down funding for providers of non-accredited ESOL. We discuss the implications of the restrictions for asylum seekers and refugees in Section 3.

3. The ESOL Environment for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Scotland

3.1 The urban-rural divide: Glasgow and the resettlement context

We can observe a notable difference in the ESOL environment and existing ESOL infrastructure when we compare the urban context of Greater Glasgow with the more rural locations that have, since 2015, received resettled refugees. As Scotland's largest city, Glasgow has a much higher number and a wider variety of learners that need to access English language provision, including settled communities. Glasgow City Council is the only local authority in Scotland to participate in Dispersal and stakeholders reported a number of Glasgow-specific issues either related to asylum or the general exceptional demand for ESOL in the city.

Glasgow has developed an extensive system of ESOL provision. Using data from ESOL Scotland, MacKinnon (2015) estimated that there were at least 55 locations in Glasgow and the surrounding area providing ESOL with over 160 courses, run by a range of providers. The situation in the more rural local authorities that have accepted resettled refugees from Syria contrasts with the Glasgow precedent. First and foremost, the numbers of people needing to access ESOL is proportionately lower and each council has dedicated resettlement co-ordinators who can keep track of the needs of individual learners. Secondly, as part of the VPRS scheme, councils can draw on specific funding for ESOL of up to £850 per refugee per year for ESOL provision from the Home Office, with a stipulation that the Local Authority provides a minimum of eight hours tuition a week. UK-wide, the Home Office also allocates a separate amount of up to £600,000 per year to support access to ESOL.¹¹ Finally, because the learners themselves are all from the same place and have similar needs (although competency in English may vary) it makes it easier for local authorities to tailor ESOL provision to their specific needs. Resettled refugees in Glasgow are directed to the existing providers in the city.

¹¹ Additional funding for ESOL is for resettled adults aged and 19+ and must be claimed in year 1 even if it is spent in a later financial year. Guidelines suggest it is used to ensure an additional 8 hours of ESOL per week per individual until they reach entry level 3, including up to 25 per cent on nonparticipation costs i.e. infrastructure (Home Office 2018).





Figure 3: 'People Make Glasgow', Glasgow City Centre. Credit: Hill 2019

Despite the wealth of ESOL services in Glasgow, demand still outstrips supply and one key recommendation of MacKinnon's report was for a consistent approach to waiting lists and the setting up of a single ESOL waiting list for Glasgow which would enable more transparency and communication to potential learners about the process for registering for ESOL. In response, Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government launched the ESOL Access Project in March 2016. Students wishing to access ESOL classes in the city must now register their interest through the Glasgow ESOL Register.¹² All applications for college and community classes in Glasgow are taken through this Register with the city being divided into three sectors or learning areas: North West, North East and South. The main purpose of this register is to allow the three FE Colleges to recruit students for their ESOL classes. The two largest providers of accredited ESOL classes are Glasgow Clyde College and City of Glasgow college and these are joined by Glasgow Kelvin College. However, by signing up with the register, an applicant may also be offered classes from other providers. Students wishing to access accredited ESOL classes in Glasgow must therefore sign up using the online application process. As part of this process, they are asked to identify whether they have had an ESOL assessment in the last 6 months, their first language and their preferred learning area. Once a student has registered, they will be invited to a free ESOL assessment session in order to test their English proficiency and

¹² See: <http://www.learnesolglasgow.com/>



receive a test certificate which shows their level of English (known as the 'yellow certificate'). These testing and advice sessions are held at public libraries across the city where Glasgow Life staff are on hand to help. FE Colleges use the Glasgow ESOL Register to recruit students for their ESOL courses although those who initially register may be more likely to be offered a place by a community provider, such as the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), Glasgow Life or the Glasgow ESOL Forum. These three organisations receive money from both the Scottish Funding Council and Glasgow City Council to deliver ESOL in the city.

These community classes often act as a feeder onto the courses at the colleges due to demand which cannot be met. Most who apply through the ESOL register would like to access college-run courses first and there can be some reluctance to accept a place on a community-run class. As a college provider explained:

What we're trying to do, is get away from the tendency of saying, 'I will not go to your community class, because further education's better'...We would much rather you go to your community venue, you prove that you'll study, that you'll turn up on time and so on, and you come with a nice reference, and we reckon that's much better for everybody.

(ED2)

Although the introduction of the ESOL register was designed to streamline and simplify the process of accessing ESOL courses in the city, frustration still arises due to the time spent on the waiting list. A Glasgow City Council representative acknowledged that 'there are massive waiting lists for college places and lots of people saying they can't get into an English course' (Interview LA1). It was reported that asylum seekers and refugees would often re-register on the system in a bid to speed up their application when this merely led to duplication on the waiting list.

Due to the high demand at the three Glasgow colleges and the need to wait on the ESOL register, those seeking to enrol on an ESOL course may decide to apply to a college in the Greater Glasgow area such as West College Scotland which has campuses in Clydebank, Greenock and Paisley. However, demand from other migrant communities means that there is still no guarantee of a place and it becomes imperative to register when enrolment opens. The size of the migrant community in Glasgow means that it is difficult to get a sense of the unmet demand for ESOL. The introduction of the ESOL register was meant to manage the queue of people waiting for classes and although it has made it easier to communicate to people the opportunities available, there is no mechanism to monitor progress and not everyone can be catered for because resources are already stretched.

The waiting list question is a horrendously difficult thing... Now, we have that central waiting list, but I think that is not funded enough...it just doesn't quite seem to work on a holistic level. You know, we can't tap into it. It would be nice if, you know, if within Glasgow somebody centrally knew where all the classes were, so that people could really be directed into those classes near where they live. And then could be followed up where they're going, what they're doing, who's getting what provision. I suppose data protection is difficult but ideally you have a one-stop shop, people come in and immediately they get assessed and they get sent somewhere, be it to college, be it to their local community, and then somebody watches them and knows when they can move out into college. I think it could be a lot more joined up.

(ED5)

As a result of this situation, community provision becomes paramount. The Glasgow ESOL Forum, set up in 1998 by practitioners to identify and promote examples of good practice and to enable discussion and support for those working in the field, is one of the most important providers of community ESOL classes in Glasgow. These classes



rely on volunteer tutors who teach small groups or individuals in a community setting (Glasgow ESOL Forum 2018b).¹³ The Forum also acts as a point of contact for information and advice for potential learners and part of its brief is to attempt to coordinate the various strands of community ESOL in Glasgow and address the gaps in provision. Glasgow Life also offer free ESOL classes to adults in the city for whom English is not their first language. Those who sign up to the ESOL register who need introductory classes are often first invited to attend these courses where participants learn to carry out everyday transactions, improve their conversational English, and learn some basic grammar. Yet due to demand, these sessions are usually only 2 hours per week which is clearly not enough to enable rapid progression. The WEA is the other main provider that receives SFC funding. Added to these 'official' providers of community ESOL which use the ESOL register, there is a large variety of ad-hoc ESOL drop-in classes that are offered by various charities and faith groups. These are often entirely volunteer run initiatives which until recently would have applied for funding either through CLD funding from Glasgow City Council or from ESOL Strategy funding allocated to Community Planning Partnerships. Some community groups may apply for small pots of funding from Glasgow Life but they are now reliant on money redistributed through the colleges in the new system. Many of the Glasgow Integration Networks offer drop-in ESOL classes that cater specifically for asylum seekers and refugees whose level of English is either at literacy or a basic level (Shuttleworth 2018).

Unlike in Glasgow where the demand for ESOL outstrips supply, the two rural local authorities studied for this report – Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute – do not face the demands of comparatively large migrant and displaced migrant populations. The more remote locations do, however, pose other challenges including the isolation of some communities and the lack of a vibrant third sector to provide additional drop-in ESOL classes like those available in Glasgow. Prior to the arrival of Syrians and Iraqis through the resettlement scheme, ESOL provision in Aberdeenshire was principally aimed at Eastern European migrants working in the food processing and farming industries. Ensuring the successful integration of newly resettled refugees has meant that the local authority has needed to refocus its attention on the provision of ESOL. The ESOL landscape as it relates to resettled refugees in Aberdeenshire can be divided into college provision and community classes that are the responsibility of the CLD service of Aberdeenshire Council.

The main provider of college ESOL courses is North East Scotland College (NESCOL) for which students usually must travel to Aberdeen (there are a few part time courses available at outreach centres in Ellon and Inverurie). Although the college also offers part-time courses, there is a preference among the Syrian and Iraqi learners to take the full-time ESOL courses, partly as a result of the travel time and costs incurred. This contrasts with the experience in Glasgow where there is more demand for part-time courses among displaced migrants. ESOL classes in Aberdeenshire are split between those provided by the council and those run by the WEA which is subcontracted to provide literacy level and beginner level classes. ESOL classes are universal and inclusive of all learners - there is no dedicated refugee provision. The classes by the WEA are paid for (in part) through the Home Office ESOL allocation of £850 per adult. These classes are deemed essential as they tend to have the most excluded and least resilient learners in them, but the amount of provision on offer is less than CLD accredited ESOL classes. Within this landscape we can identify four types of English learners. The first concerns a small number of (mainly younger) students who have successfully progressed through the college ESOL courses onto mainstream courses such as business studies. These students are those who arrived in Aberdeenshire with some knowledge of English already.

¹³ Each volunteer tutor is qualified to teach English to adults (CELTA I* or equivalent minimum) and completes an induction training before being matched with adult learners.



The second type of student is also studying ESOL at college but at a lower level and progressing more slowly but striving to attain the National 3 level which is seen as the minimum requirement before any transition can be made to the world of work (Interview, LA2). The third type of student are the CLD learners taking ESOL courses organised by the council. This regroups a significant amount of resettled refugees and is particularly important for those who would be unable to travel to Aberdeen. The fourth type are the 'literacy learners', for which informal, unaccredited classes are run by the WEA. Progression is a struggle for people at this level due to many being illiterate in Arabic or having no experience of education in Syria.

Following a major refocusing and reallocation of staff and funds, CLD in Aberdeenshire are now delivering Nat 2 and Nat 3 ESOL only. This is a significant move away from CLD being the historical social practice deliverers of ESOL but it has evolved to meet the requirements of the new learner funding model. The feedback from the learners' perspective has been mixed. Some feel that the set curriculum does not meet their needs as they are unlikely to progress to college or achieve Nat 2 or 3 levels, and some still lack the practical and functional language they need to get by. Accreditation has now been introduced into the CLD classes but with mixed results:

So now they're delivering Nat 2. The sense from our side, and from the learners' perspective, is that it's not really working because delivering a curriculum isn't necessarily what people who are not able to get to college need. They're not learning in a normal way and there's too many other things going on. Actually, what would be more beneficial would be a class on your CSCS [Construction Skills Certification Scheme] card or the language you need to go shopping or talk to a teacher, survival English. They started off with a bit of that but then there was a concern that it was too subjective and not measurable.

(LA2)

Although the restructuring of ESOL classes and increase in offer has been widely welcomed, there has been some push back from learners against the introduction of accredited only courses with some arguing for classes based on more practical and experiential learning, whether it be employability or family learning for women with young children. It is argued that providing accredited ESOL merely replicates the provision on offer at the college rather than providing for the needs of those who would struggle to access the formal education system. There are also now associated pressures because if learners do not regularly attend classes, funding distributed by the college may be removed. This is particularly problematic for female learners who may struggle to attend if crèche facilities cannot be provided (discussed further below) but discussions are currently underway with the WEA around the development of Family Learning ESOL for women and young children to learn together. When the shift happened, there were concerns that the new accredited system may discourage learners from accessing ESOL courses but there was also an acknowledgement that learner engagement had been a challenge under the previous ESOL delivery framework, where there were no incentives for attendance with little focus on progression. Indeed, trying to ensure all refugees were regularly making use of ESOL provision was cited as an ongoing challenge along with encouraging learners to self-learn at home and complete homework tasks. Stakeholders reported that since accredited ESOL had been introduced there had been more consistent attendance amongst those engaged in their learning but a slight drop off from those less engaged and struggling with personal, family or health issues. Stakeholders also reported that there have been ongoing discussions about facilitating the creation of bottom-up community-led ESOL courses through the community development Al-Amal Project (run by Syrian refugees) and the associated Friends of Amal group which is made up of local welcome groups which currently provide befriending and informal language support to those not participating in ESOL for health or family reasons. Closer links between CLD, Jobcentre and the Resettlement Team now means that language assessments, progression and employability plans are more closely



interlinked. 'Clients are beginning to see a relationship between their language progression and employability status which makes employability support more focused and tailored' (LA3).



Figure 4: Argyll and Bute. Credit: Hill 2018

Argyll and Bute Council delivers a dedicated ESOL programme for resettled Syrian refugees in Rothesay through its education and adult learning services. They are in the unique situation of having all their resettled refugees in one area which simplifies the process of providing accessible language courses. They have invested heavily in the use of funds provided as part of VPRS to front-load ESOL language provision. In the early months of the resettlement scheme, language classes were based on an informal 'community ESOL' approach but at the request of the learners this became a more traditional teaching approach but with a focus on language needed for everyday living. ESOL classes are now organised by themes such as health, shopping and work. Indeed, there is now an increased focus on employability running through all ESOL courses which are complemented by vocational courses run by the council such as one on construction skills. The courses delivered by the local authority are split into beginners, intermediate and advanced levels and are accredited as Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). In common with their rural local authorities like North Lanarkshire, Argyll and Bute Council has decided to largely bypass the use



of college provision. Due to this decision, the introduction of the new funding arrangements has had less of an impact on refugees learning English. For those who want to go beyond the in-house ESOL classes provided by the council, there is still the option of a college-based route although this means travelling off the island and has only been taken up by a handful of individuals. Council officials were proud of the flexibility and ability to offer different ESOL courses relating to different needs for the refugees.

Despite this situation, there remains a key challenge on Bute relating to poor attendance at ESOL classes and learners failing to prioritise the learning of English. The lack of engagement was a concern for those working with the refugees as there is a recognition that they will not always have such a well-funded programme when the money for the VPRS runs out. It was also puzzling as there are also relatively few barriers to attendance. All the Syrian resettled families are based on Rothesay and additional funding has been secured in order to provide childcare for all ESOL classes including a special class for new mothers. Despite this, a stakeholder commented,

Attendance isn't great. It's really hard to get our Syrian adults to prioritise attending ESOL. We deliver over the Home Office minimum which is eight hours per week...what we're tending to find is that people do not prioritise the learning of English above other things...which is somewhat frustrating.

(LA3)

Stakeholders suggested that this could be a result of several factors. Firstly that many of the refugees who came to Bute were low-skilled and perhaps had little previous background of formal education. Another suggestion was that there were not enough incentives to learn as there is no formal requirement to achieve a certain standard of English in order to get leave to remain. Those involved with language provision are unsure what this will look like on Bute once the VPRS funding has been exhausted. The current level of provision is not sustainable in the long term but it is hoped that the increased focus on employability will make attending ESOL classes more attractive and that as people move into work, it will provide the incentive for others to commit to language learning. Yet the frustrations of council staff are shared by many others working across Scotland and the example of Bute shows that sometimes even providing a comprehensive and accessible service is not enough in order for ESOL to be a success. Further research is arguably needed here, especially relating to the difficulties that local authorities reported in maintaining learner progression.

3.2 Employability

All college ESOL courses in Scotland are encouraged to have employability built into their structure which is part of the wider trend in Further Education of making students ready for the world of work as part of the initiatives stemming from the recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (Scottish Government 2014). This policy document has shaped the focus on offering more full-time programmes, and on tailoring courses across the FE sector to give people skills that are required by industry. This means that developing employability has to be at the heart of all college courses, including ESOL courses, and meeting the needs of employers is a key stipulation of the Regional Outcome Agreements between colleges and the Scottish Funding Council.¹⁴

¹⁴ See <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/outcome-agreements/outcome-agreements.aspx>



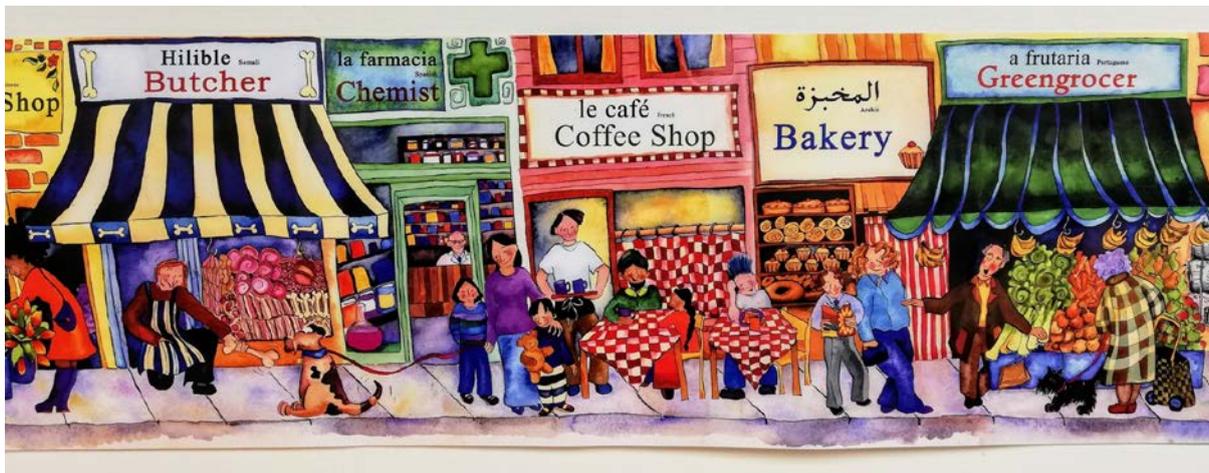


Figure 5: ESOL teaching aid in Glasgow. Credit: Hill 2018

These agreements set out the processes and mechanisms that colleges must establish to monitor performance and progress in achieving their goals and objectives and are supposed to reflect their commitment to responding to the educational and skills needs within a specific region. The practitioners engaged in delivering ESOL classes in FE colleges that we spoke to were keen to stress how employability was at the heart of their teaching and how they had moved away from ‘textbook learning’ to ‘contextualised learning’. Lessons are focused on developing language skills and employability skills at the same time. At a lower level this may involve some basic ICT skills and developing a CV. Working towards the intermediate level, students are taught about the world of work which may include doing an investigation on a local employer. As they progress up the levels, they may be asked to do more group and project based work, event organisation and even a mock job interview. Once they have passed the upper intermediate level, students may be encouraged to transition to non-ESOL courses at the college which are designed as entry routes to specific careers:

An ESOL course can't give someone a job, but developing their language skills will mean that they can have better career prospects. So, we really focus on employability skills whereas other courses are focusing on getting them work placements and getting them into the workplace. We're kind of trying to get them ready for that when they move into a mainstream course, but employability is a big part of our courses and it's very good for them.

(ED4)

Some colleges have developed what they call ‘ESOL Plus’ courses which are designed to offer routes into specific sectors of the labour market. One college, for example, offers ‘ESOL Plus Care’ and ‘ESOL Plus Travel and Tourism’. Colleges are also encouraged to work with organisations such as the Bridges Programme or the Scottish Refugee Council in order to facilitate access to work. Some, however, did feel uncomfortable about the overriding focus on employability as an instrumental outcome of college ESOL classes when language learning cannot be reduced to this activity alone:

We found we were being asked a lot of questions that we didn't think were relevant to our ethos or to what we felt was most beneficial to our students. Obviously, a big focus on employability is useful. People need to get jobs and things. But it took the focus away from a lot of the other things that we felt our students really genuinely needed to do more with just effective integration. I personally got a sense that this kind of focus



on giving people the skills to do the jobs that are needed by the economy was actually quite disempowering for learners. I felt that it basically put them in a position where it was like ‘right, these are the jobs, we’re going to give you the skills to do these jobs that we want you to do’. There was very little voice given to the students to express what *they* actually wanted to do, what contribution *they* felt they could make.

(ED4)

ESOL courses that have been organised for resettled refugees across Scotland have also focused heavily on employability, even if the vast majority of the learners are at a beginner level and a long way off from being able to enter the labour market. Local authorities have made efforts to get people onto college courses and even arrange work experience placements, often in conjunction with the employability service of the council. In both Aberdeenshire and Bute, particular efforts have been made to tailor ESOL courses to employability skills and the needs of the local labour market including working with employers who have shown an interest in employing refugees. On Bute, language training was combined with a specific construction skills course. In Aberdeenshire, they took advantage of the Employment Support Programme offered by Starbucks to offer job placements for those refugees who have achieved a pre-intermediate level of English.¹⁵ The council has also worked with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to set up a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) that would incentivise private enterprises (or even a third sector organisation) to bid for a contract to set up specialised ESOL classes that would lead to employment.¹⁶ This approach has also been adopted in other areas of Scotland. Resettled refugees are in a fortunate position because they are ‘carefully case managed with a lot people advocating for them’ (Interview NGO1) both in terms of the ESOL provision they receive but also the additional help to enter the labour market.

Even community providers are increasingly offering vocationally specific English language courses that focus on employability and including this into the teaching programming is usually a stipulation that comes with CLD funding. One of the most notable initiatives at community level is the ‘ESOL for Work Project’ run by the Glasgow ESOL Forum since 2006 and funded by the Scottish Government Equalities Fund. This involves providing accredited and non-accredited ESOL courses for jobseekers and employees who do not speak English as their first language (not necessarily forced migrants) with a particular focus on work related and employability topics. The Glasgow ESOL Forum has also delivered language classes in the workplace for a variety of businesses and organisations in Glasgow. The biggest stumbling block for stakeholders has been progressing English learners to the required level of proficiency to actually get into work, this is deemed to be National level 3.¹⁷ By the same token, those refugees who are in employment may not, due to the nature of the work involved, have that much opportunity to actually improve their English. Due to time commitments they would also struggle to find the time to attend ESOL classes that may help them to make the required improvements and give them access to a wider variety of career prospects.

¹⁵ In 2017, Starbucks pledged to support refugee employment globally and stated that it would hire 2,500 refugees to work at its coffee shops in Europe (part of a commitment to hire 10,000 refugees worldwide over 5 years). The Refugee Council and Scottish Refugee Council are partners in this scheme.

¹⁶ The Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) is the Department of Work and Pension’s (DWP) electronic system for setting up and maintaining a list of suppliers and offerings from which provision can be procured. Organisations that provide work-focused activities such as skills training and employability readiness support can register with the DWP so that Job Centre staff can view and potentially purchase these services for those seeking work

¹⁷ It should be pointed out that whilst the UK Government has published a code of practice in relation to English language requirements for public sector workers and some professions state a particular IELTS level, there is no national guidance in Scotland about minimum levels of English needed for work.



4. Challenges for the provision of ESOL for asylum seekers and refugees

4.1 Gender

The gendered nature of English language learning was stressed by all research participants and has also been noted in previous reports (MacKinnon 2015, Scottish Government 2015b, Education Scotland 2018a). Two issues in particular were recurrently evoked in our interviews in relation to women's access to ESOL provision – childcare responsibilities and the cultural expectations in terms of gender roles. These issues are becoming more salient in Glasgow as the number asylum seeking and refugee women increases with respect to the previous overrepresentation of single asylum-seeking men. As women are frequently primary caregivers, one of the largest barriers for many women relates to their caring responsibilities. The provision of childcare is fundamental in order to give many women access to a suitable learning environment but such provision is often patchy, as noted in a number of other reports (Strang *et al* 2014, Mackinnon 2015, COSLA 2017, Education Scotland 2018a). This is a problem that is recognised by all providers of ESOL courses and increasingly attempts are made to either provide childcare on site or offer times that suit those who have children in school. For this reason, there is a preference among asylum seeking and refugee women in Glasgow to attend part-time ESOL courses at college, although, as noted earlier, colleges themselves are incentivised to offer more full-time courses. Colleges cannot usually provide onsite childcare but students can apply for money that pays for childcare costs e.g. at a nursery.

Glasgow Life ESOL classes do not usually have crèche facilities but they have specialised in providing specific 'mother and baby' classes. Indeed, both the British Red Cross and Glasgow Life have pioneered ESOL classes for expectant and new mothers. Such classes are aimed at increasing engagement in antenatal classes and interaction with health visitors. The childcare situation is comparatively better for resettled refugees taking ESOL classes because the additional funds provided by the VPRS, alongside a dedicated Home Office resource, allow providers to establish or increase childcare capacity. In the drop-in ESOL settings, these arrangements are much rarer given the extra costs involved although childcare is occasionally provided by volunteers. An ESOL teacher at one of the Glasgow Integration Networks said that some of the funding they receive for language classes is used for a playworker who can look after the children. Through necessity, some community classes may simply allow women to attend class with their children.

Cultural differences around gender roles were also cited as inhibiting some women from attending language classes. For some women there was an expectation that they would not need to go out to work and therefore had reduced motivation to attend language classes. Another recurrent theme was the struggle to convince male household members to take on childcare responsibilities. Some women were also reluctant to take part in language classes that included men. ESOL practitioners, particularly in resettlement locations, often received requests for women only classes. Much debate was had as to whether such requests should be met and whether this is beneficial for learning outcomes. Local authorities offering classes to resettled refugees have taken different approaches. While some areas have initially opted to split up the classes, councils have realised that this is 'resource intensive' and not feasible in the long run. This was the experience on Bute, where languages classes for resettled refugees were initially separate for men and women at the request of the students in order provide the most comfortable environment. However, as students progressed to different levels, it was harder to justify continued segregation and the policy is now for mixed classes. One community ESOL teacher explained why she has a preference for women-only classes:



My experience generally is that the women become very quiet if there are men in the group, and particularly with their husbands. You know, I'll ask the woman a question, she'll look at the husband, the husband answers me...so it's often better not to have them together. I think it just depends on the people, and I think the experience of the teachers. You know, the men like to, I'm generalising, but the men like to show off and the women become quite quiet, and you have to quieten the men down and encourage the women.

(ED5)

In the more formal setting of FE colleges, ESOL classes are mixed by gender even if teachers told us that they try to minimise the potential discomfort that may arise from such situations. In Community ESOL settings, there is more variety in terms of gender segregated classes. For example, the Glasgow ESOL Forum drop-in community classes have some women-only classes. This also used to be offered by Glasgow Life but their classes are now all mixed. A final point that stakeholders noted regarding gender specific issues was that displaced women appeared to disproportionately have higher rates of illiteracy than displaced men, in both English and their own language. As mentioned above, this puts them at additional disadvantage when it comes to learning English.¹⁸

4.2 Impact of displaced migration status on access to ESOL

One of the distinguishing features of ESOL provision in Scotland is the Scottish Government's fee waiver in the college system for asylum seekers.¹¹ Fees are also waived for some ESOL learners in receipt of welfare support, including refugees and EU migrants (see Section 2). This approach has been praised for its accessibility, especially in relation to the environment in the rest of the UK in which asylum seekers are not given access to state-funded ESOL. In Scotland, the approach has resulted in ESOL policy that does not overtly distinguish between ESOL for asylum seekers and refugees and ESOL for migrants of other statuses. Yet, the lack of a specific focus on the needs and abilities of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland does have an adverse impact on how they access these services. Stakeholders from devolved government and non-government bodies noted to GLIMER that though ESOL provision was an active policy area, there was less activity specifically dedicated to how immigration status – and particularly asylum seeking and refugee status – interacted with ESOL provision in Scotland.¹⁹ Without an overt policy directive from the Scottish Government's ESOL strategy, the extent to which ESOL providers took into account the immigration status of their learners was largely localised.

Providers were generally aware that learners with asylum seeking or refugee status may have a different experience to others in their classes. However, approaches varied, ranging from third sector classes specifically for asylum seekers and refugees to a more universalist approach by some CLD providers. As a non-governmental body involved in CLD ESOL delivery noted, 'they don't distinguish, or provide bespoke services' (NGB3) for refugees and asylum seekers.

¹⁸ One aspect that was not raised in our interviewees was the particular experience of displaced migrants who identify as LGBT. It should, however, be noted that there is increasing interest in the exploration of LGBT lives and an engagement with issues of sexual and gender diversity in the adult ESOL classroom in Scotland (Stella et al 2018).

¹⁹ Some guidance on how displaced migration statuses impact ESOL experiences has been provided by Education Scotland at the following links: <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/Teaching%20ESOL%20to%20refugees> <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/practice-exemplars/COSLA%20National%20Learning%20Event> <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/practice-exemplars/Working%20with%20young%20unaccompanied%20asylum%20seekers%20and%20refugees>

¹¹ See: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcqd072018/SFCGD072018_Fee_Waiver_2018-19.pdf



The question of the extent to which ESOL provision should account for the immigration status of its learners remained subject to discussion for many stakeholders. A college provider noted that organising ESOL according to immigration status could lead to inflexible and discriminatory expectations about their language and social background:

Sometimes you get asylum seekers who maybe they've left their country for political reasons, maybe they could be very well qualified and respected academics in a certain field. So you get exceptions, and there's a huge variance in terms of asylum seekers' own educational backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, what they were running away from, to put it bluntly, and how that might have affected them, what their journey here involved as well. I don't really like to label and say 'oh well, asylum seekers are like this and EU migrants are like this'.

(ED1)

However, amongst ESOL providers, there was a broad acknowledgement that asylum seeking or refugee status meant that learners were likely to experience conditions that were distinct from learners of other immigration statuses. The difference was seen to be particularly acute for asylum seekers, whose immigration status was likely to precipitate vulnerabilities that could impede attendance or learning. An NGO ESOL provider observed:

Sometimes people are often unable to maintain a daily commitment towards taking on things. [...] People are sort of disempowered from taking any meaningful control over their lives [...] There's the gap around if you're new inside a country, even things like supermarkets, the shops, the buses, the everyday bits and pieces and actually how do you start both building up your daily opportunities and making your money go further when you're not living on much money. [...] And then there's the bits around the social interaction with people and being able to feel welcome inside a community and being able to even just do the basics. [...] And we often see the impact of not having all of those bits and pieces. So there's all those bits, some of which are quite generic to other people who are arriving in a country and some of which are quite specific [to asylum]. Sometimes what we see is the pertinence of some of the health issues [...] if people have been persecuted, or got significant mental health issues, or mental wellbeing issues, they really struggle to engage in services, then that can have a profound impact [...] or the impacts of isolation or [being] unable to access the services that people really need to access. So you can see situations where people fall through the gaps.

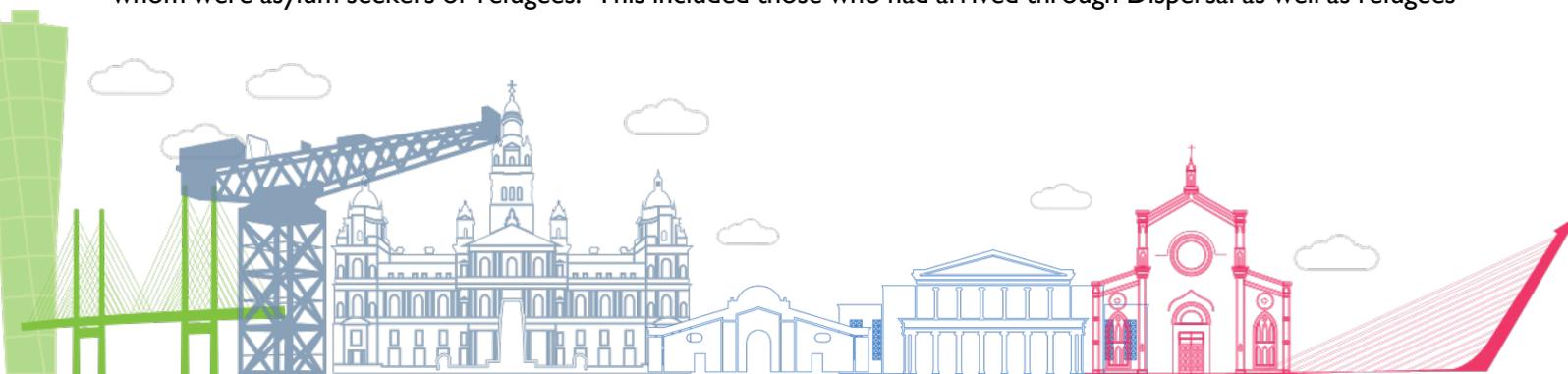
(NGO2)

A college-level ESOL provider also noted that English classes can become low priority for some asylum seekers amidst other concerns relating to their status:

Coming to college, it's certainly not the bottom of the pile, but there are things that are higher up in life, than coming to learn English, and that has an adverse effect. On top of that, people have got a Home Office case, so they've got lawyers' appointments, they've got to present at the Home Office, they've got to sign [on]. So, [...] there's a lot of things that have got an impact on people's attendance.

(ED2)

There is also a correlation between displaced migration status and literacy skills. Colleges, NGOs and CLDs in all local authority areas with whom we spoke reported a proportion of learners without literacy skills, the majority of whom were asylum seekers or refugees. This included those who had arrived through Dispersal as well as refugees



who had arrived through the VPRS. A Glasgow-based education provider noted that of the displaced migrants they had taught,

A large number of them had little or no educational background. They've maybe never been to school or hardly been to school. [...] So obviously a lack of educational background is hugely important because if you don't have literacy in your first language then it makes gaining literacy in a second language a very slow, drawn out process. But it also means that they often would lack the basic academic skills, really basic skills like turning up on time, being able to sit in a lesson for three hours, just sitting in the one place. Even how to hold a pen. Some really fundamental things.

(ED1)

In a programme conducted by the Red Cross (Marsden and Harris 2015: 71), the majority of displaced people in Glasgow were assessed at SCQF Level 2 / National 2 – (67%). Of these, 13.5% were categorised as 'Beginner', 15% at 'Starter' at 38.5% at 'Elementary' (see Table 1 above). A stakeholder from a local authority participating in the Resettlement Scheme noted that because the local authority had consciously sought to resettle low-skilled refugees in the area, their experience of refugees with low literacy was proportionally high:

We have a lot of lower skills refugees here, more than...well maybe not some of the urban authorities, but we deliberately resettled slightly lower skilled refugees because we felt it would be easier to find employment opportunities for them. Therefore, they have not spent lots of time in school themselves.

(LA3)

As the education stakeholder notes above, low literacy levels amongst learners had an impact on how people learned, their likely progression and the extent with which they were familiar with educational culture. This required ESOL providers to adapt courses to specific learning needs. In all stakeholder locations, literacy level ESOL tended to be supplied through community or CLD initiatives in settings less formal than college classrooms. National 2 is the lowest credit bearing ESOL level available in Scotland. This encompasses a wide range of ESOL and learning levels, from literacy level to 'beginners'. Once learners have achieved 'elementary' level at National 2/SCQF Level 2, they are able to progress to National 3/SCQF Level 3. Within National 2, the SQA offer three 'pre-entry' courses for literacy learners, which, once completed allow learners to progress onto the 'beginner' courses at National 2 (see Table 1 on page 9). However, stakeholders reported that because of the scope and scale required of learning required at literacy level, though they may progress through 'Literacy' and 'Beginner' levels, learners may spend a significant amount of time at National 2 and may be unable to provide evidence of formal progression (to National 3 and beyond). At the time of research, stakeholders expressed concern that because SFC funding required that providers show evidence of progression in their learners, literacy level courses (in which formal progression may take longer) would be vulnerable.

Asylum seekers and new Dispersal-pathway refugees in Glasgow were likely to experience accommodation-related barriers to ESOL education. Current Dispersal accommodation pathways disrupt the successful functioning of the ESOL Register which assigns ESOL classes based on location of accommodation at the time of registration. Asylum seekers are accommodated in Dispersal housing only until they receive a decision on their asylum application; if they receive a positive decision, then they are able to access social housing through Glasgow City Council's homelessness route (Meer, Peace and Hill 2019). However, because the provision of Dispersal and social housing



is not joined up, asylum seekers are likely to be accommodated in social housing that is in a different part of the city. They are also likely to initially be placed in temporary social accommodation and obliged to move several times. This level of precarious housing decreases the likelihood of their accessing ESOL classes because by the time they are assigned to an ESOL class, they may have been moved to a different, less accessible part of the city which is considered as a different 'learning area'. Data inaccessibility, high demand and the precarious conditions of asylum meant that the ESOL register was unable to track accommodation changes.

Across stakeholder discussions, GLIMER participants demonstrated in-depth knowledge of how asylum seeking and refugee statuses had the potential to impact an individual's access to ESOL provision. Across community, some CLD and some college settings, providers had adapted courses in response to displaced migrants' circumstances, from informed teaching, flexible scheduling to applied or 'survival' classes. At Edinburgh College, for example, they provide a large amount of community-based ESOL college classes (up to 11 hours of teaching per week) delivered in outreach venues in order to make learning more accessible. For those courses they have kept a paper application process which is much easier for learners to use and for other people to help them, if necessary, due to literacy levels. Stakeholders involved in policy-making, including non-government bodies also had a good working knowledge of the barriers displaced migration statuses may raise for language education. However, arguably less widespread was an understanding of how prevailing or emerging approaches to Scotland's ESOL infrastructure impacts displaced migrants' access to ESOL. Three strands in particular emerged.

(1) Design and capacity of college ESOL provision

Colleges in Scotland provide ESOL for learners of a range of migration statuses. As a result, the (a) type of courses they deliver and (b) registration processes are not necessarily tailored to asylum seekers' or refugees' circumstances. Decisions made at college or regional level to (a) bolster income or (b) make efficiencies therefore had potential to adversely impact asylum seekers' or refugees access to college ESOL. One stakeholder noted:

A lot of asylum seekers are suffering from psychological trauma and stuff like that that just makes it very hard for them to commit to an academic programme that's full time. And refugees in the same way. They might have other commitments, they might have jobs and other things that make it very difficult for them to study full time. So what we found was that when we were encouraged to run more full time programmes, the places on those full time courses were being filled up by European nationals, and that meant that we obviously had less space available to accommodate asylum seekers and refugees. But the demand was still there.

(ED4)

The decision to run more full-time ESOL classes to capture the demand from EU nationals meant that there were (a) fewer part-time classes and (b) increased competition for places. The level of competition for places puts displaced migrants at a further disadvantage because being able to successfully apply requires a degree of literacy and a well-informed community network. The precarious nature of Dispersal accommodation means that asylum seekers in particular are unlikely to have robust social networks and be at a disadvantage when attempting to access highly competitive ESOL courses:

Speaking very generally here, the EU nationals that live in this region have quite a tight, close knit community [...]. It's a very well hooked up network. Whereas asylum seekers and refugees, generally speaking again,



maybe their access to IT is limited, access to the internet is limited and their communications and their knowledge of the local community are not as great. And it means that whenever applications open for ESOL courses at [the college], immediately - within a day, there's over 100 applications from [EU nationals], and asylum seekers and refugees just tend to be a bit slower off the mark [...] So I think the current system disadvantages the people who are already the most vulnerable.

(ED4)

Some colleges in Scotland have taken steps to address this by allocating places based on need and vulnerability with top priority given to asylum seekers and refugees. This along with steps such as introducing paper applications and providing in person help on campus for those using the on-line application system is beneficial, particularly for learners with literacy issues. It should also be noted that although there is parity of access to the provision of ESOL for those of different migrant status, asylum seekers and refugees may not have access to the same sorts of funding. Indeed, this access tends to be skewed towards EU nationals who are eligible for bursary funding to study full-time while there is no bursary funding for part-time courses which is what many asylum seeking and refugee learners prefer.

(2) Changes to the funding structure means that courses more likely to be attended by displaced migrants may struggle to access funding

Post-2018 changes to the ESOL funding infrastructure included preferences either towards accredited forms of ESOL or towards classes in which progression could be demonstrated, so the SFC could evaluate allocation of funds and their usage. However, this placed non-accredited courses (college or community) and non-credit bearing literacy courses in a vulnerable position. As discussed above, literacy level classes and non-accredited ESOL courses are likely to be attended by asylum seekers and refugees. This vulnerability is likely to disproportionately impact displaced migrants, as a stakeholder from a Non-Government Body observed:

While there isn't any clarity [to the changes], providers who maybe have a group of literacy learners, who may be refugees or asylum seekers, they have no clarity whether or not they will get funding for that provision, and therefore that provision is potentially...the provision has either been cut, I've heard, or they're not sure whether the provision can be run. So that then impacts upon the people, the learners who are accessing that provision, which could include refugees and asylum seekers.

(NGB2)

A local authority stakeholder commented that the changes to the system had the potential to most adversely affect the already-vulnerable and contribute to a cycle of under-provision:

Throwing all of that out and just bringing in a formal model will only work for those who are already able to access the education system.

(LA2)

Another Non-Government Body stakeholder noted that the new infrastructure not only placed significant funding allocation at the discretion of the colleges, but also disincentivised them from cascading it down to providers offering non-accredited or non-credit bearing ESOL. She noted that whilst in her region colleges worked very



well with CLD ESOL providers, it was not necessarily the case across Scotland:

[We] have a [positive] service level agreement with the college. [...] You probably won't possibly know that that's not the case across the country. That different colleges have interpreted the funding guidelines in different ways. And many are essentially delivering against what seemed to be the original guidelines [on eligibility]. So community based learners are registering as college learners, eligibility's having to be established. So we're in an interesting point in this timeline to...really see where this is going because the same model isn't being operated across the country. And...I guess moving forward we would, [in this region], hope that our model continues to be supportive.

(NGB3)

(3) Changes to the funding structure means that access to ESOL is not necessarily universal

Routing funding for ESOL provision through colleges also presented potential issues for displaced migrants with irregular statuses – i.e if their asylum application had been refused by the Home Office and they were appealing (Section 95), or if their appeal rights were exhausted (Section 4). Stakeholders reported historic issues with asylum seekers on Section 4 attempting to access college ESOL:

So it depends on which funds you're accessing but we've had programmes that have been clearly only for people with status, not people without status. But also there's been bits where we've heard of people unable to access, that the colleges are unable to access funding if somebody's on section four support, for example, when they've been rejected. And so then we have people who have been sort of disrupted from education because of the change in the type of support they're accessing.

(NGO2)

Under the new system, stakeholders were unclear whether colleges would be able to claim credits from the SFC for asylum seekers with irregular statuses. The fallout of this impact was also unclear:

The other issue is around – just thinking about asylum seekers – is around residency rules, their status, so, you know, I'm not sure what the position is in terms of that. The [Scottish] Funding Council have residency criteria, that you're either ordinarily a resident or have been here for three or more years, or you're from an EU country, or you're an asylum seeker, so what about all the people that fall outwith those profiles? We're not sure whether colleges can then claim credits for provision where learners with those profiles are actually attending. So there's a whole host of technical issues which the original guidance didn't go into

(NGB2)



5. ESOL Governance

Previous sections have outlined the historical background and contemporary provision of ESOL in Scotland. We now explore some of the governance dynamics that characterise the present landscape. Part of this is multi-level in that while ESOL provision is devolved to the Scottish Government, ESOL learners remain subject to the UK Government's reserved powers over immigration, security and border control. This means that the UK Government is able to intervene in ESOL delivery in Scotland by providing resourcing through other reserved pathways. In addition to this vertical governance there is a horizontal dynamic across both a variety of stakeholders (governments, local authorities, NGOs and charities), as well as across pathways that sees ESOL provision in Scotland dispersed across three strands: (1) ESOL through Further Education courses (2) ESOL through local authority provision (including 'community' ESOL courses, and ESOL in post-16 secondary education) and (3) ESOL through 'community' settings (including third sector and voluntary courses), as detailed below.

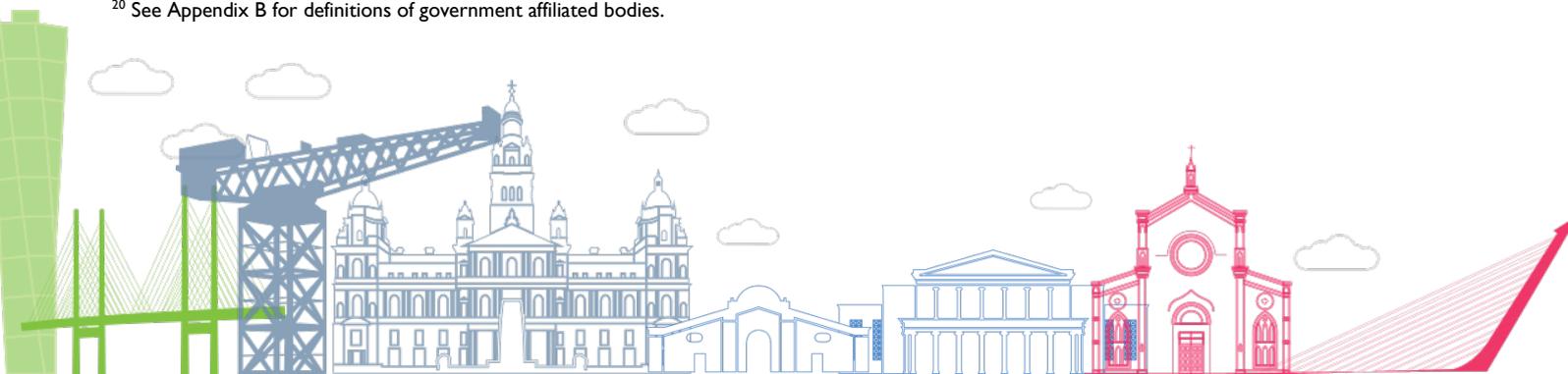
5.1 Mapping ESOL Governance infrastructures

At the time of writing, the overall picture of ESOL infrastructure in Scotland was markedly complex and fragmented. In strand 1 (see Diagram 1 below), funding was channelled through local authority budgets. Resourcing for Community Learning and Development (CLD) – a priority policy area which includes Youth development, Adult Literacy and ESOL – was drawn down to Local Authority CLD budgets and some was allocated to ESOL. The allocation of funds was done differently across local authorities: in Glasgow, Glasgow City Council channelled resources to Glasgow Life, an Arms Length External Organisation (ALEO) with responsibility for cultural activities in the city. In Aberdeenshire, ESOL provision was at times done in-house, or was subcontracted by the CLD team to a third-party NGO provider, the WEA. In Argyll and Bute, ESOL was largely provided by the CLD team. Local Authorities could also potentially fund some ESOL provision through their secondary education budgets. For instance, in Glasgow, some schools received funding for post-16 ESOL provision.

In strand 2, funding from the Scottish Government budget, allocated through the non-departmental body²⁰ of the Scottish Funding Council, and overseen in policy terms by at least three separate Directorates, was allocated to college providers, which were accountable to regional college governance structures and an education Inspectorate. Colleges were funded to provide ESOL classes for learners of all immigration statuses. Colleges also subsequently had the responsibility to allocate ESOL government funding to ESOL partners. Partners may also be independent, or members of existing CPPs and/or CLDs and provide a range of types of ESOL.

In addition to mobilising devolved funds, Local Authorities also had the opportunity to use funding from the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme to provide ESOL classes (strand 3). This funding was provided directly from the Home Office to a participating local authority. The way in which Resettlement funding was used in ESOL provision was highly localised. In Aberdeenshire, subcontracted CLD ESOL was funded through Resettlement resources, with the VPRS team acting as intermediaries to direct the funds. In Argyll and Bute, the funds had been used to 'resource up' existing community provision and allowed the Council to develop their own SVQ accredited ESOL courses (Interview LA2) that were stratified according to ability and tailored to refugee needs (i.e. employability). However, the funds, which to-date are guaranteed only for five years came with a caveat, as one Local Authority stakeholder observed:

²⁰ See Appendix B for definitions of government affiliated bodies.



I think ultimately the issue here is that the funding we've got is limited. So we'll need to wait and see what we can do when we run out of funding this way. But, you know, I'm absolutely committed to using the money we get through [VPRS] so we can get the best possible outcomes for the refugees. And for that language is key. So, you know, we'll fund our way for as long as we can.

(LA3)

Resettlement funds were used by participating Local Authorities largely to fund (accredited and non-accredited) community ESOL programmes. In Aberdeenshire, the subcontracted Council community ESOL was the only available provision for beginners and literacy learners (colleges in the region only provided ESOL from SCQF Level 3 and above).

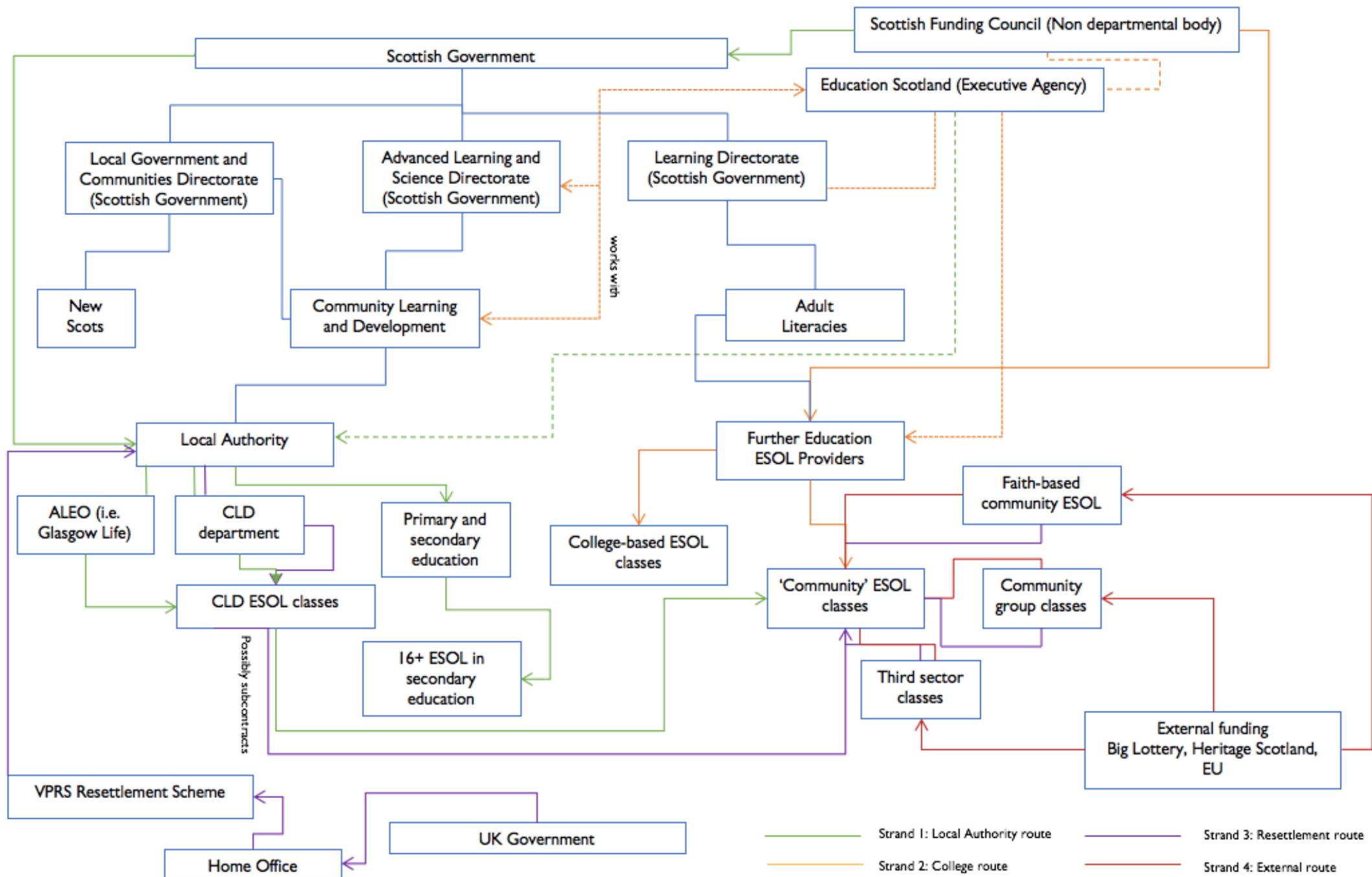
The final strand (strand 4) of funding accessed by ESOL providers in Scotland is non-governmental. Though some third sector and grassroots providers received funding through CPP or CLD partnerships,²¹ they also looked for funds elsewhere including external funders such as charity donations, EU or Big Lottery funding. Third sector and grassroots ESOL providers may connect to government-funded partnerships through Community Planning Partnerships (which post-2018 have adapted to the ESOL funding restructure and continue to function) or through Community Learning and Development initiatives overseen by a Local Authority.

Oversight across all strands of ESOL provision in Scotland was provided at local level in Glasgow by the Glasgow ESOL Forum, an NGO set up to help manage the volume of demand in the city, and nationally by Education Scotland, an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government.

²¹ They should also receive funding through the new college infrastructure.



Diagram 1: ESOL Funding and Policy infrastructures in Scotland



This present configuration draws a complex picture of the governance arrangements between the UK government, the devolved Scottish government, local government, non-governmental bodies, the education sector made up of professional language practitioners and third sector organisations more broadly. In our research we find it to be especially characterised by the following features.

5.2 Dispersed ESOL Governance

The first feature takes the form of what Ferguson and Gupta (2002: 989) characterise as a ‘transfer of the operations of government’ toward ‘nonstate entities’; something that is arguably true of other thematic areas relevant to the incorporation of displaced migrants and refugees in Scotland (especially accommodation and housing as outlined and discussed in WP3). This is a mode of governance in which statutory responsibilities remain with state agencies, but operational roles and the provision of services are distributed to third parties through a series of arms-length relationships.

As one respondent from a Non-Government Body describes, ‘we’re not directing providers; we’re saying these are our strategic objectives, and through the funding process we’d like to see what you’re doing to support those strategic objectives’ (NGB 2).²² This model of coordination might be seen to reflect what Clarke (2004: 36) termed a ‘dispersed state’, in which ‘the number of agents and agencies involved in delivering a particular service’ increase and function as ‘proxies of state power’.

On the face of it, this would imply less centralised administrative control of language provision. In practice, however, it adds complexity to governing such approaches that paradoxically invite state actors to drive certain benchmarks from the centre (as we discuss further with the case of accreditations). Negotiating a path through the ‘dispersed state’ is not straightforward. As one respondent from devolved government puts it, a principle challenge is the need to ‘get the right partnership at a national level that cascades locally, that understands what it’s doing and can communicate what it’s doing...’ (Interview GVI). This is consistent with Blanco et al’s (2014: 3133) discussion of how contemporary states govern through ‘simultaneously retreating and advancing’ in so far as ‘withdrawal from direct service delivery [becomes] matched by its advance into regulation of service delivery by others’.

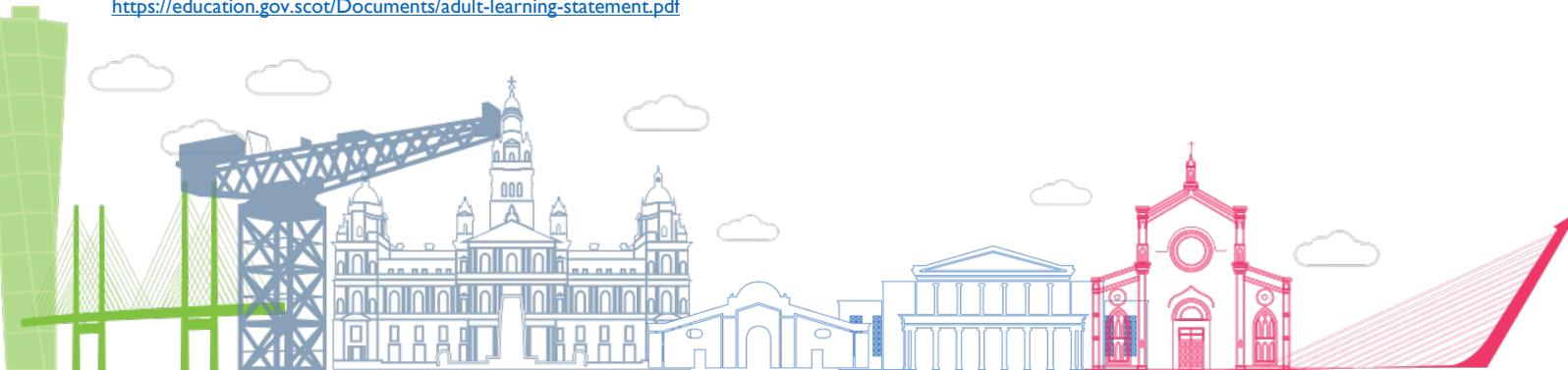
5.3 Opaque ESOL Governance

The second feature flows from the first and concerns the opacity of lines of responsibility. This is perhaps most readily apparent across an increasingly complex funding architecture and allocation of resources for language provision. As one respondent from a Non-Government Body describes:

Okay, so the SFC’s...the funding that goes into core teaching funds works within a credit system, and within that credit system there’s certain criteria in order to be credit funded, so that’s the phrase. So colleges need to have so many people and they need those people to have attended for such and such an amount of time. And they need to show that...the learning is contributing to something, a learning profession. So with that,

²² The ESOL Strategy’s objectives, co-produced and agreed by adult learning partners and organisations, were aligned to the overarching objective for Adult Learning:

<https://education.gov.scot/Documents/adult-learning-statement.pdf>



colleges then have to work within sort of minimum numbers and a minimum length of time, et cetera, which has posed a challenge for community classes that may be run with smaller groups, short courses, et cetera. So there's a lot of diversity in the way CLD providers run their programmes and it could be short six-week programmes, particularly projects, you know, voluntary sector organisations that are part of that CLD partnership maybe run short courses, et cetera. So lots of providers have come back to say, well, does that mean...? Under this new arrangement, does it mean I can fund this? Does that mean that this will be funded? There's a whole range of things. And then there have been discussions around recognising that some provision will not fall under credit funded provision, so what is that? And then how does the college actually technically put in processes to draw down funding that is not technically under credit funding? So there's a whole range of things that I don't...you know, it's hard enough for me to actually paraphrase some of the stuff that people have been asking about. There are issues around administrative duties or expectations, so all the partner providers, do they all have to register their learners with the college, and who then carries out that administrative duty?

(NGB2)

Similar issues are raised in other respondents' statements, and which go beyond the question of funding and relate to a disjuncture between the focus of policy and policy creators. One respondent described this as 'a fundamental lack of understanding of who we're dealing with and a lack of engagement with that demographic and the people who are on the ground delivering it' (NGO 1). There is, then, a sense that while there is a great wealth of expertise in the sector, this is not being realised or directed in ways that might better shape policy construction.

5.4 ESOL Alignment

The third tendency falls around the purpose of alignment in two respects. The first is specifically about how the governance of language provision becomes 'technocratic, managerial, or disciplined towards a single goal' (Wood and Flinders, 2014: 161). The central goal being: to facilitate language training in order to build capacity and readiness to enter the labour market. This includes the complaint from education providers that they are a 'square peg in a round hole' (ED4), since the measure of success in language provision is not language acquisition, but employability. As one previous education provider says of their evaluation by Education Scotland:

They were asking questions like 'what are you doing to develop the employability skills of your learners?', 'what work placements are you giving your students?' and things like that. So they were asking us questions and we were like well, work placements, that's a rather odd thing to be asking us about, because we're not teaching them cookery. It's not like they can go and get a job in a restaurant. We're teaching people language to prepare them for any kind of employment. So it's very difficult for us to partner up with employers because we might be sending them down a road that's not appropriate for them. [...] Industry needs are driving the whole FE sector at the moment. [...] I don't think they've quite got the capacity to deal with the number of people who are living in this country who need to develop their language not just in order to get a job but in order to do all kinds of other things as well, in order to become active participants in society.

(ED4)

The pre-eminence of employability is at odds with the function of language as a means of cultivating a holistic integration – a Scottish government stated objective – more broadly. It is not only a top-down priority, as providers describe how clients and those seeking language training are themselves identifying similar objectives, though often



because their encounter with the state emphasises the need e.g., following the direction of job centre case workers. In either case, the prevailing conception of language provision as a vehicle for labour market participation might be characterised as a means to ‘align subjects with the state’ (Uitermark and Nicholls, 2014: 975) in contrast with an approach that emphasises autonomy of learners. A second illustration of an ‘alignment’ dynamic can be found in the role and status of accreditation in language provision, and the multi-level character of this.

Since the UK Government does not recognise SQA accreditation, ESOL students in Scotland must also study for other English Language qualifications²³ if they are subject to some immigration controls.²⁴ Accredited ESOL that meets UK immigration criteria is not the type of accreditation that is necessarily readily accessible for displaced migrants in Scotland. Since immigration is reserved to the UK, but ESOL qualifications fall under education, which is a devolved matter to the Scottish Government, there is an inherent tension between the more open language provision in Scotland, and the more closed requirements of accredited ESOL provision which meets immigration criteria. Perhaps underlying this are different rationalities in the use and function of language as something that is a necessary social tool for elementary facets of social life. As a respondent from a local authority reports:

Up to now the classes had been more social practice classes but they were concerned that they weren’t able to benchmark learners so they’re now delivering the Nat 2.²⁵ Certainly from our side, and from the learner’s perspective, the sense is that it’s not really working because delivering a curriculum isn’t necessarily for people who are not able to get to college stage. They’re not learning in a normal way and there’s too many other things going on. And actually what would be more beneficial would be a class on your CSCS²⁶ card with the language or how to go shopping, how to talk to teacher, how to do this, how to do that.

(LA2)

The extension of language provision across asylum status in Scotland is a possible illustration of the different operation of formal and informal rights compared with the rest of the UK: informality pervades non-accredited provision, while formality and all of the triage and policing that come with it characterises the accredited provision. What is arguably at stake therefore in the alignment or non-alignment of ESOL with accreditation, are the governance spaces that can ‘exist outside, alongside or in-between the formal statutory scales of government’ (Haughton et al. 2013: 217).

²³ Including IELTS or Cambridge’s Trinity exams:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784830/Approved_Secure_English_Language_Tests_and_Test_Centres_-_website.pdf

²⁴ Applications for citizenship contain an English testing element, for which SQA qualifications are not accepted by the Home Office. Furthermore, if an asylum seeker applies for a Higher Education course, they will be treated as an international applicant and expected to meet language entry criteria, validated by testing centres outside Scotland.

²⁵ See Table 1 above

²⁶ The Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) card allows participants to accumulate skills and qualifications for the construction industry: <https://www.cscs.uk.com/about/>

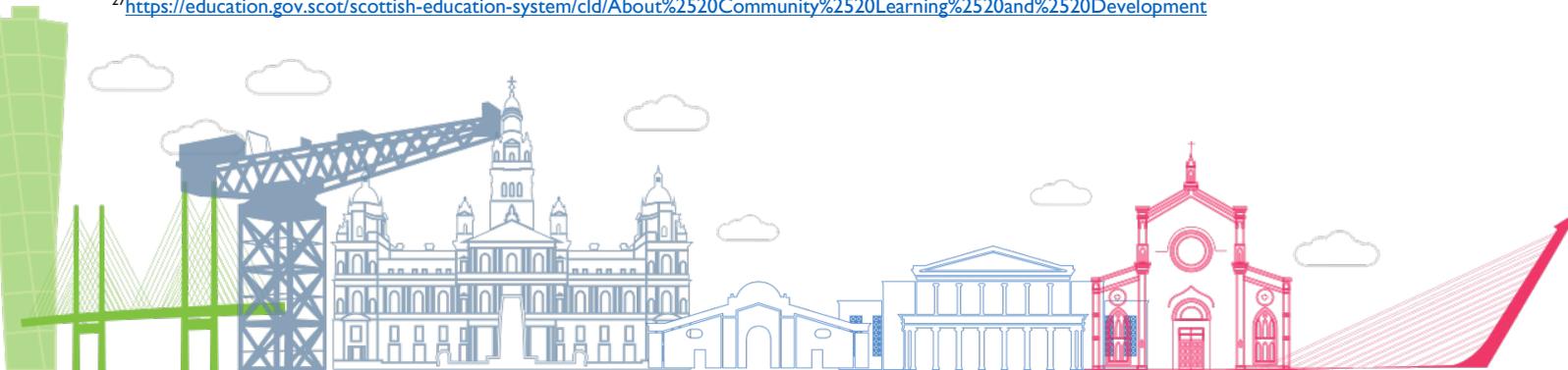


6. Conclusions

Governance

- The current ESOL landscape in Scotland combines a mix of highly localised approaches with an increasingly centralised steer. At the time of research, the Scottish Government was seeking to develop partnerships with local level providers, and with the guidance of Education Scotland, provide oversight at national level through the Community Learning and Development Directorate. The findings of this report reflect the conditions at the time of research, and may be subject to change.
- Current ESOL provision in Scotland has developed through a combination of lateral, local-level partnership working, and steering from national bodies. However, whilst at local level partnerships may be well-established, the overall ESOL infrastructure is highly fragmented.
- GLIMER research traces at least four separate types of ESOL provision for adult displaced migrants in Scotland (through colleges, CLD providers, the VPRS and third sector providers). At local level, there is a significant level of interaction between these types of provision; however, this is not reflected at national level, where there is an absence of strategy or coordination.
- Alongside the divergent forms of ESOL types, GLIMER research also traces multiple funding streams for ESOL for adult displaced migrants in Scotland (including the SFC, CLD, VPRS and third sector foundations). ESOL providers may receive funding from multiple funders; however, there is an absence of mapping or understanding of how this funding interacts, or shapes ESOL provision.
- The Scottish Government's decision to prioritise full-time ESOL programmes in colleges has had some knock on effects in terms of access for refugees and asylum seekers, many of whom struggle to commit to full-time study. Meanwhile, EU nationals, for example, can enrol on full-time courses *and* receive a bursary, which acts as an added incentive. The result is that many of the more vulnerable ESOL learners experience additional, sometimes prohibitive barriers to the college sector.
- Recent revisions to the SFC ESOL funding stream arguably create an imbalanced ESOL eco-system: they give colleges the lion's share of power over the distribution of funding, yet they are the providers for which SFC funding is of lower importance. Meanwhile, providers who have a higher degree of reliance on SFC funding have little say in its distribution. As the latter are likely to provide ESOL to a high proportion of asylum seekers and refugees, this infrastructure means that ESOL for displaced migrants is vulnerable to under-funding and under-representation.
- Local level providers' feedback to the Scottish Government through several reporting infrastructures. CLD Regulations (2013) require all local authorities to publish plans for addressing issues arising and unmet needs in existing provision.²⁷ However, this infrastructure relies on local authorities to define the terms of 'unmet need' and identify under-represented groups. The needs of vulnerable groups, including asylum seekers and refugees,

²⁷<https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/cld/About%2520Community%2520Learning%2520and%2520Development>



may not be known to local authorities, or CLD partners. At the time of research, the Scottish Government relied on feedback from existing CLD partnerships to identify unmet need. Existing infrastructure thus has the potential to perpetuate a cycle of under-representation on ESOL provision for asylum seekers and refugees at both local and national government level.

Policy

- The fact that the Scottish Government’s approach to ESOL does not actively and formally exclude asylum seekers and refugees is to be commended. However, more actively inclusive work needs to be done to better address the informal barriers experienced by displaced migrants in the existing ESOL system.
- The ‘New Scots’ Integration Strategy explicitly raises language as a potential barrier to integration for asylum seekers and refugees; however, our research found evidence that the policy was not widely consulted by ESOL practitioners and policymakers. Whilst the ESOL Strategy defers to *New Scots* on issues relating to the language acquisition of asylum seekers and refugees, there was little evidence that *New Scots* exerted influence in policymaking areas in which the needs of displaced migrants needed to be specifically taken into account.
- Revisions to the ESOL funding infrastructure with the intention to provide increased oversight for the SFC have the potential to actively disadvantage asylum seekers and refugees. Under the new structure, SFC ESOL funding is not contingent on accreditation, but on ESOL facilitators providing evidence of learner progression. However, the large majority of stakeholders felt that significant emphasis remained on accreditation. A lack of clarity in this area meant that stakeholders running non-accredited ESOL classes were uncertain about institutional support for their work, and were concerned that (a) classes delivered through non-accredited means and (b) literacy level are made vulnerable. As our research suggests that asylum seekers and refugees are more likely to attend these forms of ESOL classes than migrants of other statuses, this has the potential to specifically and adversely impact these groups.

Resettlement

- Resettlement has provided participating local authorities with the flexibility to design ESOL provision in ways that best suits the needs of their learners. The local authorities with whom GLIMER spoke had front-loaded ESOL provision to provide refugees with as much support as possible after arrival. However, the time-limited and tapered conditions of Resettlement funding means that local authorities face uncertainty over ESOL funding post-2020. Local authorities noted that non-Resettlement ESOL funds are insufficient to sustain comparable levels of ESOL provision, even though demand will remain.
- The new ESOL funding infrastructure appears to respond to ESOL environments more closely associated with urban experiences than those in rural and remote Resettlement localities. The infrastructure assumes (a) that colleges are in accessible locations (b) that college provision is supplemented by a variety of non-college ESOL providers. Neither of these are necessarily the case in remote and rural areas and it is unclear how Resettlement stakeholders would routinely access ESOL funded through this pathway.



Appendix A: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms

ALEO – Arms Length External Organisations
 CLD – Community Learning and Development
 CPP – Community Planning Partnership #
 DWP – Department of Work and Pensions
 EAL – English as an Additional Language
 ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages
 SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
 SFC – Scottish Funding Council
 SQA – Scottish Qualifications Authority
 VPRS – Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme

Quotation coding key

ED – Educational stakeholder (including college practitioners and HE researchers)
 GV – Devolved government
 LA – Local Authority stakeholder
 NGB – Non-Government Body (organisations connected to but devolved from government)
 NGO – Non-Government Organisation (including third sector and community groups)

Organisational definitions

ALEO: a type of organisation specific to Glasgow City Council, which has devolved responsibilities from the local authority to deliver a specific service, i.e Glasgow Life delivers cultural and sporting activities for Glasgow City Council

Community Planning Partnership: a partnership between different types of organisations in a local area to deliver community services, including ESOL. Organisations may include colleges, voluntary and third sector organisations, and local authorities.

Community Learning and Development: a partnership between different types of organisations within a local authority area, which prioritises community learning and development initiatives. CLD's are usually coordinated by local authorities, which have CLD targets, accountable to the Scottish Government.

Executive Agency: an organisation specific to the Scottish Government, which has devolved powers over service and policy delivery over a specific area, i.e Education Scotland, which has competency over the delivery of primary, secondary and Further education in Scotland.

Non-departmental public body: a government-created organisation with partial autonomy over how it acts to support specific policy areas, i.e the Scottish Funding Council.



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