

Case Study: East Lothian Community Learning Offers SQA English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

With the growing numbers of 'New Scots' living and working in the local area, East Lothian Community Learning and Development (CLD) Partnership made the decision to adapt their English learning programme to lead to SQA accredited ESOL qualifications. In less than a year the first group of 15 learners were delighted to receive SQA Certificates ranging from Access 2 to Intermediate 1.



Delivering English Learning Using The Social Practice Model

East Lothian CLD had been delivering ESOL beginners and post-beginners classes to a wide range of learners including those with literacies needs. Classes were well structured and well attended but offered limited scope for progression. Clare Cameron, ESOL Internal Verifier (IV), comments, 'Learners lacked a goal and a sense of where they had got to. There was no benchmark from an external source that they had reached a certain level.'

East Lothian Learners Gain The Opportunity To Study SQA ESOL

The team initially approached an existing partner, Jewel and Esk College, to discuss the SQA ESOL framework. Sheila MacKay, Team Leader, states, 'We thought that migrant workers wishing to improve their English would like to receive a qualification at the end of it. SQA ESOL qualifications seemed the most appropriate as they focus on the language needed to live and work in Scotland.' At this point Clare Cameron joined the East Lothian team from Jewel and Esk College and they worked with SQA to gain approval to offer SQA ESOL qualifications in-house. Thereafter the team advertised their SQA ESOL accredited courses to local employers.

Four existing English classes comprising settled ethnic minority students and migrant workers agreed to study SQA ESOL qualifications for four hours a week. As ESOL IV, Clare organised a number of training sessions for assessors on the SQA ESOL learning materials, preparing learners for assessment and the assessment process. Clare also offered assessors online and telephone support.

The team also offered to support the delivery of SQA ESOL qualifications in four local secondary schools. Janet Storey, Outreach Teacher for English as an Additional Language (EAL) in East Lothian, and Beth Steel, Support for Learning Teacher at Musselburgh Grammar School, prepared pupils and carried out all assessments in the schools and Clare Cameron acted as IV and mentor. This enabled six students to gain an ESOL qualification at Higher or Intermediate 2. Janet explains, 'All were entered for the ESOL qualifications halfway through the school year when it had become clear that a pass in English at Intermediate 2 or Higher could not be guaranteed even though the pupils were achieving well in other mainstream subjects.'

How East Lothian's Community Based Learners are Benefiting

The first group of 15 learners each passed one SQA ESOL Unit at either Access or Intermediate 1 levels. Clare Cameron remarks, 'An SQA ESOL certificate gives learners confidence and is the key to enable learners to move into jobs they are qualified for. It also helps them with their application for UK citizenship.' Gaining an SQA ESOL Unit helped one of the group to resume their career as a vet because the qualification satisfied his employer of his competence in English.

At the end of the course the team held a Celebration Event. To mark their achievement everyone was invited to complete an art panel for the All Different All Equal Quilt, pictured on the first page.

Progression For Learners and East Lothian CLD

New and existing learners will continue to study SQA ESOL Units either at the same or a higher level. Tutors have gained a lot of confidence in delivering SQA accredited ESOL Units, enabling the team to increase the number of SQA ESOL community classes from four to seven. Sheila MacKay concludes, 'The team's ultimate goal is to offer an integrated ESOL programme incorporating ESOL SQA Units and ESOL with practical or personal interest subjects such as Art or Computing.'

What The Learners Say

'At the beginning I was terrified because I didn't know what I should know to get a certificate but Jean helped us to believe that everything will be fine. I wanted to get new qualification because I think that it will help me to find a better job in the future. I feel more confident and now I know that I can go almost everywhere and I don't need to be afraid that I don't understand something'. Marlena from Poland passed an ESOL Unit at Access 3.

'When I started the course I was worried a little, but after two weeks I understand and learned quite quickly. I was nervous when I took the tests and was really happy with my results. The course has given me more confidence to deal with customers at work and in everyday life.' Canan from Turkey passed an ESOL Unit at Access 3.

'We practised report and essay writing, so it helped with subjects such as Modern Studies.' Wojciech from Poland passed the Higher ESOL Course.

'The presentation on Global Warming which I did for ESOL has helped me with Geography.' Porntip from Thailand passed the Higher ESOL Course.

For further information on ESOL call SQA's Customer Contact Centre
on 0845 279 1000 or visit www.sqa.org.uk/esol