

The argument:

1) The current ESOL system in the UK is broken:

DWP report: [Interventions supporting ethnic minority labour market participation: part one](#)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/773018/interventions-supporting-ethnic-minority-labour-market-participation-part-one.pdf

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ESOL is not viewed as effective (especially at entry level) for all claimants who could repeatedly “cycle” to and from ESOL classes.

“Well we, we just have an experience of people going to ESOL, but they just erm, you know, persist in coming back to us without having learned very much.”

And yet the DWP Flexible Support Fund is massively underspent

(Taken from my presentation to attendees of the NATCELA East conference June 2018)

As we know:

Typical AEB-funded provision for adults



- Skills for life: 3-5 hours p.w.
- Long waiting lists
- Lack of pre-entry provision
- Inadequate progression routes
- Complicated landscape – difficult to navigate, even for case-workers and supporters

And yet:

- AEB underspent nationally by £73 million
 - Community learning objectives
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Annex B - Community Learning Objectives

- Focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural areas and people on low incomes with low skills
- Widen participation and transform people's destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances
- Develop stronger communities, with more self-sufficient, connected and pro-active citizens
- Commission, deliver and support learning in ways that contribute directly to these objectives

Integrated communities – not isolated individuals



- Entry level 3 – minimum
- Waiting list – few hours p.w.
- Pre-entry
- Slow progress: 5+ years

And yet:

- Social and financial return on investment
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The most common schemes of work for ESOL – require between **200 and 270 guided learning hours** to move e.g. from entry level1 to entry level2. Over 30 weeks in an academic year, a student would need to have **9+ hours a week of ESOL to progress up one level**. This rarely occurs and in general courses are for **3-5 hours a week**, meaning it could take **2 academic years to move up one level** – or up to **6 years to move from entry level 1 to 3**, i.e. to reach a level at which learners can reduce their isolation, integrate and work (but below GCSE English). Since there is high demand for ESOL classes it is not unusual for a learner to be added to a **waiting list** until classes are actually available – which could take 2 years. Even then, there are frequently no reliable progression routes through the levels so there could be gaps between studying one level and moving onto another. Many however do not start at entry 1 – they are pre-entry so progress to entry 3 is even slower.

2) We are wasting money and lives

The social benefits of people in work are massive. In addition, the **Let Refugees Learn report by Refugee Action** clearly states the financial return on investment for the society if refugees (and others) are able move off benefits and into work. To summarise: “Therefore, **costs of two years’ worth of ESOL** are effectively reimbursed following an individual’s **first eight months** of employment at the national average wage and about a year and three months at the lower wage of £18,000 per year.”

“Even where refugees who have learned English through ESOL do not work, for instance they may be a home carer or at retirement age, their lives would be significantly improved. This could lead to **savings for government due, for example, to the refugee being able to attend doctor’s appointments without the need for an interpreter.**”

The Let Refugees Learn report does not estimate the cost savings achieved by moving a person off benefits and into work. These savings are however significant over a lifetime and should be factored into the return on investment on ESOL classes.

3) German Success:



The image shows a screenshot of a tweet from Jeremy Cliffe (@JeremyCliffe) dated January 26, 2019. The tweet discusses the success of German immigrant policies, citing statistics from DIW Berlin. The tweet text is as follows:

Jeremy Cliffe 
@JeremyCliffe Follow 

Merkel was widely derided for her immigrant policies. But now we know:

- 3/4 of new immigrants have done or are doing German courses
- 33% speak good or v good German, up from 18%
- 35% are in work
- 2011-16 migrants added €35 billion to the German economy

Source: [@DIW_Berlin](#)

1:13 PM - 26 Jan 2019

These are the statistics quoted in the tweet:

https://www.diw.de/de/diw_01.c.612250.de/themen_nachrichten/mehr_und_mehr_gefluechtete_sprechen_gut_deutsch_nutzen_bildungsangebote_und_integrieren_sich_in_den_arbeitsmarkt.html

Half of the 2013-2016 arrivals have completed the languages classes and integration course. $\frac{3}{4}$ have completed at least the language classes. One third therefore have good or very good language skills. Another third have average German skills.

Around one fifth of 2016 arrivals and 10% of 2017 have started training or apprenticeships. Around 20% of 2015 arrivals were in work by 2017. By Oct 2018 this had increased to 35%.

Why has Germany been successful?

From my original report:

[Germany] has established language and orientation (integration) classes that are provided for 3 hours a day and last between 430 and 960 hours depending on the students' abilities and requirements. Learners therefore complete the courses to B1 [B1 = Entry 3 approx] (citizenship level in the UK and Germany) on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) within 9 to 18 months.

...

Germany has a well-established system in place for language teaching and integration. Average learners, i.e. those with good literacy skills and a high school education in their own countries, complete 600 language teaching hours to reach B1 level. Language courses are followed by 100 hours of a so-called "orientation course" covering Germany history, culture and law. Learners are expected to attend full-time, i.e. 3 hours a day. It takes 40 weeks to complete the language course plus 6 weeks for the orientation course. There is recognition that the standard course does not suit all learners so there is also an intensive course for fast learners (400 hours of language teaching plus 30 hours for the orientation course). On the other hand, there are separate courses for special groups, including 960 hours (64 weeks), i.e. an additional 300 hours (20 weeks), to teach literacy where needed or provide additional information necessary for women, parents and young people not in education. A national curriculum is provided for all of these classes.

- 4) **The ESOL system in the UK needs a fundamental review to make it "effective"** (to quote the DWP), adequate – or to use different words "fit for purpose".