

## **Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

### **Paper on 'Taking Forward the Recommendations in the Oxfordshire Community Action Report on 'ESOL in Oxford: Transcending the Barriers'**

#### **Background**

1. The OSP allocated £3,000 (LAA funding) to Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA), to undertake a piece of research into ESOL provision in Oxford.
2. At the OSP meeting, held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2012, Kate Hill, Networks and Communities Manager, OCVA, outlined the provisional findings of this work and a final copy of the report was circulated to members on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012.
3. The purpose of this paper is to:
  - Consider the recommendations made in the report.
  - Learn about some developments that have taken place since these recommendations were made.
  - Consider some options for taking the recommendations forward.

#### **The ESOL Report Summary and Conclusions**

4. The report drew upon interviews with community group members, ESOL providers and other stakeholders to assess the extent, gaps and implications for ESOL provision in Oxford.
5. The research has revealed that ESOL provision in Oxford is far from meeting the need and that this is likely to worsen in the coming years, through dwindling financial resources. Also, that the lack of ESOL provision has potential implications, for individuals not reaching their full potential and for lack of social cohesion.
6. The research highlighted that there is a groundswell of volunteers and community groups that are doing what they can to plug the gaps in provision but that there opportunities to strengthen this work through improved coordination and support, for example for recruiting volunteer teachers, connecting volunteer teachers to groups.

#### **The ESOL Report Recommend Actions**

7. The Report made the following recommendations.

##### **a) Regular networking meetings**

Regular quarterly ESOL networking meetings organised on a rota of agencies  
Two meetings have taken place and these have proved to be highly valuable to aiding information sharing and improved coordination of services.

##### **b) Map of ESOL provision:**

OCVA has produced a map of ESOL provision in Oxford.

OCVA and the ESOL Forum have produced updates.

- c) **Referral agency communication:** Ensure referral agencies are better equipped to make referrals through the mapping process.  
The Report was circulated to all referral agencies.
- d) **Build on wellspring of volunteer teachers:** OCVA's volunteer centre to actively recruit qualified volunteer teachers for ESOL community group projects.
- e) **Teaching space at independent schools:** By way of fulfilling their charitable objectives, independent schools make rooms available for community ESOL classes.  
Oxford City Council to put their weight behind the idea and engage in discussions with independent schools.

OCVC has come forward with an offer but the available times were not appropriate. On reflection some people may find schools and colleges more intimidating than other community venues.

- f) **Work clubs:** Oxford City Council to link ESOL into the work clubs that are currently being setting up by Oxford City Council Community and Neighbourhoods Team.

The map of provision has been included on the software package used by the work clubs to signpost people to support which is available.

- g) **Lead Coordinator:** One organisation or partnership of organisations takes a lead role in coordinating ESOL provision in Oxford/Oxfordshire.
- h) **Sponsor a learner:** Oxford residents are invited to "sponsor" ESOL learners.
- i) **ESOL Centre:** An Oxford centre for ESOL which can be used for free by Community groups wanting to put on ESOL lessons.
- j) **Build on wellspring of volunteer teachers:** OCVA's volunteer centre to actively recruit qualified volunteer teachers for ESOL community group projects that provide for a broad spectrum of needs including one to one lessons, cultural exchanges, women only, older people and so on.
- k) **Beginners and mother tongue literacy:** Mainstream ESOL providers to work more closely with and support the development of groups such as the Oxford Polish School which provides a vital role in getting beginners into ESOL provision.
- l) **Learning difficulties:** Mainstream ESOL providers look into the possibility of setting up a designated group for people with learning difficulties.

- m) **Mental health and wellbeing:**  
Provision of ESOL classes which are sensitive to mental health and wellbeing.

- n) **Educational attainment:** ESOL should be recognised as a key factor in influencing educational attainment in Oxford City and resource should be put into ESOL for both children and their parents.
- o) **Strengthening ESOL for employment:** Stronger links between ESOL providers and the Job Centre both by ensuring that ESOL providers are in regular communication with the Job Centre as well as ensuring that Job Centre staff is aware of ESOL provision and how to refer clients on.

The Report and recommendations have been considered at a 'Back to Work' Group meeting (which chaired by Job Centre Plus) and the Oxfordshire Skills Board.

- p) **ESOL as crime prevention:** Thames Valley Police to forge links with ESOL providers to support vulnerable people (e.g., women) to understand the basic police system such as reporting a crime. Thames Valley Police might also consider collaborating with community groups and ESOL providers to design a specific ESOL as crime prevention project.

### Recent developments

- 8. There have been a number of recent developments.
  - There are to be changes made to the Citizens Test in August 2013 and a level 3 in English will become a requirement.
  - The payment system for mainstream ESOL classes has changed – this is no longer paid on the basis of need but as a lump sum payment. This assumes that everyone learns at the same pace but there will be some people who will not reach level 3 within the allocated allowance. This is likely to increase demand for community ESOL provision.
  - The Learning and Skills LAA Fund have agreed to fund a similar piece of research in Banbury.
  - The Department of Local Government and Communities has launched an English Language competition with the aim of generating new and innovative ideas to deliver English language tuition in communities and up to 4 successful bids will receive a share of £6 million funding. The bidding criteria include a number of named target areas but Oxford is not included on the list but Slough is. We have tried to contact Slough to see if we can work with them in forming a consortium to bid and will continue to do so.
  - Cllr Larry Saunders has contributed £2,450 from his Councillor Budget 2012-13 to OCVA towards:
    - Facilitating work with potential venue providers.
    - Helping to maintain the mapping of ESOL Provision.
    - Exploring how volunteers find out about ESOL teaching opportunities.
    - A further network event.

- Support to organisations providing ESOL.
- This work has been led by the Networks and Communities Manager at OCVA. Funding for this post expires from 1 April 2013 and there will be no dedicated resource to support this area of work in OCVA from this point.

### **Priorities for taking this work forward**

9. To consider how the following can be further resourced /supported.
  - A dedicated resource to provide support and coordination for the network forums, updating the map of provision, linking groups with venues etc.
  - Additional support for the volunteer centre to support the management of ESOL volunteers.
  - Support for additional network meetings (2 x per year).
  - The provision of up to date teaching and training materials, including IT equipment.
  - The development of work based ESOL classes.
  - Training for ESOL teachers and volunteers on migrant and asylum seekers needs (for example mental health issues).

### **Funding options**

10. There are a number of funding options:
  - There is the possibility of approaching both City and County Councillors for support through their individual budgets.
  - There is a new, Oxford City Council Social Inclusion, Budget (£50,000 revenue funding in total). City Councillors will be able to nominate projects, up to £10,000 per project. The criteria are currently in the process of being agreed.
  - The OSP could use some of the remaining LAA Reward Funding (a balance of £37,000 capital/revenue remains). This could be used as match funding to attract other funds.
  - A proposal could be made to the Oxfordshire Learning and Skills Board / Local Enterprise Partnership (although this would need to be resourced).

### **Recommendation**

11. The OSP consider the above proposals and options for funding.
12. To identify a small task and finish to develop a proposal for submission for funding and to consider how this work can be made sustainable in the future.

Alison Baxter  
Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action

Val Johnson  
Oxford City Council

