

INVITATION TO TENDER

Scope & Specification

**For the provision of support for the regional
coordination of English for Speakers of Other
Languages (ESOL)**

August 2025

Tender Aims & Outcomes

The purpose of this document is to support the development of tenders for the provision of support for East Midlands Councils' (EMC's) coordination activities in the regional English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) sector.

The successful bidder will partner with EMC to maintain and develop work completed during EMC's regional ESOL programme, which ran during 2024 and 2025.

In general terms, this will comprise:

- Attend and support development of the emerging sub-regional collaborative ESOL forums, paying attention to recommendations contained in *ESOL in the East Midlands* (see Appendix One).
- Develop and convene an annual region-wide ESOL conference to bring sub-regional strands together.
- Support EMC to deliver Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) objectives relating to ESOL (see Appendix Two).
- Build on previous research and mapping work to support sub-regional forums and wider region-wide activities with evidence-driven insights, and maintaining oversight of developments in the regional sector with relevance to this research.
- To map relevant ESOL qualifications, highlighting their equivalency and progression routes between them.
- Work with EMC to develop engagement and collaboration with emerging Combined Authorities.
- Support EMC in management of day-to-day ESOL enquiries, and support quarterly monitoring returns to Home Office in respect of ESOL.

This activity will encompass each of the following localities, considering the prevailing situation and unique features of each:

- Derby & Derbyshire
- Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland
- Lincolnshire
- Nottingham & Nottinghamshire
- Northamptonshire

Project Deliverables

The key (mandatory) deliverables for the contract are:

1. Develop an over-arching action plan to account for the objectives listed below, including how you will measure and evidence delivery. Consider recommendations made in *ESOL in the East Midlands*, and articulate a strategy for prioritising and driving implementation of these through sub-regional forums.
2. Attend and support development of the emerging sub-regional collaborative ESOL forums, paying attention to recommendations contained in *ESOL in the East Midlands* (see Appendix One).
3. Develop and convene an annual region-wide ESOL conference, or 'good practice event', to bring sub-regional workstrands together.
4. Provide an end of contract evaluation report, highlighting progress against deliverables, distance travelled, opportunities and challenges, and proposals for future activity (subject to contract extension).

In addition to these over-arching priorities, the successful bidder will also show progress against the following sub-objectives:

5. Support EMC to deliver Home Office requirements relating to ESOL coordination (see Appendix Two).
6. Increase awareness of existing mapping tools for ESOL provision to assist in assessment of quality, capacity, and shortages in the region; establish processes and protocols for their maintenance, and make progress towards identification of named individuals to adopt responsibility for these. Develop awareness of local efforts to map ESOL provision, and provide support for the synergising and de-duplication of mapping tools, as required.
7. Work with EMC to develop engagement and collaboration with emerging Combined Authorities (ie, the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) and the Greater Lincolnshire County Combined Authority (GLCCA)).
8. Work with EMC to maintain engagement with national stakeholders such as NATECLA (seeking to foster developments in NATECLA's Midlands branch), WEA, Bell Foundation, etc, capturing and sharing resources, expertise, and good practice in all spheres of ESOL delivery, and ensuring this is factored into planning.
9. Support EMC's management of day-to-day ESOL enquiries with input as required, and support EMC's ongoing monitoring requirements (eg, quarterly reports to Home Office, ongoing data and insights for Regional Migration Board papers, etc).

Criteria for acceptance of the deliverables is included below:

Reference	Deliverable	Acceptance Criteria	Method
1	Develop an over-arching action plan to account for the objectives listed below, including how you will measure and evidence delivery. Consider recommendations made in <i>ESOL in the East Midlands</i> , and articulate a strategy for prioritising and driving implementation of these through sub-regional forums.	Action plan submitted and approved by EMC within 2 weeks of contract start, including SMART objectives aligned with deliverables, including strategy for progress against <i>ESOL in the East Midlands</i> recommendations.	Action Plan
2	Attend and support development of the emerging sub-regional collaborative ESOL forums, paying attention to recommendations contained in <i>ESOL in the East Midlands</i> (see Appendix One).	Attendance at 100% of scheduled forum meetings (unless otherwise agreed with EMC), documented contributions to at least one key development per locality, evidencing alignment to <i>ESOL in the East Midlands</i> recommendations.	End of Contract Report
3	Develop and convene an annual region-wide ESOL conference, or 'good practice event', to	Event held within the contract period, reflecting sub-regional priorities and including a proportionate	End of Contract Report

	bring sub-regional workstrands together.	mixture of formal, informal and VCSE providers. Post-event evaluation completed with at least 80% positive feedback.	
4	Provide an end of contract evaluation report, highlighting progress against deliverables, distance travelled, opportunities and challenges, and proposals for future activity (subject to contract extension).	Report submitted by 1700 on Friday 20 th March 2026 and approved by EMC. Includes analysis of progress against all listed deliverables and sub-objectives, and identifies lessons learned, challenges, and recommendations. Includes stakeholder feedback where applicable.	End of Contract Report
5	Support EMC to deliver Home Office and MHCLG requirements relating to ESOL coordination (see Appendix Two).	Evidence of coordination activity and alignment with Home Office and MHCLG requirements included to end of contract report.	End of Contract Report
6	Raise awareness of EMC mapping tools awareness and maintenance.	Evidence of awareness-raising via sub-regional forums. Develop and articulate protocols for maintenance of EMC-hosted tools.	End of Contract Report
7	Work with EMC to develop engagement and collaboration with emerging Combined Authorities.	Evidence of meetings, joint planning or shared initiatives with Combined Authorities.	End of Contract Report
8	Work with EMC to maintain engagement with national stakeholders such as NATECLA, WEA, Bell Foundation, etc, capturing and sharing resources, expertise, and good practice in all spheres of ESOL delivery, and ensuring this is factored into planning.	Evidence of regular and ongoing contact with national stakeholders, and demonstrating work with NATECLA to develop its Midlands branch.	End of Contract Report
9	Support EMC's management of day-to-day ESOL enquiries with input as required, and support EMC's ongoing monitoring requirements (eg, quarterly reports to Home Office/MHCLG,	Evidence of support, data, insights provided (if requested).	End of Contract Report

	ongoing data and insights for Regional Migration Board papers, etc).		
--	--	--	--

Project Timelines

EMC seeks to award a contract valued at £50,000, running between 22nd September 2025 and 31st March 2026, with an option to extend, subject to satisfactory monitoring returns, and at EMC's sole discretion.

Provider Responsibilities

The appointed provider will:

- Undertake to deliver the services described in this Invitation to Tender
- Demonstrate expertise and experience in the strategic coordination of ESOL at the regional and local levels.
- Maintain close links with EMC and Local Authority partners in the delivery of services, committing to meet with EMC on at least a monthly basis to maintain communication of progress, and allow for the early identification and mitigation of issues in delivery.
- At the end of the contracted period, provide a report evaluating the delivery of services specified in this tender, accounting for opportunities and challenges, and proposals for future activity (subject to contract extension).
- The provider will develop a business continuity plan to ensure the service can be delivered without interruption, should a disruptive event occur.
- Give as much notice as possible, and at the earliest opportunity, should any issues occur which are expected to impact on the achievement of agreed objectives and deadlines.

EMC Responsibilities

EMC will:

- Provide information, contacts, and officer time to enable the supplier to deliver requirements to agreed deadlines.
- Leverage its existing relationships and networks to enable the supplier to deliver requirements to agreed deadlines.
- Maintain regular contact with the appointed supplier to provide management input to guide project delivery.
- Attend and support the sub-regional ESOL forums (eg, providing policy updates, information on funding opportunities, insights from other localities, etc).
- Agree an escalation process with the supplier to ensure that a clear route is available for the reporting of issues. This will be commensurate with the contract value.

Scope Changes

EMC will maintain ongoing dialogue via regularly scheduled project management meetings with the supplier to ensure that changes of scope during the contracted period are identified

as early as possible, and will escalate such requests within its own governance.

Contract Termination

EMC reserves the right to terminate the contract at any time if there is a major breach of the contract conditions.

Appendix One

ESOL in the East Midlands: Recommendations

(Extracted from [ESOL in the East Midlands: An Evaluative Report](#))

- Consolidate and develop collaborative networks in the ESOL sector both within defined localities and region-wide across the East Midlands.
- Ensure ESOL provider representation at wider multi-agency meetings in order to advocate for vulnerable ESOL learners.
- Extend the complementarity of provision by developing models of collaboration between providers in different sectors, to ensure that learners can access a range of classes in a week, and to address specific learner needs and aspirations.
- Share the experience and ways of working of those areas where there is an established ESOL infrastructure with areas whose ESOL provision is sparser due to historic patterns of migrant settlement.
- Develop cross-border agreements with providers adjacent to the borders of East Midlands, to facilitate learner access to a wider range of provision.
- Improve access to information about ESOL classes for learners and those that advise them by developing a user-friendly, continually updated database of classes, and/or ensure information is available to newly-arrived migrants through key community spaces including hotels.
- Promote access to trauma-informed delivery training and crisis support, building on existing expertise in the region and through multi-agency networks. • Improve provision for learners with literacy and SEND issues by providing literacy and SEND training for ESOL staff and establishing ESOL SEND protocols in collaboration with external SEND professionals.
- Boost support to community sector ESOL providers in a way that recognises their vital contribution to ESOL delivery across the region, by coordinating strategic and practical initiatives to build capacity.
- Establish a resource providing information and advice about ASF funding to enhance provider capacity to manage frequent changes in funding regulations, including developments around devolution.
- Expand access to accredited provision by supporting third sector organisations to become registered centres for the delivery of accredited learning in areas of high demand.
- Promote employer engagement with ESOL by establishing a forum for providers and employers and modelling good practice.
- Ensure inclusive learning is valued in ESOL provision so that classes are available which focus on English in non-work contexts, to improve accessibility for marginalised groups, especially older learners.
- Support professional development around AI and its everyday use by learners, to facilitate integration of AI as a teaching and learning tool in the ESOL classroom.
- Develop and disseminate an information resource clarifying the English qualifications landscape for ESOL learners and others.
- Recognise the voices of forced migrant communities as a rich social and cultural asset, and explore ways to develop and build on this asset, both within the context of ESOL delivery and more widely, through a range of linked initiatives.

Appendix Two

Home Office objectives relating to ESOL Coordination

- 2.1 The purpose of ESOL coordination is to facilitate the pooling of resources, expertise, and coordination of arrangements to ensure that Language Training needs are met with quality provision at a place and pace that suits each Eligible Migrant's needs and circumstances while providing assurance that quality standards are maintained, and issues can be identified and addressed appropriately and in a timely manner. This supports the over-arching objective set out earlier in the agreement to promote migrant self-sufficiency and integration.
- 2.2 The Project Lead(s) will do this by:
 - 2.2.1 Regularly updating the mapping work of formal and informal adult Language Training provision that was started in 2016/17, including assessing capacity and shortages in the region, and quality of delivery against basic and employment related needs. On the basis of the lessons learnt from the mapping, maintain an action plan with recommendations to address needs and gaps. Continue to assist local authorities in the planning of provision for existing and future adult (a person of over 18 years) Migrants, taking into account when arrivals are planned (together on charter flights or individually on scheduled flights); geographical distribution; likely existing level of English language skills in the cohorts; likely employability and skills in the cohort and associated predicted need for specialist Language Training for employment. As each new cohort arrives, this should be refreshed to capture lessons learnt.
 - 2.2.2 Supporting local authorities in building capacity, commissioning and delivering ESOL to assist them in meeting the ESOL requirements placed on them by the Authority as clarified in the Local Authority Funding Instruction.
 - 2.2.3 Supporting and driving problem solving and planning at a national, regional and local level to ensure that formal Language Training provision meets the longer-term integration and self-sufficiency needs of Eligible Migrants, including the delivery of sector specific training to gain access to employment, where appropriate.
 - 2.2.4 Supporting local authorities to increase the volume and quality of informal Language Training provision, promoting and delivering training on informal activities to both existing and new community groups and supporting capacity building.
 - 2.2.5 Supporting local authorities with Beneficiaries under the age of 19 who should be accessing Language Training either through college or school. Maintain an overview of gaps in provision to under-19s along with recommendations to address these. Sharing best practice examples and supporting collective problem solving where there are accessibility barriers. Reporting back to the Programme on any accessibility barriers.
 - 2.2.6 Capturing and sharing the expertise and good practice of those supporting formal and informal Language Training for Migrants, ensuring this is factored into planning. This includes holding regular meetings with further education colleges, third sector, voluntary and private organisations to build relationships and share best practice, and could also involve working with neighbouring authorities ensuring their input is incorporated into planning. Sharing with other SMP Regional Coordinators and the Authority.

- 2.2.7 Monitoring and reporting back to the Authority on Language Training accessibility and progress towards achieving these outcomes, including the required minimum number of hours. Report back on any activity undertaken that benefit 'non-eligible' Migrants, for instance through improvements to ESOL infrastructure or planning. **This will include an annual report to the Authority, and additional regular reporting as requested by the Authority.**