

# West Midlands Combined Authority English language acquisition review

Alex Stevenson, Deputy Director

ESOL Development Day  
Swansea, March 2025

# Background

## Aims

1

To assess the extent to which investment in ESOL / ELA provision is **meeting need** in the region

2

To evaluate how approaches to language learning, curriculum design and stakeholder partnerships can contribute to **improved and accelerated outcomes**

## Methodology

1. Rapid evidence review and analysis of ILR data
2. Provider interviews
3. Focus groups with learners, non-learners, and stakeholders



# Summary of Key Findings

- Demand for ESOL provision is outstripping supply, and demand is increasing each year
- Refugees, people seeking asylum, parents, and employed learners are among those whose needs are not being met
- For those accessing provision, the benefits and outcomes of learning include skills for everyday life, progression into work or learning, and improved wellbeing and social capital
- Reporting of learner outcomes is limited and inconsistent
- More personalised, tailored, and flexible approaches to language acquisition provision are key to improving learner outcomes

# Differentiated provision

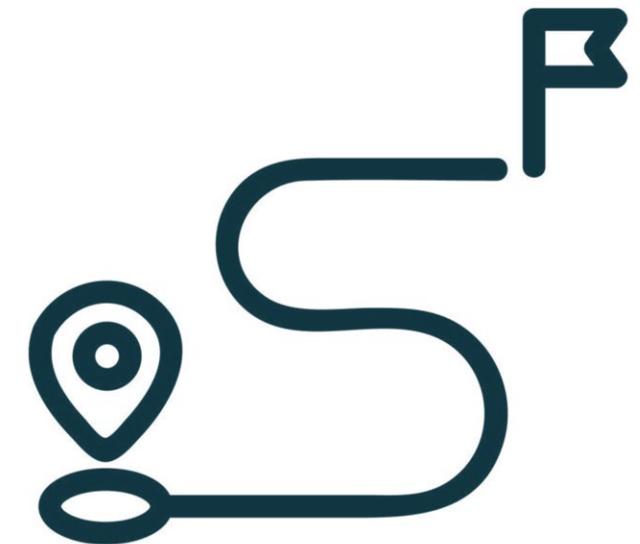
# Differentiated provision

1

WMCA should work with ELA providers to develop **ELA pathways** to form the basis for future delivery and commissioning provision

Pathways could include:

- First Steps English
- English Conversation Clubs
- Everyday English
- Everyday English (Literacy)
- Vocational English
- English for Work
- English at Work



## Learner cohort

► The specific learner cohort (in terms of needs and motivations and future aspirations) to be recruited

## Outcomes

► The outcomes which the pathway supports, alongside increased English language proficiency

## Funding

► Possible source(s) of funding to support delivery

## Provider types

► Types of provider involved in delivery of provision

## Levels available

► The levels of provision that the pathway covers

## Accreditation

► The balance of accredited and non-accredited delivery

## Mode of delivery

► E.g., community-based, classroom-based, online

## Curriculum design

► Features of curriculum design, teaching or learning methods to be used (e.g. CLIL, methods to support with literacy needs)

## Specialist partners

► Support offered and specialist partners to support outcomes, e.g., through referrals and progression, or delivery

## Progression routes

► Progression routes into further English language learning pathways and other learning provision

# Differentiated provision

2

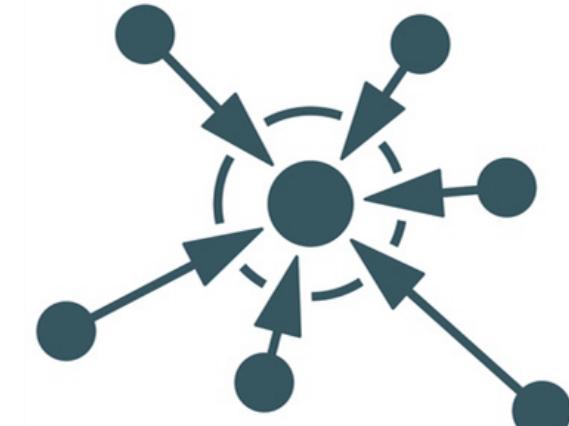
WMCA should work with central government to route all government funding for ESOL in the WMCA region through the **Integrated Settlement**

3

WMCA should establish the feasibility of appointing a single or reduced number of **awarding organisations** for ESOL qualifications in the region

4

WMCA should develop its approach to **outcomes measurement** to reflect the range of social and economic outcomes supported by ELA



# Collaboration and partnerships

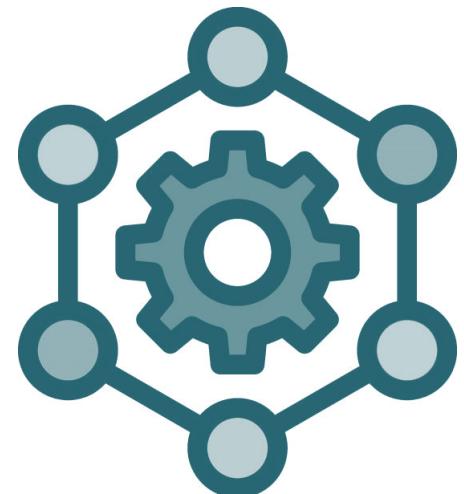
# Collaboration and partnerships

5

WMCA should work with local authorities and ELA providers to identify and initiate an appropriate **ESOL hub model** in the local authority where there is high demand for provision

6

Building on existing work in the region, providers should develop and roll out a **common initial assessment** of English language proficiency



# Collaboration and partnerships

7

WMCA should work with providers to develop and deliver a programme of **employer engagement** with English language learning

An employer engagement programme could:

- Help more employers (and representative associations) **understand the business benefits** of supporting ELA provision
- **Target employers** in sectors likely to have high numbers of employees with English language needs or those which often rely on migrant workers
- **Engage trade unions**, including Union Learning Representatives
- Be **broadened** and delivered as part of a wider drive on essential skills in the workplace



# Collaboration and partnerships

Steps WMCA, employers and ELA providers could take to bring about greater employer involvement in work-related pathways include:

Improving the quality of careers information, advice and guidance

Employers including the ESOL qualifications they accept in job adverts

Offering practical support for providers to develop ESOL at Work courses

Helping to identify skills shortage areas and job roles to which ELA programmes could respond

Helping employers understand the skills within migrant communities

Providing input into the content of work-related ELA programmes

Identifying ways in which ESOL learners can be supported to access/ progress to apprenticeships

# Building capacity

# Building capacity

8

WMCA should establish a **regional programme** to support the development of the ELA workforce and capacity in the voluntary and community sector





[learningandwork.org.uk](http://learningandwork.org.uk) | @LearnWorkUK