

ALWAYS FREE

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## Government re-think means ESOL remains free

ESOL CUTS STOPPED AFTER YEAR OF ACTION FOR ESOL CAMPAIGN.

After almost one year of campaigning the government has announced it will **not** reduce ESOL funding. Colleges in England and Wales can now continue to offer free English classes to all students in receipt of state benefits. Tim Dalrymple, teacher and campaigner from London says

**“This is not only an important victory for everyone who campaigned so hard to keep ESOL free but a victory for common sense. ESOL classes are a vital and valuable service because they help people integrate and contribute to the UK”**

Before the re-think, students claiming benefits not related to work (often called inactive benefits) would have to pay a fee. But from September, these students will receive free classes on condition they agree to look for work in the future. continued on page 2



## ESOL News

### Welcome to ESOL News

Welcome to the first edition of ESOL News, a termly newsletter covering news issues and topics of interest to ESOL students and their teachers – written by students and teachers themselves. We aim to keep you informed about national issues affecting ESOL students, and ESOL in the media as well as publishing news and features about ESOL students across the country. ESOL News is a place where you can publish your own stories and read about other students. You can learn more about things that affect you and share your ideas and opinions.

Please send us your feedback or any contributions you would like us to publish. We are also looking for students to get involved in editing and planning future issues. For this and any other information please contact us at [esolnews@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:esolnews@yahoo.co.uk)



Images around the UK. Demonstrations in **London (top) Brighton, Halifax, Bristol, Nottingham**

Continued from page 1

### NOT ALL GOOD NEWS

It isn't all good news for ESOL as the new rule only applies for one year. Next September the government may decide to cut funding again. Students would have to pay or lose the opportunity to learn English. Action for ESOL estimate there are thousands who simply can't afford the fees. Naina Kent, Education Advisor for the Learning Trust and Action for ESOL campaigner thinks cutting ESOL is short-sighted:

**“the Action for ESOL campaign must strengthen itself to ensure the government keeps ESOL fully funded and available to all who need it.”**

The government previously said ESOL students should contribute to their English costs during the current economic downturn.

What do you think?  
Should ESOL remain free or should students pay?

## Campaign News 2011-2012



Last year the government announced huge cuts to ESOL funding. Students, teachers and other organisations have all worked really hard to reverse the decision. As a result the government have agreed to free ESOL for this year. However teachers are worried about next year. About 40 teachers attended a meeting recently to discuss what we can all do now.

At the meeting they said that:

- Students and teachers who have been involved have all made a difference. Everybody should be proud of what has been achieved so far.
- The Action for ESOL campaign has to continue to protect the long-term future of ESOL.
- Some colleges have still cut classes and there are now long waiting lists in some places. These students must be helped.

A lot of people wrote to their MPs who then helped in Parliament. Students and teachers should write to their MPs again to tell them the good news, thank them and ask for their continuing support.

Action for ESOL wants students to help with the next stage. If you have any advice about what the campaign should do now or ideas about what you can help contact [esolnews@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:esolnews@yahoo.co.uk)

### Poetry Corner Government Cuts to ESOL

by Fatima Sultan Begum

ESOL cuts are like a big strong punch  
 They sound like a fox scream  
 They smell like stale fish  
 They taste like out of date milk  
 They feel like a stone

### Did you know?

There are 187,000 adult ESOL learners in England

British Citizens	39%
Women	66%
Women with children under seven	25%
Average % ESOL students in college	11%
Average % ESOL students in London colleges	22%

Source: AoC survey, Jan 2011, BIS statistics 2010

## This edition's feature articles

### How cuts to ESOL affects lives



## ESOL for Me

by Hana Fesiha

When I came here 8 years ago as asylum seeker I didn't speak English at all. I have been under social service, I used to have a key worker but we didn't understand each other because of my English so I used to cry a lot. He used to take me to the doctor, shopping and any where I want. After he would take me to free ESOL course in Harlesden community centre in half term. One year later I went to Queen's park college, again for free ESOL

course. My ESOL course helped me a little to improve my communication with people.

I started to look for a job but nobody employed me because of my English and my home office papers. Now after 8 years I got my papers, I started doing my ESOL for Care at Hammersmith and West London College and working part time.

My ESOL is very important to me because in the future I want to do nursing so ESOL will help me to improve my spelling, grammar, speaking skills, to get better job and to be independent.

If ESOL funding cuts will happen in September this will affect all my dreams and I won't be able to have good education or a good life for the rest of my life.

## ESOL for Me

by Mohamed Conde

When I first came to the UK I was looking for someone who spoke French like me to talk to them to ask them many questions I needed to understand about UK. But unfortunately I couldn't find anyone. Then I decided to join the college to improve my English. For me in the UK if you don't speak English that means

no life for you. How do you expect to live in this country if you're not able to speak English?

There are many things you have to understand about the country. For example, the laws, the history, the culture, and the live style and all this only happens when you start speaking English.

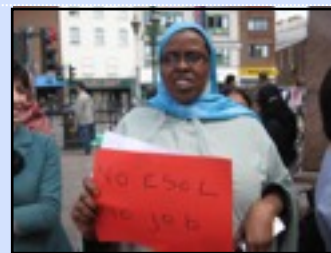
If the government decides to cut ESOL classes that means they're taking

peoples' lives away and they'll have a lot of problems and they'll lose their way or they'll break the law because they can't understand it.

For example, today we studied the census form in class.

I didn't understand it to fill it in by myself and if you don't do it properly you break the law and you can go to prison or pay a huge fine.

## Photo-board Reasons for ESOL



Students and their 'ESOL for Me' placards on the 'Make a Noise for ESOL' demonstration at Tooting Broadway, London in June 2011.

# Changes to family immigration rules

In July this year the government department UK Border Agency published a consultation paper on reforms to family migration. The proposals affect all non-European nationals from non-English speaking countries who apply to enter the UK through the family route (spouses and partners of British citizens or settled persons, their children or elderly dependents). They include: 1. A five year probationary period for spouses (currently two years) before they can apply for settlement. 2. Increasing the

language requirement from A1 to B1 (E1 to E3). 3. Introducing a higher minimum income requirement for sponsors who want to bring relatives to the UK. 4. Restrictions on other family members e.g. dependent children and those aged over 65. 5. New measures to tackle sham and forced marriages.

Despite other recent policies to reduce the numbers of people coming to the UK, Immigration Minister Damian Green said lowering net migration was 'not the primary goal' of the new plan. He said the proposals were aimed at 'tackling abuse, promoting integration and reducing burdens on the taxpayer'. Alan Travis, a journalist for The Guardian newspaper claimed that the new rules would disproportionately affect poor people. He said "British citizens who are poor or unemployed could be prevented from marrying the spouse of their choice if new family migration proposals become law".

Sheila MacDonald, an ESOL teacher said "learning English to take part in British society is very important, but this can be hard for people to achieve before they come to the UK". She said "passing ESOL E3 often takes several years for beginner adults, especially when other commitments such as childcare or shift-work are a priority. Introducing strict rules and timescales to learn will not help a lot of students".

You can read the full document on the Home Office website in the 'consultation section'. The government has invited people to respond to the proposed changes by **6<sup>th</sup> October 2011** at <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/family-migration-consult>

Have your say in ESOL News - What do you think about the proposed changes? Send us your comments for publication to [esolnews@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:esolnews@yahoo.co.uk)

## Did you know...

564,640 visas were issued last year?

**160,760 (28%)** were Employment visas

**334,765 (59%)** were Study visas

**53,755 (10%)** were Family route visas

**15,360 (3%)** were dependants

Source: Home Office 2011

## ABOUT ME

### 5 MINUTE INTERVIEW



**Name:** Noura

**Home Town:** London

### Why I came to the UK

**I come from Morocco. I married my British husband there and came to England in 2003. I like living here because people are nice and sometimes kind.**

### Would you like to publish in ESOL News?

We are looking for contributions from ESOL students for future issues. Please send your work and comments about the newsletter to

[esolnews@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:esolnews@yahoo.co.uk)

### Are you an ESOL teacher looking for materials?

Check out the **ESOL News website** with a selection of paper based and on-line materials for the classroom.

[www.esolnews.org](http://www.esolnews.org)

### ESOL NEWS - Issue no 1

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