

Brent Community ESOL Programme Report



September 2021 - August 2022

We have been on quite a journey this academic year at EFA in Brent, with the coherence of the initial project plan drafted two summers ago being realised in practice - not perfectly but substantially. You can read about the background to this project, and its first year [here](#). As English for Action's newest London hub, our work in Brent has benefitted from the strong groundwork established by EFA teachers and students in other areas, and with a healthy two-year grant from Brent council as a foundation, we have been able to deliver towards a vision of migrant community organising, that is in turn being mirrored in our other hubs, especially our work on migrant leadership development. Involving some 180 residents, and 15 student leaders, we're happy to share with you our accomplishments, the challenges we face, and our objectives for the coming year.



Classes

Our weekly schedule of 6 participatory ESOL classes has been more coherent this year: we ran three general classes (Entry 3 - Level 2+); one for IELTS preparation (as requested by students); and one dedicated class for care workers, one for asylum seekers in hotel accommodation. Both our teachers play a role in consciously developing EFA's participatory pedagogy, with Robin convening EFA's national Community of Practice sessions, and Fatime serving on a new action research group. Last year's report gives you more of a sense of

what kinds of things are discussed in the classroom.

It has been a pleasure to start one class in-person for asylum seekers, hosted by Young Roots, working alongside Care4Calais volunteer teachers. Teaching online during the pandemic made us aware of some definite advantages - accessibility for some mothers, disabled students, workers, and dispersed asylum seekers; the ease with which we could use the vast resources of the internet; better, consistent note taking; digital familiarisation for all of us. It is still the preferred option, on the whole, for the class groups which started online. But nothing beats being able to sit in a circle, read body language, for words and intentions to bounce off each other as it only does in person - and the games!



At EFA, the classroom plays many different functions:

It's a place of conscious language learning, where language serves the practical, social and emotional needs of a group of speakers. The classroom content often emerges through simple chats and check-ins, with the class offering friendly ears and peer advice from shared experience. The teacher uses participatory tools to identify themes for deeper exploration, and guides the process so that there are often tangible outcomes. [Here](#) you can read Fatime's description of several weeks of classes exploring the issue of *language barriers in health*, with the class serving as a focus group for Brent Healthwatch. A theme can be explore theory and ideology - like Multiculturalism and Citizenship. It's a rare space in today's society where, language learning considerations aside, a group of adults unconnected to an elite academic institution, come together and learn with a broad, open agenda that covers quotidien interpersonal issues, philosophy, culture, history and politics.

It's a smaller group where close relationships are formed; each one of these close-knit learning communities can feel quite different from each other depending on the participants, and cover very different content. The pandemic made us all think much more about the importance of keeping connected. If you're interested in the implications for our overall health and wellbeing of belonging to such a group, [here's a paper](#) written by Robin, the Brent hub manager for last summer's EFA conference.

Out of Many, One?

Migration, Culture, Community

English for Action Community Day
11am-3pm - **Sunday** 3rd July

@ SEIDS, Empire Way, Wembley, HA9 0RJ

Join us for our community education day where we'll be discussing the meeting of different cultures in migrant cities.

- There'll be games, debates, 1-1 discussions, a documentary about migrant citizenship in America, poetry, research on key concepts.
- We'll also be filming for a short video asking our Labour council representative where they've disappeared to after the elections.

All Welcome. English level Entry 3 +. A creche for children. Home-cooked lunch. Places are free but limited. WhatsApp Robin: 07974 331 053



Teachers discuss what themes are emerging in our classes, and this year for the first time we identified convergent themes to develop further in a series of monthly community days, bringing together students between classes. Supported by three further smaller funds (Near Neighbours, Edward Harvist and Joseph Rowntree Foundation), these monthly events have allowed our community organising mission to really come into its own.

Robin's approach is brilliant and so well-received by the learners in his group - a 'participatory' approach - listening and responding to, and being led by, learners. It's English learning that engages with the specificities/practicalities of learners' circumstances (whereas a lot of ESOL education seems totally out of touch with learners lives and removed from their day-to-day realities). It's a huge part of the reason Robin's learners get so much out of their sessions.

Having an advanced-level class at our drop-in feels like a really important response to the various needs of those who attend our sessions. At Young Roots we follow principles of youth leadership and participation, and it's brilliant to work with an ESOL teacher who takes a similar approach with his learners. With so many voluntary sector organisations etc providing different kinds of ESOL classes/activities, I think more volunteers/staff being trained in this approach would strengthen the local sector overall. - Molly Brech, Brent Services Manager, Young Roots (working with young refugees)

Community Organising and Student Leadership development

From November through to April we ran a listening campaign, ultimately focussing on what could be achieved in the window of May's local elections. Over four Community Days, 60 of our students participated in a process of identifying issues, power-mapping and strategic prioritisation of demands, producing an [EFA migrant manifesto](#) for Brent, translated by our students into 20 languages! Covering ESOL Coordination, Care Workers, Asylum Seekers and Renters Rights, this was presented to 14 councillors at a 100-strong Community Assembly, and some parts of it were also included in the Brent Citizens Manifesto. Here is our [report](#) to our funders, with links to detailed write-ups and video documentation of the process.

The local elections, although not the level of power at which some important issues can be resolved, was a tangible and meaningful experience of democratic participation, bringing our students closer to power - with all its shortcomings and disillusion! It entailed working with partners, notably Care4Calais, Brent Citizens and the London Renters Union, presenting as a strong and representative coalition. It brought



Power: Can we make Brent Council work for us?

At the last community day, we learnt about how a strategic campaign uses Power Mapping.



Once we know what our goal is, we make a map to show who our allies are, who else has an interest in the issue, and who has the power to deliver. Taking action in the right way also increases our own power.

We read about the situation of home care in Brent from the point of view of workers and the elders in our community who rely on their care. We identified the main issues and we made a power map of a campaign.

This month we are getting organised for the local elections in May. It's a chance for us to take action on the priorities we have identified

We will make a big EFA banner and a plan to build support among potential allies who share our aims.



Care Workers

- Develop better initial training and CPD career progression routes
- Fund and promote ESOL classes
- Pay a Living Wage - end zero-hour contracts. Pay for travel time between visits for home care workers
- Implement fair staffing levels & sickness policies

ESOL & Employability

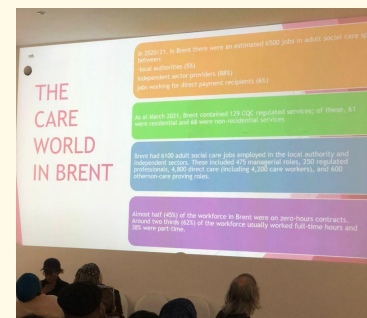
- Fund an ESOL Coordinator for Brent's statutory and community sectors
- Develop a participatory ESOL Strategy
- Host an education and careers fair for migrant communities
- Provide ESOL classes for Asylum seekers in initial accommodation

**We want community
We need change**

together students across EFA's local hubs to strategically align some of our key asks on ESOL coordination in different boroughs in a [London manifesto](#). Beyond the local, the findings of our Brent listenings and the manifesto we produced also fed into the National Listening Campaign jointly undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Community Organisers Ltd.



The most important aspect of the process was the engagement of an emerging student leadership, involved in co-designing the successive monthly events, debating whether to engage in the local elections, and deciding on our priorities and how to present them. We are grateful for the support of the local Citizens and Renters Union organisers for their support in this leadership development process.



The aftermath of the elections has been a much more complex period, wherein some of the scepticism that was expressed prior to the elections about how politicians treat their promises post-election proved true.

EFA student leaders turned out with other Citizens leaders immediately after the vote to welcome the Leader back to office and remind him of his pledges. We play a dynamic role in what is still a fledgling local chapter of Citizens UK, and when we met other leaders in June, we wanted to broaden the buy-in on the issues we had put on the agenda, which of course are felt deeply by others in the local coalition.



Politics is complex, and we have even had to challenge Citizens UK for allowing the Living Wage Foundation to tacitly dictate our actions, with its broader targets in mind, downplaying the issue of our care worker students who are not being paid the Living Wage by the council, despite the council's 10 year accreditation.



We have been relatively successful in involving our student leaders in this more sophisticated - and sometimes disillusioning - behind the scenes analysis. We're committed to developing genuine, independent-thinking leadership - not just token participation, where low-paid migrants are wheeled out for set-piece testimony. People know when there is dishonesty, and unjustified inaction also haemorrhages support.



In one of the first moments of post-election tension, some of our asylum seeker leaders attended the July Full Council meeting to put pressure on the council to vote for a motion resolving to introduce free bus passes for asylum seekers. The Liberal Democrats sponsored the resolution but the Labour Party watered down the resolves, committing themselves only to “making representations” to London Councils.



Our culture allows for multiple perspectives and tactics to be debated, sometimes in creative ways. Here, in July, while we were reviewing the text for a video we planned to make to agitate on the failure of the council to take any meaningful action, a friend of one of our student leaders, listening to our discussion, commented that we needed to act as *water*. We took his metaphor of the elements, each taking a turn to express our preferred tactical reactions to such official

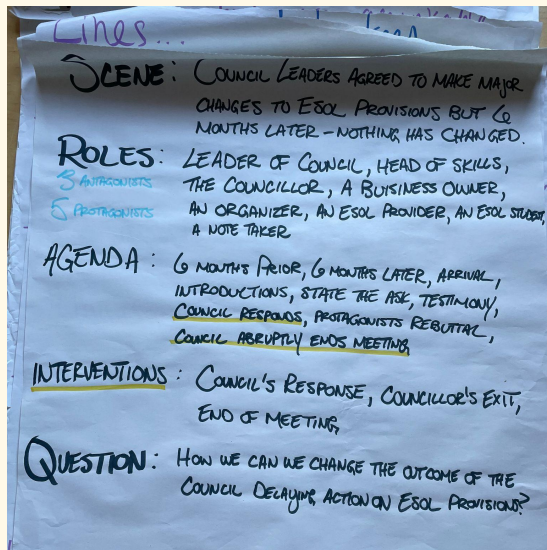
roadblocks. We all have different temperaments that shape our actions, and this was a really welcome moment where we understood each other more as a group of local leaders, sharing tactical preferences, and taking time to build a consensus outlook. This discussion guided our responses to the setback described above at the Full Council meeting. We calmly persist.



Likewise, here at Kings College, four of us from Brent participated in a forum theatre event for community organisers, co-hosted by EFA and Citizens UK, on the theme of *negotiations*. Two of us had been involved in devising the forum piece, and while we had a final rehearsal, those EFA students who were there to attend the performance went on a tour of the KCL library with our chair of trustees and did 1-1s reflecting

on their own leadership qualities.

Anticipating similar experiences across all our hubs in upcoming post-elections meetings, the forum theatre scenario that was enacted was one of a council leadership team running circles around a Citizens delegation, ultimately avoiding making any headway on their



election pledges. The performance was funny in so far as the scene was entirely recognisable - the platitudes of politicians, flattery, citing of changed circumstances, a conveniently double-booked meeting, new personnel - the gamut of deflections. What was perhaps most interesting was seeing how *our own side* could potentially act to undermine each other through our uncoordinated responses, unintentionally failing to pull together in the same direction. We reflected on what worked well - pinning down clear commitments on time-frames, reminding politicians of the weight of the coalition, being clear on what our response would be to both positive and negative outcomes, allowing ourselves time to caucus.

A Week of Action in Westminster!

Teacher-Organisers at EFA have different organising backgrounds and we take a broad approach, collectively, to our roles. Brent Hub manager Robin, with a strong activist background, led a week of action, starting with mobilisation for the Rwanda protest. It's been so inspiring to see asylum seekers overcome their fear of exercising their voice in the atmosphere created by the hostile environment. 30 of us from Brent attended the protest at the Home Office in June, but this was prefigured by just two students attending protests earlier in the year with Robin and a Care4Calais volunteer teacher. And a lot of airing of concerns about whether involvement in protest / politics would affect their asylum claims. The popular June mobilisations in tandem with the legal work, meant the planes to Rwanda were grounded, a welcome boost to morale. It was a great example of collaboration in the local refugee solidarity scene, with Care4Calais, Young Roots and individual donations funding the travel costs and a dinner at a Somali restaurant afterwards for asylum seekers. We were particularly happy that one student, Hamed, an exiled Iranian journalist, wrote [our social media report](#), which was collectively edited by one of our online classes.



The Rwanda protest on the Monday, was followed by a migrant history walking tour which ended at a picnic in Westminster for [International Domestic Workers Day](#), hosted by the Voice of Domestic Workers, who also learn ESOL with EFA. To finish the week, we joined the national TUC "[We Demand Better](#)" demonstration.

From these links, you can see that our local social media was coming into its own, with much of the photography done by Hamed. Here is a photographic [video report of the week](#). In different ways, it was another way of demonstrating leadership, one where turning out, networking, and having the spirit of protest counted.



Individual support and Casework



A lot of trust is built in our classes, and we overtly bring to the fore the material conditions of life facing our students. Our teachers are well-connected and knowledgeable people. There is no single view at EFA around how much case-work, if any, a teacher-organiser should get involved with. It will partly depend on their capacity and experience, and the links they have to partner organisations - and how accessible and effective the advice services are in a given area. For example, we've done a fair amount of simple asylum seeker casework for

the adults, where there was a gap, chasing up Section 95 letters or Aspen payment cards, writing letters against dispersal from Wembley or to the MP to expedite their main interview.

What is certainly an objective is to take collective action on issues, and very often it will be an issue raised by an individual that galvanises this. The organisations we work most closely with to ensure that we're supporting individuals in the here and now while raising collective concerns, are ones which use a model of action-casework, like the Renters Union in Brent, or Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth in South London. About 10 Brent students have been supported with housing issues via the Renters Union and a few have got actively involved in the organisation of the branch. The systemic issues identified by dealing with cases first-hand at Brent LRU informed the five local asks (translated here by EFA students), presented at the EFA Community Assembly.

"The London Renters Union's relationship with EFA in Brent has been fruitful and energising. EFA's organising approach, putting students and their leadership development at the heart of language teaching, has led to more and more empowered migrant members attending other local events and becoming more involved in local community action. This has a powerful knock-on effect, and working together allows us to support students with their housing situations at the same time as building stronger communities." - Jacob Wills, Brent LRU organiser

Case Studies: Rxxx was referred to us by an organisation supporting refugee families in Brent. Her teacher knew that she was disabled in the context of her wanting online classes and not being able to attend community events. She never spoke about any of her housing issues in the class. As part of the 1-1 listenings we conducted for the JRF sponsored National Listening Campaign, she disclosed her housing situation, the incapacitating medical issues of her husband, and totally inappropriate temporary accommodation provided by the council, which left her sleeping on their floor. Her teacher offered help, and eventually her case worker got in touch, having reached a total deadlock. EFA's role was simply to write to the relevant councillors and officers, copying in the London Renters Union Organiser.

There was a very stressful moment where it seemed the ideal accommodation was being offered to her, then about to be rescinded. It was the local election period, with a Housing themed hustings taking place in that area. Axxx, a student leader who lived in the block

we hoped she'd be moved to, whom we had also helped with her housing case, was willing to join a short notice protest. We alerted the councillors that we would picket the event if the offer wasn't confirmed before then. It was. We didn't have to do much at all in reality; the case worker was exemplary, but it did help that we had a reputation for protest and mobilisation. The Lead member for Housing had been at our Community Assembly.

Soon after her family moved in, she sent her teacher a beautiful, powerful piece of prose which she'd written describing her crossing of the Mediterranean in a dinghy, pregnant, holding on to the hand of her other daughter, which we read together in Arabic

and English in class. People seeking asylum and refuge in the UK are often retraumatised by the situations they face here, where all their mental, physical and financial resources have gone into surviving escape the journey here.

Axxx, mentioned in Rxxx's case, joined an online class that she felt wasn't really challenging her enough, but in a 1-1 she was encouraged to get involved with Citizens,



where she might get the real life outlets for her impressive language skills. She joined a protest by the Renters Union circulated in our leaders group to show solidarity with a fellow Network Homes tenant. A few weeks later, she too was in crisis, having been sent a threatening letter by their solicitors claiming unjustified service charges.

She wrote her own impressive response, but her teacher sat with her and they analysed and edited it together, discussing tone, objectives, the place of emotion and outrage,

producing a text that could be understood by third parties if she needed community support. Her councillor is an ally of EFA, and he called her and offered his help. Although she chose to find a way to settle the issue, having seen so many other tenants battle to no avail, it was important to her to have that solidarity when she was feeling totally defeated and bullied. She joined the LRU and a Facebook forum of Leaseholders, and came to her original class and gave them a briefing on some of the dangers of Shared Ownership.



Every fortnight, in partnership with the Brent-based Work Rights Centre, Fatime runs an employability and employment rights per-support group. One of Fatime's students, with a legal background, now volunteers with the Work Rights Centre, as does the daughter of another student.

In tandem with conversations in and outside of our regular classes (and often between students) students get support with their individual progression in education and employment. Quite often, students rely on poor advice and generic strategies that circulate, and take next steps without enough consideration. Equally, such peer advice is often the best advice! Our forums and networks try to improve the quality of advice people can access through assessing options together. One of the local election pledges we secured from the Leader and Lead Member for Employment and Skills was for the Civic Centre to host a Migrant Education and Employment Fair.

Case studies:

Both the following case studies are examples we're proud of, because of the amazing achievements of these student leaders, and also because we've consciously tried to make our organisation itself and the activities we're involved with direct outlets and avenues for development and progression. Their progress represents increased capacity for EFA and for the wider community sector.



Hakima has studied with us since we started working in Brent. Her major obstacle has been English, but gaining an orientation in the organisational cultures here. She was a lecturer in Communications Algeria before relocating her to support husband's career, and her VISA means she's been ineligible for college courses. She's attended every class open to her (including with other hubs), co-designed and facilitated a series of online wellbeing workshops during lockdown, sessions on Algeria and the media for the Our World Class. and got involved producing EFA's People in Action video series.

With a background in sailing and athletics, she expressed one day that she wanted to learn how to ride a bike. We directed her to a local group, where she met someone who encouraged her to apply to be a governor of a primary school in Kilburn. She completed a Level 3 ESOL and Literacy course for teaching assistants, a leadership course, and Listening Skills and Safeguarding courses as part of our involvement with the CO Ltd National Listening campaign. She's played a pivotal role in modelling what we mean by student leadership, as a researcher, strategist, and spokesperson, particularly on ESOL strategy.

She got involved in the Brent ESOL network (see below) and was appointed the volunteer ESOL coordinator for Brent Libraries. She attended a weekly summer term study group, and three intensive days in August. She's just successfully secured a job as a mental health project coordinator at Chalkhill Community Centre, yes with support and confidence building, but also by being around and getting her face known, through our collaborations there.



Annalibera joined one of Fatime's classes in our first year, new to the country. With a party political and trade union background, she immediately understood what we were trying to achieve in our classes and beyond. With Hakima, she helped curate the mental wellbeing sessions and designed the publicity. As we moved into our second year, she got a job as a learning disabled support worker in Brent, joined the care workers class, and threw herself into the organising of our community days.

She helped mentor a fellow home care worker, meeting 1-1 with her and building her confidence to be a spokesperson. She researched the care work commissioning arrangements in Brent and the wider issues of the sector, presenting the issues at the Assembly. and they very much strategise together. In the run-up to the assembly, she attended a meeting with Brent's care commissioning officer.

She's covered Robin, facilitating the care workers class when he's had clashes with other evenings, and completed the Level 3 ESOL and Literacy course as part of her plan to teach English to Italians to supplement her income. With such broad interest in the varied work we undertake at EFA, she's become a trustee of the organisation.

"EFA Brent's staff and student leaders have brought a lot of energy to our local alliance - by joining existing Campaign Action Teams or establishing new ones, participating in Leadership Team meetings and in public actions such as Assemblies with local decision makers and more - while also modelling what it means to be an organised and relational institution where leadership is actively nurtured, relationships are built intentionally and where a habit of collective action and solidarity is fostered. It is extremely rewarding to be playing a part in the development of student leaders from migrant backgrounds and to see them develop an impressive level of ownership of both EFA Brent and Brent Citizens and I am confident we can build on the work done to date. I would strongly encourage funders interested in supporting projects that focus on leadership development, capacity building and community organising to support EFA Brent and help their work become even more sustainable"- Daphne Giachero, Brent Citizens Community Organiser

The Brent ESOL Network



One of the most important developments this year was our success in co-convening with Brent Start (the council's adult education department) a new termly forum for ESOL providers. We had been compiling a directory of all the local ESOL provision, and this gave us the contacts and *positioning* to bring organisations together. It can be hard to make partnership working a priority for busy, hard-pressed organisations, and it is thanks to the good will of a range of colleagues, but especially Lotus Sisalli, a Senior Programme Leader from Brent Start.



In the Spring term, hosted by Willesden Library, we had our first meeting. Asylum seeker provision was the main item, with a speaker from the council. We pooled our knowledge on how to overcome barriers to access. It was a great opportunity to hear in some depth about each other's provision, a step towards coordination and ensuring new provision is well targeted. At our second meeting in the summer term, we discussed enrolment and referral systems, and one big outcome has been for the College of NW London to take on board some of the barriers students have encountered, leading them to seek places out of the borough. They've produced a new information sheet, so students aren't confused by their processes. The college have accepted student lists we send to check people haven't fallen through the gaps.

Through campaigning and consistent follow up, the [ESOL Directory](#) finally went live online on the Council's website, signposted prominently on the Course, Training and Skills homepage.

What's happening at Brent Start



News

New build for Brent Start

Morland Gardens will expand which will see its existing building redeveloped into a multi-purpose site with affordable housing.

[New Build for Brent Start](#)



Training and skills

Want to learn English?

You can develop your spoken, written, reading and listening skills with an ESOL course (English for Speakers of Other Languages). There are lots of different types of classes from beginner to advanced. Find an English class in Brent today!

[Brent ESOL directory](#)

Training

We consider training to be an important part of our work, to build capacity in the community, especially in participatory ESOL and facilitation. Robin ran one training session in the spring attended by volunteers and staff from four local organisations, and has also supported Care4Calas volunteers teaching the beginner classes and conversation clubs for asylum seekers in Wembley.



We were unsuccessful in a funding application to run an intensive training course to build a network of local teacher-organisers, with a particular focus on supporting migrant teachers into the profession, but we endeavour to find capacity to do that in some form over the coming year.

We have referred students onto the Level 3 ESOL and Literacy course and increasingly they are leading our own sessions, with support. There's upcoming training on facilitating conversation clubs, with our partners at Learning Unlimited, also aimed at giving ESOL students another stepping stone to build experience and confidence.



Challenges

Community Organising is challenging work. For us, it is a combination of strategic frontline delivery, intensive support for emerging leaders, creating partnerships and allies, providing the impetus for initiatives that flow from our collective assessment of what's needed - and tireless campaigning.



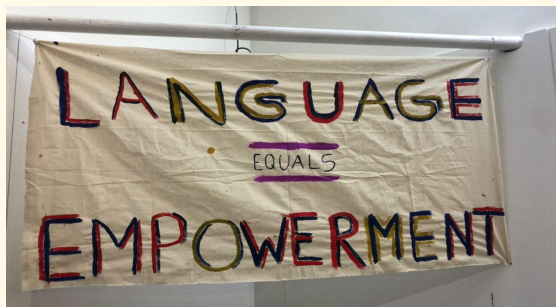
Our students are in difficult situations, and sometimes our teacher-organisers too. We rely on short-term grants, constantly cobbling together enough funds to not just sustain a routine, but to be responsive to emerging need. We have been so fortunate in the students and leaders that have invested their energy and creativity into this work - but the precarity of the rental and employment system, the immigration and asylum systems mean that many are treading water, and have to make difficult and tiring choices constantly. We've put the emphasis on building community, a social fabric of mutuality, as our best strategy of resilience. We try to be adaptive, to listen, to support, and to identify the strengths and assets of individuals in our community. It's a small but countervailing force to the atomisation and alienation of the last two decades. Though what we do involves ups and downs, progress and setbacks, we're confident that what we're doing is an important part of the migrant rights sector and the wider social justice movement.



In our summer study group, we've explored the theme of *the personal is political*. It's meaningful to us that a student in Italy will turn to her class WhatsApp group to share photos of her premature baby and details of her traumatic emergency C-section, and be flooded with love, such that she may decide to return to London postpartum, save her settled status, feeling she has people here. A new student turns to another student who she's only met a couple of times, the person she had to witness her marriage has bailed on her. The other student rallies her daughter and her teacher to go and be witnesses at her marriage, letting out an ululation at the Civic Centre as they sign the papers and regularise their life. A young Sudanese leader, housed with a family, coordinates with a longstanding Sudanese elder whose friends have cooked traditional Darfur foods, to be sent to their people accommodated in the hotels during Ramadan. The Ukrainian chef who doesn't speak good enough English to benefit from our study group, but persists, who joins the other asylum seekers as a volunteer in the local community cafe, where she's welcomed by the two staff who cobble together the few Russian words they know, and all the wariness evaporates. The student leader who insists lunch at one long table is what we need at the centre of our community days, and all the food cooked in stolen hours, and the asylum seeker who lived with No Recourse to Public Fund, dispersed to Portsmouth who returns to London with cake for us. Fatime brings together two students whose daughters have experience hospitalisation for serious mental health issues, so that one can get support and advice from the other who has navigated the systems before.



What our students have said



Fella: Joining EfA has ended my feeling of loneliness and isolation, it has given me- through real-life subject based lessons, meetings, and workshops- a voice , a place where I could be heard, to listen to others, to share opinions and to support each other. At EfA we are a family.

Kate: Attending classes, I felt great support from both the teacher and other

students. EFA classes are always held in a friendly atmosphere and provide a lot of useful information, and most importantly, communication. Thanks to EFA, I'm more confident & can feel part of the community!

Fatima: I achieved a lot in life after I participated in ESOL classes. First my mental health has improved because of the social life I experience in the classes. I became more confident in solving any issues in public services. I helped all my children in their school home work. They all did very well academically.

The English for Action course has excellent new ways of teaching. Practical variety of interesting topics. Also we

enjoyed the monthly Community Days. It brings all asylums seekers and refugees from different classes to meet with others, and we learn more skills through fun games. We also share experiences and learn about other people's cultures and values.

With English for Action we've participated in our democratic rights as we demonstrate against the Government decision to send asylum seekers to Rwanda. We also had a Week of Action against the high cost of living and money other things.

Mahide: When I first came here, I couldn't speak English and was hesitant if I could communicate with people... the sincerity of the teachers impressed me and made me happy. It helped me a lot in overcoming the difficulties I faced.

Annalibera: "The way we organise and operate as a team is becoming smoother, all of us are developing our abilities to participate and take initiative. We don't just act when prompted. We have more defined goals now."

Ali: "This class means sharing. It means a lot to me. They [the students] are friendly. I've been with you and Robin for 2 years now and it feels like chatting with family. I can share my dreams, feelings. In here, I have no friends and family so the class means everything to me. EFA referred me to the Future Leaders course, and I successfully obtained a certificate".

Ozge: I see how you and friends work for rights of citizens and refugees. I appreciate your hard work. Many thanks for your effort and friendship.

Ruba: Thank you Robin, you fought for us. It is good you know it's stability, me and my husband can focus on our health without worrying. It is a nice new home.



The coming year

We Want Brent Councillors to:

11.15: Make a Plan for ESOL!

37% of adults in Brent do not speak English as a first language, the second highest percent in London. More than half of these residents do not speak English "very well". 48% of migrants in the UK have degrees but they need support to work in their fields. Courses and opportunities are hard to find. Different categories of people are excluded or have to pay. How can mothers work or study when the childcare system is broken? We're working with the council and other organisations to address these issues.

We want Brent Councillors to:

1. Create a full-time ESOL Coordinator position who will bring together the ESOL community quarterly and develop an ESOL Strategy; maintain an up-to-date directory and website; organise training for teachers and volunteers.
2. Host an education and careers fair for migrant communities.

12.00: Care about Care Work!

During the pandemic, thousands of local people supported the elderly and vulnerable in a spirit of Mutual Aid. We saw the terrible conditions many isolated elderly people are dying in. Care work is mainly done by migrant women, for the whole community. Despite the council's efforts to improve the sector, there is a shortage of workers because the job is getting worse. Working with the council, EFA has set up a class for Brent's care workers.

We want Brent Councillors to:

1. Guarantee that contracted care companies are Living Wage employers, with no zero-hour contracts, with pay for travel time between visits for home care workers. They should have enough staff for cover, and sickness policies that support workers to stay at home when they are sick.
2. Support companies to develop better initial training, CPD and career progression routes.
3. Fund and promote participatory ESOL classes as a regular forum for care workers to learn together and share issues.

13.30: Start helping Refugees!

Brent Council worked actively to support Syrian refugees. But thousands of Asylum Seekers still live in hotels and other accommodation - invisible to our local representatives. Our students, some with children, are stuck in their rooms most of the day. They are given only £8 a week because "food" is provided, but the food is terrible. People need money for other things too, and the Home Office bank cards can take months to arrive. If they don't respond immediately to letters, they are removed from the system altogether. Charities are doing their best. What is the council doing?

We want Brent Councillors to:

1. Allocate £300K of Section 106 money (from developments) for access to leisure facilities and to fund ESOL classes for Asylum Seekers in initial accommodation.
2. Work with charities supporting asylum seekers in Brent to create a fund to disburse money to those living on £8 a week, or with No Recourse to Public Funds.
3. Organise surgeries to understand the issues facing asylum seekers.
4. Pledge to support a campaign for free bus travel for asylum seekers
5. Provide housing support for people with recent refugee status who obviously won't have a long "local connection".

14.15: Side with Renters!

All of our (settled) students are renters. Landlords and developers are exploiting the market to exploit us. We've been working with the London Renters Union in Brent to provide advice, and to stand together as a community.

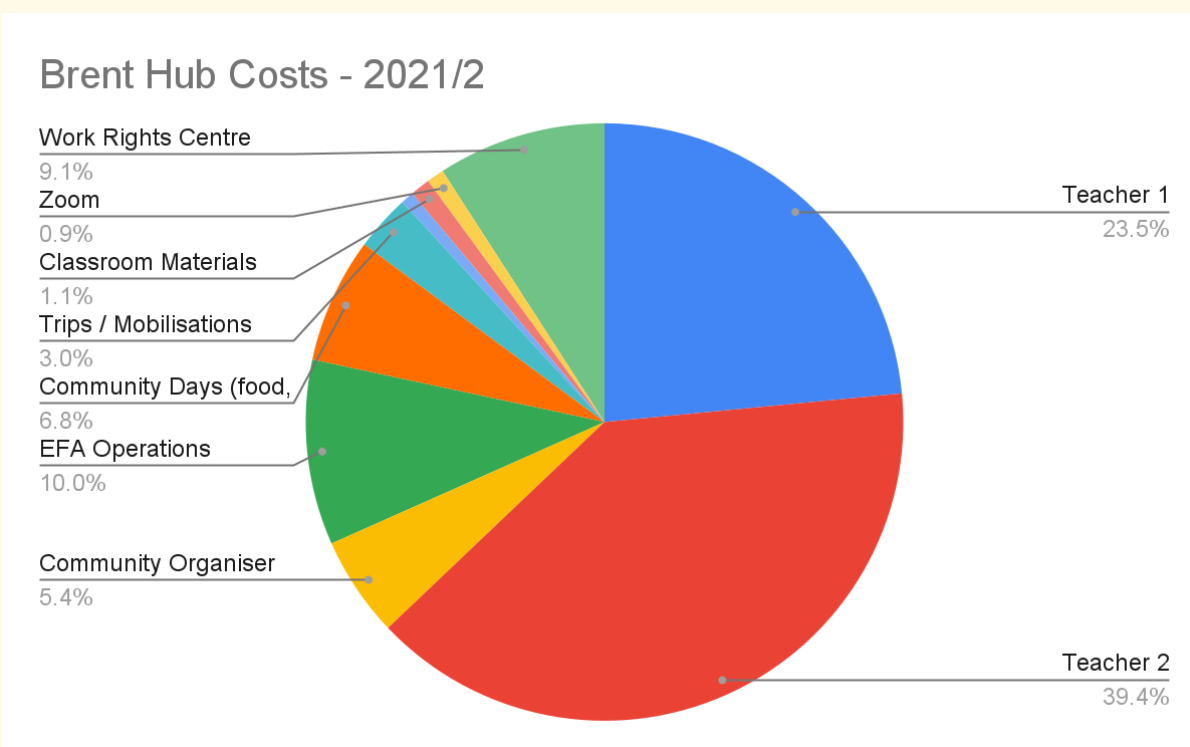
We want Brent councillors to:

1. Not give licences to landlords until they prove the accommodation is the right standard. Use your powers to make the landlords fix our problems - and to make them pay when they don't. Employ more workers to do this with the money from landlords.
2. Meet with Brent LRU regularly, and come to a public meeting after the election to show that you are keeping your promises. Tell local people that they can join the London Renters Union for solidarity.
3. Don't force people to move out of Brent when they come to the council for housing help. Never say that people are "intentionally homeless". Brent's temporary accommodation is not good enough - tell us your plans to change this.
4. Tell the government to Control Rents to stop landlords increasing the rent when they want.
5. Give us the right to have appointments to see a real person. This is very important for some disabled people, and if English or reading is difficult. No long, difficult online forms.
6. Build housing for the working-class. Don't allow new buildings to be only for the rich. Learn how to negotiate with the big companies so we don't always lose and they always profit.

We will continue working on the outstanding issues outlined in our manifesto, as long as they remain priorities to our students. Over this year, we hope that stronger coordination between our hubs and deepening partnerships with fellow campaign organisations will mean more progress on London-wide and National issues.

We know from our work during the pandemic that we are well-placed to help sustain people through the cost of living crisis, ensuring that electorally disenfranchised residents are not marginalised. Our approach to community organising, centring learning communities, is intrinsically optimistic. It provides a basis for people to continue being connected, for personal progress, maintaining an association with a community that is clearly defined by community development, mutual aid, and solidaristic social activism for systemic change.

We hope that the diversity of our work will ensure that, all told, it will continue to appeal to beneficiaries, funders and supporters. Last year's work in Brent cost approximately £59,804, plus £6,000 towards the Work Rights Centre. This was covered largely by part of a two year grant from Brent Council, and a number of smaller grants: our thanks to Brent Council, the Edward Harvist Fund, Near Neighbours, WF Southall Trust, the 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, Community Organisers Ltd / Joseph Rowntree Trust. Donations and contributions from friends, supporters and partners amounted to £2,500 and were very gratefully received, and in particular funded the Week of Action.



The biggest thanks must go to our students; student leaders - Hakima, Annalibera, Fella, Hamed, Roy, Fatima, Selam, Entela, Aisha, Mina, Florence, Ozge and Alexa; teacher-organisers Robin, Fatime and Tom; our collaborative and inspiring colleagues in EFAI our impressive colleagues in partner organisations - in particular Daphne from Citizens UK and the committed local institution leaders, Jacob and Clare from the LRU, Lora, Magda and Olivia from WoRC, Molly, Jess and Shona from Young Roots, Matilda, Charlotte and the amazing Care4Calais volunteers, Giselle and Gaynor from Unite Community, Lotus from Brent Start, Linda, Phyllis and Bernie at CNWL and the community of Brent ESOL providers; Zina, Maria and Karen from the Lounge Cafe; Anjali from Newman College; Cllrs Thomas Stephens and Anton Georgiou; Martin Francis from Wembley Matters / Greens.