

IMPACT REPORT 2022



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ENGLISH FOR ACTION





EFA students and community members chat at our 2022 LoveESOL picnic.

WHO WE ARE

At English for Action (EFA) London, we directly support over 500 migrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum across London each year.

We provide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses for all levels and support services specifically tailored to those with low levels of English. We also use community organising tools to build the capacity of our students to identify and act on the issues most important to them.

Our experienced teachers also provide training on our unique, anti-oppressive pedagogy, 'Participatory ESOL,' for practitioners across the UK. Plus, we develop our methods through action research projects exploring best practices for ESOL and community organising in the migrant space.

Finally, we work with over 40 partners across the capital to campaign for better-funded, more accessible ESOL, as part of our flagship #LoveESOL campaign.

OUR STORY

EFA was first established in 2006 to support the Living Wage Campaign led by the grassroots organising group London Citizens. The campaign, which aimed to guarantee hourly pay rates for workers in London that reflect the higher cost-of-living in the capital, led one of our teachers, Dermot Bryers, to meet and speak with a group of hotel workers from migrant backgrounds.

In their conversations, the workers described how language barriers made it difficult for them to negotiate with their employers or to organise their colleagues to fight for fairer wages, leaving them at risk of exploitation and poor working conditions.

Out of this experience, and in light of declining public funding for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses for migrants and refugees to the U.K., Dermot developed an ESOL course driven by the hotel workers' needs and designed to build the capacity of these workers to advocate for themselves and organise. Three years later, in 2009, EFA became a fully registered charity aimed at bringing this student-led, action-orientated model of ESOL provision to refugees and asylum seekers across London and the UK.

Since then, our work has expanded far beyond the classroom, as our growing team of students, partners, volunteers, and staff has built deep roots in the communities in which we live and work. We now provide both ESOL and community organising training, as well as workshops and events designed to support migrant community leaders to navigate issues ranging from overcrowded housing to COVID-19.

OUR MISSION

We believe that language skills enable people to have a social, economic and political voice, and that better and more ESOL provision fosters greater confidence, community and capacity for action. Our mission is to use language education as a tool to engage Londoners from migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds in making positive change through the practice of community organising.

Taking a holistic approach to support, we focus on areas like housing and access to healthcare, too. It's hard to focus on learning English when you're unwell or living in overcrowded or mouldy accommodation. It's also hard to access support in these areas without English skills.

We aim to bridge this gap; to do this, we make underfunded resources like ESOL accessible to people who face barriers such as:

- unaffordable course costs,
- expensive private childcare,
- not being able to find information about available classes,
- long waiting lists, and
- not being eligible for publicly funded education due to being undocumented or having No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions on their visas.



Students collaborate on an activity during a trip to the Tate Modern.

OUR HUBS



KEY PROGRAMMES



ESOL Classes

English classes taught by qualified, experienced teachers in accessible, welcoming local venues and online.



Targeted Support

1-1 and group support to resolve personal challenges in areas ranging from housing to work



Community Organising

Grassroots change, propelled and led by migrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum



Research & Training

Action research and training for ESOL practitioners and groups across the UK



Trustee Annalibera Refuto speaks at a North London Citizens Assembly.

In late 2021, EFA underwent a restructure aimed at making our organisation a more **fair, equitable and anti-oppressive** place to work.

We've introduced an equal pay scheme in which all staff receive the same wage, because **we value each team member's contributions equally**. We've eliminated any potential for gender or racial pay gaps, and, of course, we remain committed to paying above the London Living Wage.

We've also stepped back from a traditional CEO-led structure, implementing **a new 'Executive Team'**, a group of colleagues who take responsibility for EFA's risk and governance. The Executive Team has been supported in its development by our experienced and hands-on Board of Trustees.

Across the team, we're committed to building anti-hierarchical practices into our new way of working. We use **consent-based decision-making** to ensure the invaluable experience of our team leads, volunteers, trustees, and students underpins our strategic direction and day-to-day operations.

A NEW WAY TO ORGANISE (OURSELVES)

300 cleaners interviewed as part of the Cleaners United listening campaign

519 regular students in our ESOL classes

126 local residents joined our Housing Action group, with 5 residents rehoused and 8 referred to professional legal services

11 participatory ESOL trainings for orgs & practitioners

95% of participants improved their English skills and confidence

32 free, weekly ESOL classes

EFA IN NUMBERS

44% of participants were able to access English classes for the first time since arriving in the UK

98 students moved into new work, higher or further education, or apprenticeships

3 major European-Union funded projects

97% of students passed their accredited English exams

115 students participated in Citizens UK delegates assemblies and EFA community assemblies

7 community hubs

12 free creches to enable parents with young kids to attend classes and activities

98 participants earned qualifications to be used in further education or work

HIGHLIGHTS



OPPORTUNITY

- Students have taken **leading roles at Citizens UK assemblies** across North, East and South London, speaking onstage in front of hundreds of community members, local councillors, and business leaders. For many, this has been the first opportunity they've had to speak directly to those in local positions of power.
- Our **EFA Strategy Day** brought staff, trustees, volunteers and students together to kick off the development of our next three-year strategy. It's helping to ensure our strategy is informed by the needs and lived experience of our participants.



ACCESS

- EFA's #LoveESOL campaign has made **major progress on improving access to ESOL** in London (more on p. 9)
- Our hubs have hosted multilingual and **language-accessible workshops** on topics ranging from renters' rights to labour rights, making these resources accessible to migrants and refugees with low levels of English.



WELLBEING

- Thanks to our two Walk & Talk programmes in Wandsworth and Tower Hamlets, students are reporting **improved fitness and more confidence using local green spaces** - a few are even organising their own walks together throughout the week!
- Several **new social and skills-building activities** - including a second weekly conversation club in Greenwich, a monthly IT skills workshop, and a series of yoga, cycling, and swimming lessons - mean students are building skills, friendships, and language skills all in one go.



KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

- Our **Migreat! Conference** on migration narratives brought together colleagues from across Europe to pool knowledge on strategic communications, ESOL teaching, Theatre of the Oppressed, and other key tools in the fight against negative public discourse on migration.
- The newly published '**Changing Migration Narratives**' handbook is a practical guide to participatory tools aimed at changing public discourse around migration.
- Our **new three-year, transnational 'Community Organising for All' project** is creating a cross-cultural space for exploring best practices for community organising with migrants and refugees.

ESOL CLASSES & SUPPORT

SPOTLIGHT

Students work on an activity in their weekly ESOL class.



Across the year, we ran 32 weekly English classes, including a mix of general ESOL courses and themed projects. Highlights from our themed projects include:



Our World is a weekly ESOL discussion group for higher-level learners. In the class, we discuss topics across history, politics, economics, current affairs, and critical analysis, with the aim of contextualising our current social landscape.



English for Housing Action is a dual-purpose programme, tackling common housing challenges both in the ESOL classroom and in a dedicated monthly support group hosted by EFA teachers and housing experts from our partners Housing Action Southwark & Lambeth.



ESOL for Work is an umbrella programme covering employability projects across our Greenwich, Hackney, and Brent hubs. This work aims to equip participants with the language, communication, organising and digital skills to confidently enter the local workforce.



ESOL for Social Care is a project led by and for social care workers in Northwest London. Comprising weekly English classes and community organising, this programme aims to secure improved pay and working conditions for a sector highly reliant on migrants and refugees.



Our **Walk & Talks** in Wandsworth and Tower Hamlets take English practice out of the classroom and into the community, bringing learners together for regular exercise and conversation in local green spaces.



Southwark hub lead Kasia Blackman (second from right) speaks at a Southwark Citizens Assembly.



EFA signed up as a founding member of **the Cleaners United campaign**, providing support and conducting listenings with 300 commercial cleaners.



Our Greenwich, Southwark and Lambeth hubs came together for our **first South London Community Day**, engaging fellow students and new community organisers.



Students developed **forum theatre** performances to draw attention to barriers migrants face accessing healthcare, securing commitments for change in Greenwich.



Alongside Housing Action Southwark & Lambeth and Citizens UK, students took **action on housing**, calling for an end to overcrowded, mouldy accommodation.



Brent student leaders and teachers welcomed over 100 community stakeholders to the **first Brent Community Assembly**, calling for change in four key areas.



Hackney students successfully campaigned for Hackney & Islington Citizens to make **Migrant Employability** a key priority ahead of the 2022 elections.

COMMUNITY ORGANISING

SPOTLIGHT

SPOTLIGHT

THE #LOVEESOL CAMPAIGN

WHAT IS #LOVEESOL?

EFA's flagship campaign to improve access to ESOL provision across London and beyond.

We're demanding:

- Better access to ESOL classes for all,
- A multilingual 'ESOL for London' web database to facilitate access to classes upon arrival, and
- Restored funding and better public awareness of the importance of ESOL.

SO, IS IT WORKING?

We're proud to say **our #LoveESOL coalition of over 40 London organisations** has helped secure significant improvements:

- The Greater London Authority (GLA) has increased the wage threshold for accessing free, publicly funded ESOL classes to include anyone earning under the London Living Wage. This has made ESOL accessible for approximately 20,000 more low-earners in London.
- In 2020, the GLA has also widened the eligibility criteria for accessing ESOL classes to include more people seeking asylum and from EU/EEA backgrounds.
- In 2022, the GLA announced a further widening of eligibility criteria for accessing ESOL which included, for the first time, those with No Recourse to Public Funds.
- In 2022, the GLA also launched its Migrant Londoners Hub, which included the first draft of a map aggregating many key resources, including ESOL.
- Key GLA personnel including the Deputy Mayor for Skills and the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration have engaged with our students, staff and partners at LoveESOL events, and Mayor Sadiq Khan made a public commitment to improving access to ESOL during his 2021 reelection campaign, including mentioning access to ESOL explicitly in his election manifesto.

Students share their reasons for pursuing ESOL at our 2022 LoveESOL picnic.



SPOTLIGHT

RESEARCH & TRAINING



Pedagogy lead Dermot Bryers (centre) leads a training for ESOL practitioners.



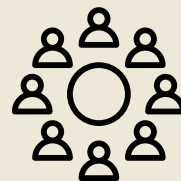
Our monthly **Community of Practice** welcomes ESOL practitioners from across the country for skills-building, networking, and trouble-shooting.



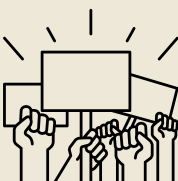
Our **External Training** team hosted 11 sessions on participatory ESOL for organisations and individual ESOL practitioners, welcoming 132 participants.



Our three-year **Migreat!** project, focussed on tackling negative migration discourse, produced research, a short film, a handbook, and a multinational conference.



EFA and **the Hub for Education and Linguistic Diversity** at King's College London hosted a seminar on language education and a two-day summer school on Linguistic Citizenship.



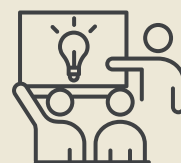
Our **Community Organising for All (COFA)** project kicked off in late 2022, exploring organising in the migrant context alongside partners across Europe.



With support from CO Ltd, we held **listenings in Brent and Greenwich** to explore current issues most affecting migrant communities in our neighbourhoods.



11 teachers from across the ESOL sector joined the EFA teaching team in taking part in **our reflective research project, 'Participatory ESOL - Taking Stock.'**



11 King's College London MA students preparing to become researchers or teachers in the ESOL sector carried out training placements in EFA classes.

CASE STUDIES



MEET HAKIMA

STUDENT LEADER

Before coming to London, Hakima was a communications lecturer in Algeria, but when she relocated to London to support her husband's career, she found that she couldn't get a job without learning English, and she couldn't learn English at college because her visa conditions prevented her from doing so.

Upon discovering EFA, she attended every class open to her, jumped at the chance to co-design and facilitate a series of online wellbeing workshops during lockdown, delivered sessions on Algeria and the media for the Our World Class, and got involved in 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.

Hakima took on voluntary roles in the areas of research, strategy, and spokesperson, particularly on ESOL strategy. **She has recently secured a job as a mental health project coordinator at a local community centre.**

CASE STUDIES



MEET VERONICA

FORMER STUDENT

IN HER OWN WORDS:

Coming to London had been a dream of mine since I was 13 years old. But when I came here, I knew no English - I was saying 'good morning' even if it was evening! **It's not easy coming to a country where you don't speak the language, because it is important for everything** - for communicating with other people, to find better jobs, even to go to the shop.

I was first introduced to English for Action (EFA) when my daughter started school, and I was told about free English classes with a creche for babies. I didn't have enough money to pay to have anyone look after my son while my daughter was in school - so having him sit in a buggy next to me during the class helped me a lot. **To be honest, I think that was the best opportunity I had in my life here.**

It's a nice environment to study there. It's friendly and fun and the teachers are dedicated. At other courses, you finish a lesson and you have to leave right away. But sometimes you have doubts or questions. I was able to study with the same teacher - he maybe missed three classes all these years! If he can go with you to an appointment, he will go with you.

EFA has also helped me with my business. Four years ago, my husband and I decided we wanted to be more independent and we started a cleaning company. But I felt stuck trying to find a way to expand the business and went to my EFA teacher, because I thought he could help. He told me about a charity that runs a free course to support people who have a business idea and I took that and it was amazing. We now have seven staff and hope to continue to expand the company. **Our dream is to also give jobs to people new to London.** Because people come here, and they don't know where to start. That is what happened to me. It's hard to find a job if you don't know how to start or speak the language. I think so many doors can be opened for you if you know English.

CASE STUDIES

MEET FATOU

STUDENT + HOUSING GROUP MEMBER



EFA students and staff at a housing action.

Fatou was living in a cramped studio apartment with her husband and two children. Her EFA teacher believed Fatou's family might have been placed in the wrong Band on Southwark Council's housing list and recommended that she attend Housing Action group meetings to learn more about her rights. In Fatou's words: **"I was hopeless, I was vulnerable, I didn't know any of my rights."**

During her first Housing Action Group meeting, Fatou developed an action plan together with a representative from our partner organisation HASL. Together, they decided to appeal her Band 3 placement. Putting together an application to review her priority band allocation involved gathering lots of documents and writing a personal statement detailing exactly why she believed her family deserved a higher priority band placement. She was supported throughout this process by EFA and HASL. As Fatou says, **"They stood by me every step of the way."**

Fatou was overjoyed to find out that her appeal was successful. Three months later, they moved into a much more suitable home. Most importantly, says Fatou, her previous home was "so small...my two kids, they don't even have space to play safely, but now, thanks to **the housing I'm living in - my dream house - the kids have lots of space to play. We have a garden. It was just like a dream come true.**"

CASE STUDIES

MEET BETH VOLUNTEER

Beth studied Spanish and Portuguese at university and spent some time teaching in Brazil. After finishing her Master's, **she wanted to get involved in the community through something teaching-related and to maintain skills gained from her studies.** She was told about EFA by a mutual contact she shared with EFA teacher Anne, who mentioned Anne's classes included a lot of Spanish-speaking students. Beth felt this could be a good opportunity to employ her language skills, and she started volunteering with us online during the lockdowns.

As part of volunteering with Anne, Beth helped two students who were complete beginners to access and use Zoom, and she helped them understand class instructions. She translated from English to Spanish whenever needed, in order to facilitate their participation. After Christmas, one of the students started to bring more and more Spanish-speaking community members to the class. Though it can sometimes be challenging to retain beginner-level students, especially online, **the class grew and developed into a tight-knit cohort.**

Beth is now volunteering in our new Southwark class, hosted by Amott Road Baptist Church, and she says the class feels like a community and a space where people can share their stories and the issues they're currently facing with each other.

EFA is a supportive place to volunteer, says Beth. Anne has provided plenty of guidance, as well as useful teaching resources. Beth had the opportunity to attend training on Participatory ESOL teaching methods led by EFA teacher Dermot, which she found valuable, as it helped her better understand classroom activities and the values underpinning our teaching. Her own language-learning experience was completely different from how ESOL is taught at EFA. It was strict, highly structured and more about getting a good grade, whereas participatory ESOL encourages people to participate and take ownership of the classroom. Everyone shares their knowledge, and teachers and students are on equal terms. In this space, participants are able to build confidence.

Beth also attended our first South London Community Day, in 2022, where student leaders covered all the basics about EFA and the campaigns. **"It was impactful. You had to get up and talk to someone who you've never spoken to before and share an issue. Everyone realised common issues: housing, language,"** Beth said.

Volunteering at EFA has helped Beth gain leadership and communication skills and she believes her listening skills have also improved. She has felt better equipped to explain concepts and think on her feet, coming up with solutions.

So, what does EFA mean to Beth? "Community. It is the most important thing. A safe space where people can talk about their issues. By talking a lot about issues, they know they're not on their own. It's great. EFA is a great place to volunteer."



It's been a challenging year, marked by twin energy and cost-of-living crises, increasingly dire public discourse around migration, and the persistent risk of deportation flights bound for Rwanda. Within our network of community organisations, rising running costs, staff fatigue, and a challenging fundraising landscape have been recurring themes of discussion. Despite this, our donors, venue partners, and funders have provided the steadfast and responsive support we've needed to keep our activities running successfully.

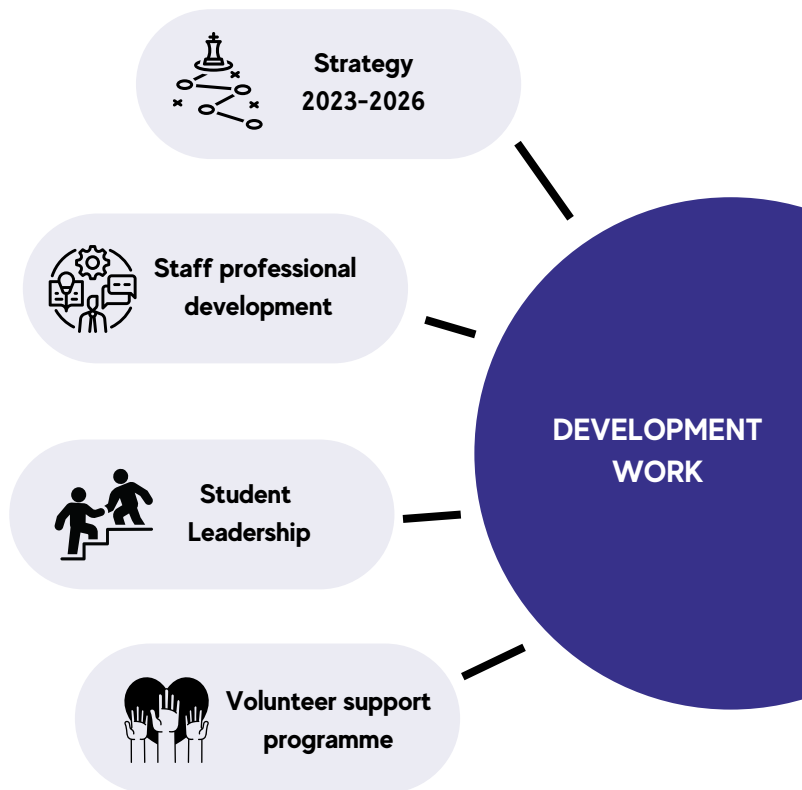
In the face of these challenges, we've been reminded of the value and importance of **face-to-face provision** in our community hubs. We've taken care to balance this with accessibility, making sure **online options are still available** for those with conflicting work schedules, caring responsibilities, or mobility issues that may make attending in-person activities more difficult. We've also taken care to implement **a hardship fund** to cover transportation costs for students in some hubs during this cost-of-living crisis. And, we'll work to expand this support going forward.

CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

ON THE HORIZON



In the year ahead, we'll continue projects ranging from our 'Learning & Action' hubs in Greenwich to our Brent ESOL course for young refugees in partnership with Young Roots. We'll continue organising with our communities in four key areas, and we'll keep building a stronger, more resilient EFA.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANK YOU'S

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANK YOUS

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Housing Action Southwark & Lambeth
King's College London
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Surrey Square Primary School
The Bridge at Waterloo
The Voice of Domestic Workers
Time & Talents
Work Rights Centre
Young Roots

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Thank you for supporting English for Action London and helping us make a positive impact in the lives of our students and the communities we serve.

Want to get in touch?

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