IMPACT REPORT 2023



EST. 2006



EFA members participate in a campaign strategy exercise at the July 2023 LoveESOL picnic.

WHAT WE DO

At English for Action (EFA) London, we directly support over 400 migrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum across London each year.

To do this, we deliver over 20 'Learning & Action groups' weekly across London. These sessions combine English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction with topical discussion groups relevant to learners' lives and support services specifically tailored to those with low levels of English. In our groups, our 'teacher-organisers' also use community organising tools to build the capacity of our members to identify and act on the issues most important to them.

Our experienced teacher-organisers also provide training on our unique, anti-oppressive pedagogy, 'Participatory ESOL,' for stakeholders 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 UK to campaign for better-funded, more accessible English language education, 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, actionorientated 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 insufficient access to healthcare.

IMPACT REPORT 2023

OUR MISSION



EFA members perform during the July 2023 LoveESOL picnic.

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 work, too. It's hard to focus on learning English when you're facing exploitative working conditions 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, being a person seeking asylum in the UK for less than six months, or having No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions on one's visa.

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REFLECTING On the year

This year was one of resilience-building at EFA. As we came to the end of our previous three-year organisational strategy, we began work on **a new**, **2023-2026 organisational strategy** in conversation with colleagues, our Board, volunteers, EFA members, and community partners. This began with a deep, valuable exploration of our work to-date, our collective aims for the coming years, and the impact of external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and an increasingly hostile set of policies affecting Londoners from migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds. This work then continued throughout 2023 in the form of consultations, further development, and drafting.

In tandem with this strategy-building, we sought to strengthen **our internal** systems for monitoring and evaluation of our work, with an aim toward improving our ability to share our impact with our community, our partners, and our supporters. This included new project monitoring systems, a strong external communications push, and the overall growth of EFA's profile as an organisation to be trusted in the fields of ESOL and community organising.

This work has been bolstered by the further development of **our volunteer support programme**, the continuation of **our employee professional development fund**, and a commitment to maintaining cost-of-living increases for our valued team despite external financial pressures on grassroots charities like ours.

In addition, we've continued **our Hardship Transport fund** to facilitate activity attendance for our community members impacted by the economic crisis, and we've remained committed to providing **free creches or child-friendly spaces** during as many of our activities as possible.

Through a steadfast commitment to these priorities, we're both strengthening our internal capacity to carry on this work and removing barriers our members are facing to engaging with our classes, activities and organising. In a period that's seeing families restricting their outgoings and many workers leaving community organisations due to burnout, precarity, or low pay, we're charting a new path toward the realisation of **our vision of a London in which all are able to fully participate in and help create a just, equal society.**

OUR HUBS





KEY PROGRAMMES



Learning & Action groups

Weekly sessions taught by qualified, experienced teachers in accessible, welcoming local venues and online



Community Organising

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



Targeted Support

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



Research & Training

Action research and training for ESOL practitioners and stakeholders across the UK and Europe

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151 ESOL practitioners and providers trained in participatory pedagogy and community organising with EFA

> 9 participatory ESOL trainings for orgs & practitioners

NUMBERS

407 members joined our Learning & Action groups

91% of participants improved their English skills and confidence 174 local residents joined our Housing Action group, with 13 residents rehoused and 24 referred to professional legal services

> 25 free, weekly ESOL classes

89 participants moved into new work, higher or further education, or apprenticeships

6 free creches

to enable

parents with

young kids to

attend classes

and activities

EFA IN

2 major European-Union funded projects 43% of participants were able to access English classes for the first time since arriving in the UK

98% of students passed their accredited English exams 129 members participated in Citizens UK delegates assemblies and EFA community assemblies

71 participants earned qualifications to be used in further education or work 7 community hubs

> 39 learners joined our Walk & Talk ESOL walking groups

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HIGHLIGHTS



OPPORTUNITY



SOLIDARITY





KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

- EFA learners have taken on **leading roles at Citizens UK assemblies and Refugee Week 2023 events** across North, East and South London, speaking onstage in front of hundreds of community members, local councillors, and business leaders.
- Our **Found in Translation** project launched in autumn 2023, with the aim of demystifying adult education for Londoners with lower English proficiency. By December, 112 local residents had been engaged and 22 referred into ESOL and numeracy provision.
- EFA's #LoveESOL campaign has continued to make **progress on improving access to ESOL** in London (more on p. 12)
- Our hubs have hosted multilingual and **language-accessible workshops** on topics ranging from housing rights to labour rights, making these resources accessible to migrants and refugees with low levels of English.
- Our community organisers have spoken on the importance of embedding organising into our teaching work at events including the Right to Remain Toolkit conference and the Latin x Brixton Festival.
- Our learners have had the opportunity to train with skilled community organisers working with campaigns and coalitions like **Safe Sick Pay**, **Living Wage**, **South London Listens**, and more.
- 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.
- We've run several **new social and skills-building activities** including sewing classes in Tower Hamlets, peer-led mental health workshops in Greenwich, and a 'Theatre for Workers' Rights' series meaning students are building skills, friendships, and language all in one go.
- Our 2023 Conference Classrooms of Sanctuary and Struggle brought together teachers, researchers, volunteers and other stakeholders in the migration space to explore strategies for embedding meaningful, trauma-informed practice into languagelearning spaces. We also considered the relationship between this work and community organising and participatory ESOL.
- Our three-year, transnational '<u>Community Organising for All</u>' project continues to explore community organising with migrant communities. This year, we published <u>our introductory report</u> on the project's core themes, as well as <u>a five-part podcast series</u> on community organising in each of our national contexts.

ESOL CLASSES & SUPPORT



EFA learners participate during a Learning & Action group session..

Across the year, we ran 25 weekly Learning & Action groups, including a mix of general ESOL courses and themed projects. Highlights from our themed projects include:



<u>Together for Tower Hamlets</u> was a year-long wellbeing initiative hosted alongside colleagues at Chisenhale Primary School and Stitches in Time. It included social trips, sewing classes, ESOL classes, and a weekly walking group, and it culminated with our 10-year anniversary of this partnership.



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.



<u>ESOL for Work</u> is a Hackney-based project that brings English learners together for ESOL courses, employability trainings, and a collaboration with the East End Trades Guild aimed at developing local work placement programmes for migrants and refugees in the East End.



ESOL for Social Care was 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 first **<u>Be Well Hub</u>** launched in Greenwich in 2023, as part of a broader South London Listens initiative that aims to tackle poor mental health in our communities by creating easy-to-access spaces where local residents can find mental health support, community, and wellbeing resources.

IMPACT REPORT 2023



EFA members participate in series of theatre workshops exploring the Living Hours Campaign.



Student-leaders spoke to employers along the South Bank, including the Globe Theatre, to advocate for **the Living Wage campaign**, with successful results.



Students developed forum theatre performances to draw attention to barriers migrants face accessing healthcare, working alongside the local council to grow the number of **Safe Surgeries** in Greenwich.



Our ESOL groups launched a letter-writing campaign to Mayor Sadiq Khan calling for improved public transport conditions in an effort to mitigate climate change.



Our Brent hub hosted 'Homes and our Health,' a public education event exploring local housing challenges and the Homes, not Hotels campaign.



Working alongside organisers from Citizens UK, we hosted our first **Theatre for Workers' Rights** workshops, exploring collection action as a tool to drive change in the workplace.



Our July 2023 LoveESOL event brough together over 110 supporters and stakeholders to reflect on our successes and strategise for the coming year.



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

COMMUNITY ORGANISING

SPOTLIGHT

THE #LOVEESOL CAMPAIGN



EFA learners in Tower Hamlets produced this handmade LoveESOL quilt in collaboration with Stitches in Time.

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

#LoveESOL is EFA's flagship campaign to improve access to English language education 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 40 London-based 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 40,000 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. In 2023, a translation tool was added to this site.
- In 2023, ESOL directories were launched in the London boroughs of Brent, Southwark and Lambeth. Each included contact information and relevant details for local education providers all in one, accessible place. This year also saw the launch of the Southwark ESOL network, organised by EFA's Southwark team and hosted by the council.

RESEARCH & TRAINING



Our reflective research project, 'Participatory ESOL - Taking Stock' released its final report and a five-part podcast series sharing our learnings.



Our <u>External Training</u> team hosted 9 sessions on participatory ESOL for organisations and individual ESOL practitioners, welcoming 151 participants.



The EFA team spoke on our research at events across the UK including **The Future of Training conference and Ascentis's ESOL conference**.



EFA and <u>the Hub for</u> <u>Education and Linguistic</u> <u>Diversity</u> co-hosted: 'Teaching English in Israel/Palestine, Brazil & the UK: Resonances & Commonalities?' in October, welcoming 51 participants.



Our <u>Community Organising</u> <u>for All</u> (COFA) project has launched <u>its first report</u> and <u>podcast series</u>, and partners have met for our first knowledge-sharing training.



Following consultation with our partners at **The Voice of Domestic Workers**, we cocreated a training series on community organising for workers in this sector.



Our monthly <u>Community of</u> <u>Practice</u> welcomes ESOL practitioners from across the country for skillsbuilding, networking, and trouble-shooting.



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

SPOTLIGHT

COMMUNITY ORGANISING FOR ALL

EFA teacher-organiser Kasia Blackman (r) learns about video-editing alongside our fellow COFA partners.

Community Organising for All (COFA) is a three-year, European Union-funded research and training project in collaboration with organisations in Italy (Giolli Coop), Slovenia (Zavod BOB), and Croatia (POKAZ). Together, we're exploring community organising with migrants in each of our national contexts and sharing best practices based on our individual areas of expertise. These include Theatre of the Oppressed and participatory ESOL methods for organising, and we anticipate five major research outputs by the project's end in 2025.





In February, we hosted a three-day training in London on the theory and practice of community organising.



In November, we hosted 'Community Organising: What is it good for?,' bringing together over 60 organisers to discuss best practices.



In October, we published our project's introductory report laying out core themes we want to explore in our national contexts.



In December, we released our podcast series on community organising with migrant communities in the UK, Croatia, Italy, and Slovenia.

CASE STUDIES



MEET MAIDA EFA MEMBER + COMMUNITY ORGANISER

Maida belongs to our Saturday Learning & Action group in Southwark. She is originally from Bolivia and migrated to the UK from Spain for work. She has rapidly improved her English skills in the year or so since she joined the class, to the extent that in November 2023, she prepared and delivered a personal testimony in English to an audience of 450 people. This included NHS decision-makers who pledged to use NHS influence to back the Living Hours Campaign.

Living Hours is very important to Maida and people from her community. Living Hours is an employer commitment to guarantee a minimum of 16 hours a week, pay for shifts cancelled with less than a month's notice and ensure that contracts reflect the habitual number of hours worked. Maida says "I works eleven hours a day, five days a week because the standard of living is very expensive in London, especially housing, food and healthcare." At the assembly in November, Maida shared that because of these long hours and night work she really struggles to concentrate in her ESOL class.

Maida's long and irregular hours don't stop her training, organising and taking action on top of her studies, though. This year, she has attended several community organising trainings, receiving a certificate from the Living Wage Campaign. As well as playing a key role at the health assembly where she helped secure important commitments from the NHS, she has taken part in Living Wage strategy work and most recently an action in support of care workers where Bupa committed to meeting with the team to move towards paying the Living Wage for their thousands of care workers. Maida attended the action on her way to an 11-hour shift in the City of London.

CASE STUDIES



MEET DILARA

EFA MEMBER

Under the tutelage of partners Stitches in Time, Dilara hand-stitched this beautiful square as part of our LoveESOL quilt (p. 12).

Dilara is a member of our one of our Tower Hamlets Learning & Action groups, based at Chisenhale Primary School. She's a parent of children currently studying in the school who has been involved in EFA activities since 2016. When Dilara first joined us, she struggled with English and with literacy, often finding it difficult to follow activity instructions.

Since then, Dilara has barely missed a class. She has improved her language skills massively and is an integral part of our Chisenhale group, now working independently on activities and often being the person to volunteer information for newer group members. Even during the COVID-19 lockdowns, she diligently attended our weekly Zoom sessions and also joined fellow EFA teacher-organiser Lucie's conversation club, where she's still a regular attendee.

In addition to earning recognised English qualifications, she has been involved in every recent project we have worked on in Tower Hamlets, including our Roman Road photography project, Act ESOL, our swimming sessions for ESOL learners, sewing workshops with Stitches in Time, and many social trips. Her studies with EFA have contributed to strong growth in her confidence, both educationally and socially, and her reliability has contributed greatly to her ability to be involved.

Across 2023, Dilara also took part in our pilot Tower Hamlets Walk & Talk - a weekly social walking group for English learners in the Bow area - which was led by former EFA student and current volunteer Farhana. Following consistent attendance, Dilara was presented with a prize for attending and she shared that, 'The walks helped me to do some exercise and take time for myself. Also, [I] enjoyed walking with my friends and doing it as a group. Hopefully, I am able to carry on with walks by myself and with the group.'

In our 10-year anniversary event celebrating our longtime partnership with Chisenhale Primary School (January 2024), Dilara was one of the students that prepared and delivered a speech about the impact of the group on her life in these recent years. This is something that would have been a major challenge in her early days studying with EFA. In 2024, Dilara will take a leading role in the development of our new Tower Hamlets Housing Action group, working with fellow EFA learners and local residents to identify opportunities for positive change in the local housing landscape. CASE

EFA members take part in an action against unaffordable, lowquality housing in London.

MEET AATIFA

HOUSING ACTION GROUP MEMBER

Aatifa* is a Lambeth resident, in her 60s, who hails originally from Eritrea. She was referred into one of our Lambeth Learning & Action groups by a fellow EFA student, and she has been studying English and learning about her housing rights with us for six months now.

Aatifa was homeless for seven years, and during this time, she was staying with friends in Lambeth. Due to some health challenges and her level of English, she faced barriers to well-paying work and was unable to afford to rent even a room in a shared house in the private rental market. Two years ago, she got a bidding account to try to access local council housing for herself, but for two years, she was bidding on council properties without success.

During summer 2023, around the time Aatifa began studying with us, she was invited to join our Housing Action group by a fellow student in her class. When she joined the housing meeting and explained her circumstances, she was advised by one of the HASL team members to collect medical evidence that would demonstrate that she has a priority need for housing. Once this information was filed with the council, she moved forward on the waiting list and in September - within weeks - she made a successful bid for a one-bedroom flat in sheltered accommodation with a housing association. She is delighted with her home and has become a staunch supporter for our Housing Action group.

Aatifa has since invited 40-50 people from the local Eritrean community to join our Housing Group meetings. Although her own housing issue has been resolved, she continues to bring people along to meetings and interpret for them.

*Name has been changed to protect privacy.

CASE STUDIES MEET SIMON

Q: Why did you join EFA?

A: The reason I joined is that I know refugees experiencing a lot of problems in the country merely because of a lack of English. They can't communicate with councils or housing managers. I wanted to have direct input [on these issues]. I'm passionate about language as a former journalist and as a Linguistics student. English is very powerful if you use it correctly, and I wanted to empower a vulnerable group in society through the use of language teaching.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about the class you're volunteering in and your work with our learners?

A: Classes are amazing with [EFA teacher-organiser] Anne [McConnell]. In one session, she was teaching vocabulary associated with housing issues and, during the conversation, Anne and I established that two learners had a month to find a place to live. We asked and answered questions like, "What is rent?" If the questions are relevant, and that's what you're looking for, that is the power of a class. Learning English for use. Their confidence has improved. When one learner first started, she was Google Translating all the time. It was there as a security blanket. I reassured her that we're patient, and that she could step back from using Google Translate for some time. The next week, she was much more vocal and her English came out fantastically. The class also empowered the group to be able to have conversations with the Council. It's given them the confidence to learn more. The class is so friendly, like a group of friends sitting down to learn English. That is the perfect environment to improve your English.

Q: How has your experience been volunteering at EFA?

A: It's very satisfying and fulfilling to see how the students are improving week by week.

Q: What does EFA mean to you?

A: It empowers people to improve their lives in this country through support and networks such as Housing Action Southwark & Lambeth and EFA.

IMPACT REPORT 2023

ON THE HORIZON

In the coming year, we're expanding our community organising efforts in our **four key focus areas**, and our English language education is a crucial tool in enabling as many community members as possible to get involved. Find out more about our organising work and where we hope to be by the end of 2024:



If you or your colleagues are working or interested in one of our four areas of focus, please get in touch! We're always looking to build a broader network of collaborators in this work: contact@efalondon.org.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANK YOUS

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EFA learners and partners from Creating Ground participate in a Refugee Week 2023 event in Greenwich.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANK YOUS

Host Venues & Key Partners

Amott Road Baptist Church Chisenhale Primary School Citizens UK Creating Ground Henry Cavendish Primary School Henry Fawcett Children's Centre Housing Action Southwark & Lambeth King's College London Latin American Women's Aid Learning Unlimited Living Wage Foundation Notre Dame Secondary School Oliver Goldsmith Primary School Robert Owen Children's Centre Salvation Army, Camberwell South London Listens Stitches in Time Surrey Square Primary School The Bridge at Waterloo The Voice of Domestic Workers The Star of Greenwich Time & Talents Walworth Living Room Work Rights Centre Young Roots

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PHOTO CREDITS

Cover photos:

Top-left: Lucie Vyhnálková/EFA London Top-right: Robin Sivapalan/The Utopia Workshop 2nd row left: Dermot Bryers/EFA London 2nd row centre: Lucie Vyhnálková/EFA London Bottom left: Hannah Gretton 3rd row centre: Becky Winstanley/EFA London Bottom right: Robin Sivapalan/The Utopia Workshop

- P. 2: Yiwa Lau/UAL
- P. 4: Yiwa Lau/UAL
- P. 7 (clockwise from top-left): Kasia Blackman/EFA London,
- Robin Sivapalan/The Utopia Workshop, Stephanie Habib/EFA

London, Becky Winstanley/EFA London

- P. 10: Colum O'Dwyer/London Community Foundation
- P. 11: Kasia Blackman/EFA London
- P. 12: Becky Winstanley/EFA London
- P. 14: Stephanie Habib/EFA London
- P. 15: Dermot Bryers/EFA London
- P. 22: Royal Borough of Greenwich

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? contact@efalondon.org