

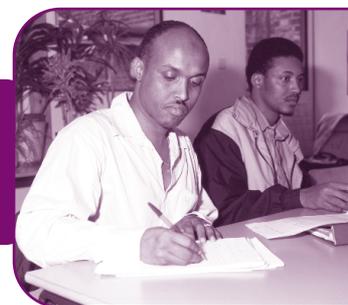
Setting up ESOL provision for refugees



3

- **Organisational issues**
 - Programme planning
 - Recruiting staff
 - Recruiting learners
- **Networks and referrals**
 - Establishing networks
 - Local contacts pro forma
 - Networking
 - Stockport and Walsall case studies

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3

1. Organisational issues

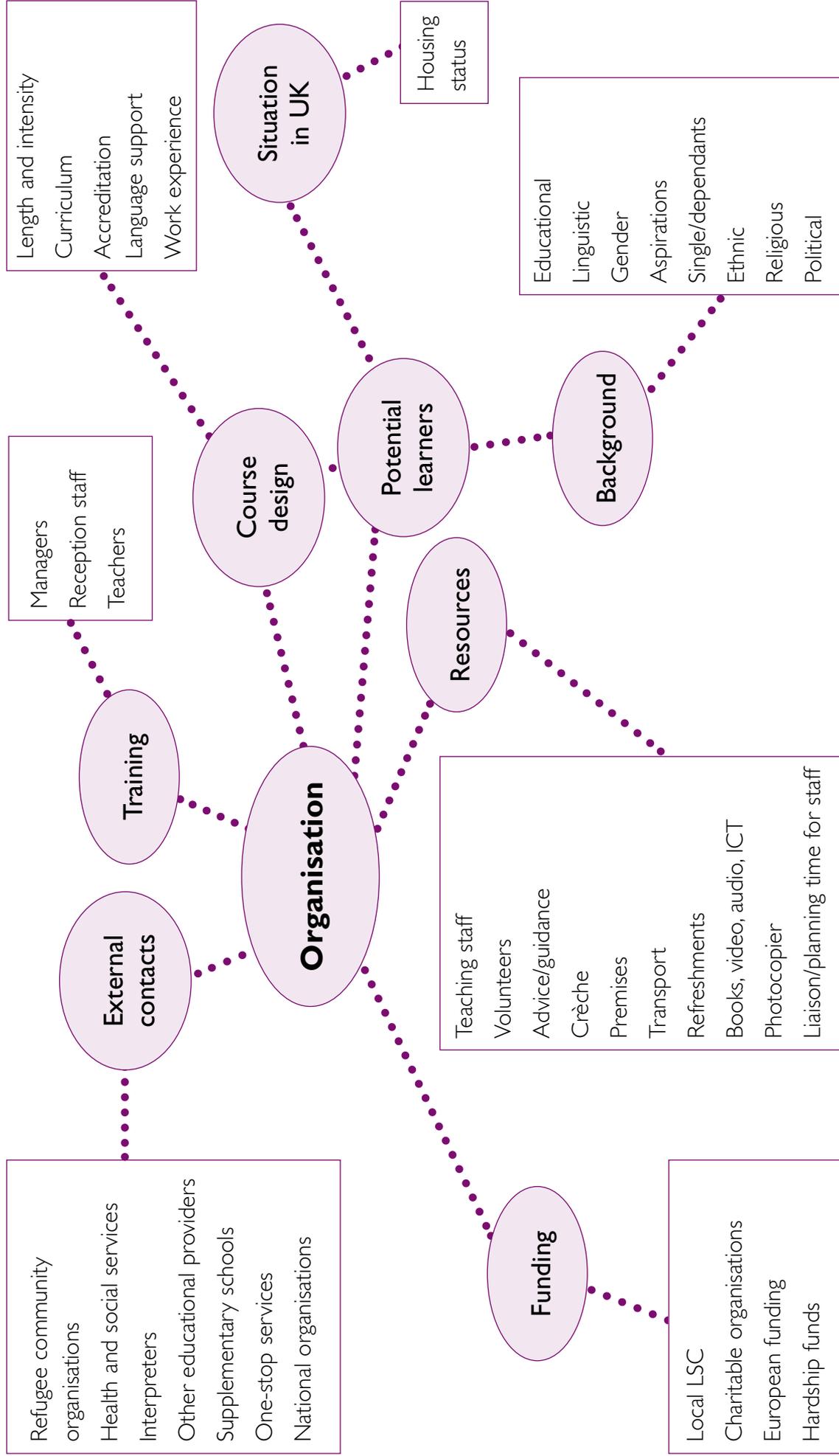
Figure 1 in the previous section showed the routes learners could take to achieve their learning goals and the interaction possible between ESOL providers, partner agencies and other groups. It highlighted how important it was to give the learner appropriate support, including extra-curricular activities. Figure 2, on page 36, shows how an organisation may set up provision. This table may be used for training purposes: trainers may add to it and discuss its relevance (but they should bear in mind that provision may not be exclusively for refugees, even if refugees may form a significant proportion of the groups).

Section 3 is aimed at any organisation setting up new provision, or reviewing existing provision, with the specific intention of addressing the complex needs of refugee learners. Some FE colleges or adult education institutions already offer a comprehensive range of provision including:

- discrete ESOL provision at different levels and in different contexts, e.g. family, hostels
- vocational training and work experience
- progression to mainstream courses within the organisation
- language support on mainstream courses
- student services, including counselling and personal advice
- advice and guidance
- tutorial support
- bilingual support
- childcare
- travel costs (e.g. bus passes).

Much of what is provided by large institutions may be on a much smaller scale and in isolated settings. There may be partnerships with community groups and other agencies. Voluntary groups or groups with a particular interest may also be involved. There are a number of examples of different programmes developed to respond to the needs of refugees in (Section 4: *Delivery*).

Figure 2 What organisations need to consider when setting up provision for refugees and asylum seekers



Programme planning

Here are some questions to consider before you set up provision.

Experience

- Are other organisations in your area already offering something similar?
- What can your organisation offer that is not available in these other organisations? Is there a need for this locally?
- Can you work in partnership with other organisations so that programmes complement rather than duplicate each other?

Funding

- Is funding available from the LSC or other sources?
- What do you need to do to secure this funding?
- Who will write the submission for funding?

Location

- Where will the provision take place?
- Are the premises of an acceptable standard? Do they comply with health and safety regulations? Do they have storage space for teaching resources?

Resources

- What resources will you need to run the programme?
- What additional support will you need? Crèche? Volunteers? Bilingual support?
- Do you need to recruit qualified staff?
- How many hours of provision can you offer?

Recruiting learners

- Do you need to develop new strategies to recruit learners?

Quality and effectiveness

- Who will be responsible for management, support, monitoring and quality control?

Programme design

- What type of programme is on offer?
- Is it long term or short term?
- What are the aims?
- At whom is it aimed?
- Can you build in flexibility to ensure maximum access?

Experience

If your organisation has not offered ESOL before, or can offer only a limited choice, establish links with other providers. This will enable you to make best use of others' expertise and resources and to offer classes at a range of levels, hours per week and in different contexts (see also *Networks and referrals*, p. 40).

Location

In order to ensure accessibility, or respond quickly when your organisation has no room to spare, you may have to use venues that are less than ideal. However, taking provision to premises where potential learners are already present and where they feel comfortable may be a necessary first step to a good-quality programme. Many programmes have been delivered successfully in temporary accommodation such as hotels or hostels. More appropriate premises may be found:

- in a neighbouring community centre, place of worship, or a school attended by the learners' children;
- in an organisation that offers vocational as well as language provision.

2. Resources

In addition to budgeting for learning materials, bilingual dictionaries, readers and stationery, think about the resources the learners will need to develop their speaking and listening skills – tapes, videos and television. Access to ICT resources are also important. If your budget does not cover all these, think about the resources that may be available in the local neighbourhood, free materials such as well-illustrated catalogues, information leaflets and brochures, libraries and other local amenities where learners can hear and use English.

Teaching off-site with limited ESOL resources can be a great challenge, especially if the number of learners does not make it viable to group learners according to levels. The 'Big Red Crate' approach can be helpful in this situation! The Big Red Crate is a big crate full of activities, books, task-sheets, tapes, realia, etc., which learners can use individually or in groups independent of the teacher (see pp. 97–9 and also Section 6, *Learning materials and resources*).

Try to avoid setting up a class that runs for just two to four hours a week, in isolation from other provision in the area: it is very difficult to learn a language in so few hours a week.

Research suggests that beginners need 1,765 hours of tuition to reach the linguistic competence needed for further study or to get a job. On this basis:

- full-time FE students (450 guided learning hours per year) would need almost four years of study;
- adult students who learn English ten hours a week over 30 weeks would need five years and seven months of study;
- adult students who learn English four hours a week over 30 weeks would need 14 and a half years of study.

(Source: Philida Schellekens (2002) *English as a Barrier to Employment, Education and Training*: DFES research 4RP/210/98.)

If you can provide only a limited number of hours of tuition, think about offering short intensive courses (focusing, for example, on orientation or introductions to living, working or studying in the UK) or family learning, which could lead on to further provision in a larger institution.

Recruiting staff

Good quality programmes employ teachers who are trained, experienced and qualified to teach ESOL. In 2002 the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) commissioned South Bank University's London Language and Literacy Unit (LLLU) and FENTO to produce subject specifications for teachers of ESOL. These subject specifications are at Levels 3 and 4 of the National Qualifications Framework. New teachers entering the profession from September 2003 who wish to specialise in ESOL teaching will be required to obtain a Level 4 qualification that recognises the subject specifications. Those who wish to support learning must obtain a Level 3 qualification. The subject specifications were published in September 2002, and programmes leading to new qualifications will be available from September 2003. Until then new staff can undertake existing acceptable English language teaching (ELT) qualifications. A full list of qualifications can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk/section97. Further information on appropriate qualifications is available from the FENTO helpline (020 7332 9535).

When interviewing potential ESOL teachers, include these kinds of question:

- What is the candidate's experience of teaching groups?
- How much experience has he or she got of teaching ESOL (as distinct from EFL)?
- What is the candidate's experience of teaching refugees?
- How does he or she think refugees' needs differ from those of other ESOL learners?
- How would he or she ensure equality of opportunity for learners?

Teaching assistants and bilingual assistants, deployed effectively, are a valuable resource in the classroom, particularly with mixed-level groups. Additional assistance can be gained from **Adult Learner Supporters (ALS)**, who often do not charge for their services. Make sure they receive an induction programme and appropriate training, such as the new Level 2 Certificate in Adult Learner Support (ESOL), scheduled to be available from February 2003.

ALSs are a valuable resource and can help build bridges with the established community. Trained ALSs can provide extra support to learners under the guidance of a qualified teacher. They can work in partnership with the teacher to model dialogue, role plays, demonstrate activities and so on. Volunteers with limited English language skills can also play a useful role in helping to recruit and support learners. They will also need training and support.

Recruiting learners

Once the outline for a programme has been established, it needs to be advertised in clear and concise English if it is to be understood by people with limited knowledge of the language. If possible, translate it into the languages of the target group. Flyers should give details of dates, times and venues for courses, and brief additional information such as 'crèche available'. It is important to state when learners should come to enrol for the course: in advance, which makes planning easier; or on the first day? If the offer is for a range of ESOL provision at different levels, then learners will have to enrol in advance; if it is for a mixed-level small group of learners, enrolment on the first day should be fine.

There is no substitute for word of mouth. If existing learners can pass on the information through their own networks, this can be an efficient way to recruit. Course co-ordinators, development or guidance workers and volunteers can also visit areas where refugees live, and leave publicity in hostels and hotels, and with other organisations and agencies in touch with the target group.

Quality and effectiveness

Whatever the size or scope of your programme, it is important that it is well planned and that there are systems in place to ensure quality and effectiveness. If your provision is funded by the Learning and Skills Council you will have to meet specific quality requirements and will be subject to inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and/or Ofsted. Further information on inspection can be found in *Success in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Provision: A guide to support the Common Inspection Framework*, which is available from the DfES (see p. 111).

Flexibility

Asylum seekers are often placed in temporary accommodation and may thus not have the opportunity to complete longer courses. Others may be on the Job Seekers Allowance or in part-time employment working irregular hours. Plan courses for roll-on/roll-off enrolment and consider short, intensive courses, day, evening, weekend provision and flexible learning facilities.

Some providers have developed 'buddy' systems in which learners are put in pairs to support each other – if one is absent, the other takes responsibility for passing on the work done in class that day. Others make sure that learners have access to materials relating to particular teaching points in the open learning centre, where they can catch up in their own time. Any effective programme will include regular revision of skills and revisiting of topics if necessary.

3. Networks and referrals

Collaborative working is a vital means of developing appropriate responses to the needs of refugees, both in terms of improving services and also of providing mutual support. It is equally important to include the voice of the refugees, through such channels as Refugee Community Organisations and focus groups. English language teachers have a key role to play here in terms of assisting students to express their views and needs in English. Contacts with other groups provide valuable opportunities for developing the curriculum and enabling learners to use the services that these organisations provide. This type of contact can also help teachers identify people who could support learners' learning needs, for instance by providing speakers, resources, arranging visits to workplaces or by offering work placements.

Try to involve refugees in this process of contact, either through channels such as refugee community organisations and focus groups, or by using English language teachers to help learners to express their views and needs in English.

There are other reasons why it is important that ESOL programmes create networks with other organisations, and compile information on appropriate support systems for the organisation or

individual learners. Learners will find few networks and support systems in areas where people from their ethnic groups have not previously lived, and their ESOL teacher may become one of the few consistent people in their daily life, outside their home situation. As a result, learners may ask their teacher to help with a variety of problems. Knowing which problems it is appropriate to deal with, and which should be referred to someone else, is not always easy. Giving the wrong information can have serious effects on a learner's experience, and, rather than try to help at all times, teachers need to be aware of others better placed to provide help in specific areas.

Internal networks are equally important. Make sure that all key workers – frontline, guidance, welfare and community development staff – understand the needs of refugees and that teachers know who they may need to contact in a particular situation and how to do so. The kind of network or liaison group you might establish will vary according to the size or type of organisation, but try to cast your net as widely as possible. Where ESOL classes are provided by another organisation or a part-time teacher, make sure that they are integrated into the activities in the organisation or centre, and that you liaise regularly with other staff.

Networking does not need to involve frequent meetings: it may amount to little more than a list of contacts to whom individuals are referred or whom managers or teachers will contact from time to time. All teachers should ideally have access to such a list, and one named member of staff (or more) should be responsible for keeping the list up to date. The same member of staff should be responsible for referring to the most appropriate support any learner who has needs an English teacher would not be expected to deal with.

Key contacts will vary from place to place, but any list should include other local voluntary, community or maintained-sector educational establishments, including LEA schools, as well as:

- information and guidance services – careers service, Connexions
- refugee organisations (local/regional/national)
- statutory services – social services (employment, housing, health)
- faith organisations
- interpreters/community organisations
- employer organisations.

The blank Local contacts pro forma on pages 42–5 can be used to record the details of useful contacts in your area. Section 7, *Sources of further information*, lists a wide range of national contacts.

Local contacts pro forma

| Area | Organisation | Contact name | Contact details |
|--|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Learning & Skills Council (LLSC) • Learning Partnership • Regional Development Agency (RDA) • Other | | | |
| Refugees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Refugee Council • NASS • One Stop Service | | | |
| Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Health Service • Doctor • Dentist • Optician • Health Education Service • Well-woman clinic • Well-man clinic • Counselling Service | | | |
| Housing and welfare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social services • Housing offices • Welfare advice • Benefits office | | | |
| Religion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mosque • Church • Temple • Other | | | |
| Interpreters | | | |

Local contacts pro forma

| Area | Organisation | Contact name | Contact details |
|---|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Voluntary sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community groups • Volunteer bureau | | | |
| Education/training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Education Authority (LEA) • Schools • Further Education (FE) College • Adult/Community education • Training providers • Connexions • Careers service • Job Centre • Employer organisations • Learndirect Centre • Library | | | |
| Leisure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports centre • Youth clubs • Women's groups • Men's groups • Clubs | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

The two case studies that follow describe effective networks that were established to respond to the arrival of dispersed refugees in the metropolitan boroughs of Stockport and Walsall.

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Background

This network was established to support Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council's Home Office contract to provide accommodation for refugees as a partner in the West Midlands Consortia. The Council now provides a wide range of two-bed flats throughout the borough. The Council invited a number of organisations to work with it to meet the challenge of managing a complex dispersal process: engaging staff and elected members, reassuring the local population, and providing a welcoming and safe environment for the refugees themselves.

Activities

Briefings and awareness raising

Accurate and honest information has been one of the keys to the success of the programme in Walsall. This has been achieved by providing training sessions for staff, and awareness sessions for local residents. These last were delivered through public meetings and talks to community groups, clubs, religious organisations, residents' associations, local committees and any other groups requesting such a session. This has proved particularly successful in areas where the arrival of refugees was perceived as being potentially contentious. The police help with the delivery of the programme, and they have played a major role in helping to address the fear of crime, which has been of concern to local people.

Refugees' forum

A weekly 'refugees' forum' has run in parallel with these briefings, hosted and chaired by the local authority. This is an informal information exchange, and is attended regularly by the housing staff, the police, social services, the health authority, environmental health, the strategic race equality partnership, voluntary agencies and representatives from education sectors. In addition, the meeting is open to any other interested party on a 'need to attend' basis. In the first year and a half of the forum, representatives from the Home Office, Refugee Council, other local authorities, Benefits Agency, CAB, churches, mosques, temples, the Local Government Association and others working in similar fields have attended the forum.

A weekly newsletter is produced and distributed to those who attend the meeting, as well as to those who are unable to come but who wish to be kept informed of current developments. Individual cases are discussed and effective solutions are found as a result of co-operative working. Information is shared freely within the meeting, based on the commitment of all forum members to respect confidentiality.

Induction days

Bi-monthly induction days are held for all newly arrived refugees. The events are informal and enable people to meet together in a relaxed atmosphere. A free lunch is provided.

These events are held in the LEA's College of Continuing Education and offer a welcome to Walsall – an introduction to local society, services and facilities. The police, fire service, health authority and a range of other organisations give a series of talks and provide further information about rights and responsibilities, fire safety within the flats, and advice about how to safeguard health and welfare. Translation is also provided. The fact that these talks take place in the college means that they provide a valuable opportunity for learners to find out about ESOL and other educational opportunities. These events are also open to any refugee living in accommodation owned by private providers.

The induction day also provides the refugees with the opportunity to speak privately with any of the agencies represented and allows them to get help on a range of issues, for example on what services (such as language classes) are locally available. In addition, these talks provide a forum for refugees to meet each other: this is particularly useful, because refugees are housed in different parts of the borough. Finally the induction day provides an opportunity to establish networks with local agencies, other local authority refugee teams and the private sector.

Outcomes

As a result of these activities, the Walsall programme has succeeded in receiving refugees into the borough on a weekly basis without any significant problems.

Local people, those involved in the refugees' welfare in any capacity, and elected members have been supportive and welcoming. Of equal importance is the fact that the refugees themselves have responded positively to this approach, which has helped to foster good relations.

Stockport English Language Service – Kosovar refugees

Why was this network needed?

The dispersal of a group of Kosovars to Stockport from refugee camps in Macedonia provided a unique opportunity for the English Language Service:

- to work in partnership with a number of agencies to address the needs of the new arrivals
- to use the skills and expertise of its staff in its school, adult and interpreting teams to meet the English language and interpreting needs of the refugees.

In order to meet the educational, health, financial and accommodation needs of the new arrivals, it was essential to liaise and work together with staff from a range of organisations. Once the health needs of the new arrivals had been met, parents were eager to see their children in school and to attend classes themselves.

Network partners included people from the Refugee Council, the Red Cross, Social and Community Services Divisions, Healthcare and Acute Services Trusts, youth service, Human Appeal International, the mosque, and the Greater Manchester Fire Department. The local MP, Ann Coffey, and a range of local authority personnel were also involved.

Activities

Living accommodation was provided in former nurses' quarters at Barnes Hospital, supervised and run by the social services. There were 31 men and 22 women in 13 family groupings:

- 53 adults (aged from 17 to 89)
- 30 children under the age of 16 (plus two new babies born in Stockport).

Few of the group spoke any English on arrival, their main language being Kosovar Albanian, which differs in many respects from standard Albanian. Many of the older generation also spoke Serbo-Croat, and some could speak other European languages, including Italian, French, German and Turkish.

Albanian bilingual support was provided for the first 10 days by the British Red Cross. This enabled teachers to assess the adults' and children's language levels within the first week and to start two daily classes for adults and three separate daily classes for secondary, primary and infant children at the Barnes Reception Centre during the Whitsun holiday.

The children of school age attended three local schools, supported by teachers from the Language Service and interpreters.

A team of teachers and classroom assistants from the Service ran up to three daily classes for adults. Many of the older students had had little formal education in Kosovo and the schooling of those in their late teens and early twenties had been severely disrupted over the past decade. The classes, which were well attended, focused on basic survival English, including language for health needs, shopping and getting about in the local area. In addition to some formal teaching, learning strategies included workshops, role plays and game playing.

- The future of the Kosovars in Stockport was uncertain. Most were eager to return to Kosovo, but they had been advised to wait until the following year. The plan was to start to house family groupings over the summer holidays.

Activities carried out by the Stockport English Language Service

- Initial individual assessment of language and educational need of all adults and children in the first week after arrival
- Provision of English language classes at Barnes Reception Centre within 10 days of arrival
- Three classes for adults – 3.5 hours per day (ongoing and throughout the summer)
- Class for secondary pupils – daily
- Class for primary pupils – daily
- Class for infant children – daily
- Crèche for under 5s – daily
- Appointment of three EAL teachers, the Service's Guidance Organiser and a Serbo-Croat bilingual assistant to teach/work with the adults at Barnes Reception Centre
- Placement of children in three schools. This included preparatory visits, provision of information on background and educational experience of refugees, strategies to help language acquisition across the curriculum, and bilingual resources for teachers in the receiving schools
- Liaison with Education Welfare Officers in relation to uniform, behaviour and school placement
- Employment of a full-time EAL specialist in each of the receiving schools
- Recruitment and employment of Albanian bilingual workers in both primary schools for 4.5 hours per day to offer in-class support, and provision of interpreters for all three schools
- Management of the nine Red Cross bilingual workers, ensuring their availability for social services, DSS and health personnel, clinics, appointments and meetings
- From Day 10, recruitment, management and co-ordination of four bilingual workers and four sessional interpreters after the departure of the Red Cross team (requiring the full-time attendance of the part-time Interpreting Unit Organiser at Barnes and at the daily Heads of Family meetings)
- Translation of documents, signs, health questionnaires and sundry information into Albanian
- The Service acting as a central information point on cultural, religious and language issues

Outcomes and lessons

Working in close partnership with other agencies has been a key factor in integrating the refugee families into the education system in Stockport. The majority of the adults joined the LEA's ESOL provision, with some enrolling on mainstream courses at the local FE college where the LEA service provides language support. This has proved a model for integrating further arrivals of refugees into the Stockport area.