

Kevin Brennan MP

Minister for Further Education, Skills,
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To Local Authority Chief Executives

31 March 2010

Update of the New Approach to ESOL

I want to thank you and your colleagues for the tremendous work you have undertaken on the New Approach to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and update you on how this work will continue within the new adult skills landscape.

I have been most impressed by the progress you have made with your local partners and providers to ensure ESOL provision and services best align with local needs and your wider priorities. However, the economic downturn and increased unemployment set us a challenge and there are also a number of structural changes to support our Growth Strategy that have an impact on the remit of many bodies, including local authorities, RDAs, providers, and the LSC. These changes mean we need to review our approach to ensure ESOL plays its full role in re-energising local economies and communities. I know that many authorities have already placed the lead for the New Approach to ESOL within their economic development teams.

The new Local Economic Assessment, Worklessness Assessments and Work and Skills plans recently announced by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions also offer an excellent opportunity for ESOL planning to be embedded into the wider skills needs of a local area. We will shortly update the guidance on Work and Skills Plans to reflect the importance of ESOL within that framework. Alongside this you will be aware that responsibility for funding adult learners moves to the Skills Funding Agency from 1 April. They will allocate their resources based on the annual Skills Investment Strategy and route funding to colleges and training organisations in response to demand, giving them the freedom to innovate to meet the skills needs of their local community. This will strengthen the importance of the role providers play in delivering your priorities, working much more closely with you in the future. To support this transition we are establishing some additional short-term support for those of you that require further help to implement this policy and bed in the new arrangements.

Once again please accept my thanks for your work in this important area and I know your continued leadership will make a real difference for those in need of English language skills in our communities.



KEVIN BRENNAN